



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Resources and Development Committee recommends approval of funds for new Tuba City senior center**

**TSE BONITO, N.M.** – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee considered Legislation No. 0217-16, which seeks supplemental funding from the Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance in the amount of \$3,745,312 for the construction of a new Tuba City senior center.

“Tuba City elders desperately need a senior center in the community of Tuba City. Two years ago the senior center was permanently closed because there was asbestos under the building. Our elders need a safe place where they can gather,” stated Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi), who sponsored the legislation and represents the community of Tuba City.

According to the project proposal submitted by the Western Agency Navajo Area Agency on Aging, the senior center was built in 1979. It is estimated that the center would serve as many as 275 elderly Navajo people from the communities of Tuba City, Coalmine Canyon, and Bodaway/Gap. Since the closure of the previous facility, the Tuba City Chapter has contributed a temporary modular building for senior citizens to use as a cafeteria and recreational usage.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tside To ii), who represents several of the surrounding communities, expressed concerns regarding the project cost and financial contributions.

“What does the \$3,745,312 project cost include? Does it include demolition cost of the old facility and the new construction cost? Tuba City Chapter is a tax-based chapter and do they plan to provide matching funds or any funds at all? The chapter needs to be involved with these types of projects,” stated Delegate Phelps.

According to the NAAA project budget proposal, approximately \$2.7 million will be used for the construction of the new senior center and for the demolition of the existing facility. An additional \$845,728 will be used for professional technical services, and \$179,936 will be used to purchase new furniture and fixtures for the new building.

“Tuba City Chapter has not contributed to the construction of the new senior center facility but they purchased a temporary modular building for the NAAA administration. The chapter tax dollars are being utilized for start-up projects throughout Tuba City and I strongly believe they will provide assistance and contribute to the cause,” Delegate Tso said.

RDC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse'ii'ahi, Whiterock) requested information regarding local support from the chapter and elderly people.

"I do not see any chapter resolutions or letter of support from the chapter in the legislation. Are they aware that NAAA is seeking funding for a new senior center in their community? Is this project included in the chapter's Infrastructure Capital Improvement Plan?" asked Delegate Perry.

Tuba City Chapter and the elder council will include a supportive resolution and letter of support with the legislation and this project is number two in the chapter's ICIP, added Delegate Tso.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) recommended NAAA to provide an update report regarding building conditions of all the senior centers and for the Office of Tax Commission to provide a report on the chapter's current tax revenues.

The Resources and Development Committee approved the legislation with a 3-0 vote. The Budget and Finance Committee will consider the legislation next. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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