



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee receives report on the proposed FY 2017 chapter budget cuts

TSE BONITO, N.M. – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development regarding the fiscal year 2017 chapter budget allocation and possible policy recommendations to address budget shortfalls.

According to DCD executive director Carl Smith, the proposed FY 2017 chapter annual budget allocation shows a \$1.3 million budget cut. The division proposed a full allocation for \$15 million but only was allocated \$13.7 million. The shortfall will affect chapter officials' stipends or chapter personnels' payroll, added Smith.

"Does the division have any policy recommendations that the Council can act on to address the budget shortfall?" asked RDC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock).

Smith issued four recommendations to address the budget issue including: 1. Reduce chapter meetings to one per month by combining the planning and regular meetings 2. Reduce chapter planning and regular meetings to eight per year 3. Limit one chapter official to attend district council meetings 4. Consider eliminating the chapter vice president position.

Pursuant to Navajo Nation Code Title 26, each chapter shall determine the number of meetings to be held each month and the chapter president may call special or emergency meetings. It further states that chapter officials shall be compensated for only the number of meetings provided for in the Nation's approved budget.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) questioned th workload, duties, and responsibilities of chapter officials.

"I have many issues and concerns with chapter officials. I believe that some chapter officials do not have the passion to help the community. A lot of officials do not know the process of local governance. Many of them also have full-time jobs and they only show up for meetings. Is anyone keeping track of their accountability to their communities? Does anyone report and evaluate their progress?" asked Delegate Pete.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) questioned why the chapter budget may receive a budget cut and provided recommendations to accommodate the cut.

“How has the division determined to give a \$1.3 million cut from the chapters? Was this cut part of the three branch chief agreement? I believe the chapters should not receive a cut. The division can also prepare a budget proposal to request funding from the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance,” stated Delegate Shepherd.

“The chapter budget allocation was presented to the division without any justification why the chapter’s received a budget cut. The division can also prepare a budget proposal for UUFB funds,” added Smith.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) recommended for the DCD to collaborate with the Navajo Nation Title 26 Task Force to address the four DCD recommendations.

“The division needs to meet with the Title 26 Task Force. The task force is moving towards a regionalization concept for chapters to address budget deficiencies. The two programs need to come to together and formulate a plan and provide a summary report to RDC on ways to resolve chapter budget issues,” stated Delegate Phelps.

The Resources and Development Committed approved the report from DCD with a 3-0 vote.

The Council’s Standing Committees will begin holding oversight hearings in August and the Council will hold its annual budget hearing in early September.

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