



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee directs President Begaye to hire police chief and considers police sub-stations

WINDOW ROCK – The Law and Order Committee on Monday unanimously approved Legislation No. 0179-16, which directs Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and the Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety Executive Director Jesse Delmar to promptly hire a police chief within 30 days.

LOC members have held several meetings, reports, and work sessions to discuss the challenges and concerns over hiring a police chief – a position that has been vacant since 2008.

“The Nation needs a police chief. The vacancy has prolonged many public safety initiatives. NNDPS needs a sense of direction on public safety issues,” stated LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), who sponsored the legislation.

LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) emphasized how hiring of a police chief would help protect Navajo communities.

“The committee had numerous meetings on this issue. We question when the Nation will have a police chief because our Navajo people need protection. I support this legislation because the president and NNDPS need to take this issue serious. Our people have waited too long and there is an outcry,” stated Delegate Tso.

LOC approved Legislation No. 0179-16 with a 4-0 vote. The resolution was finalized and signed Wednesday directing the president and NNDPS to hire a police chief by July 13. LOC is the final authority for the legislation.

During Monday’s meeting, LOC also received a report from officials with the K’ai’Bii’To Chapter, a community located 36-miles southeast of Page, regarding a project proposal for a Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety sub-station.

The K’ai’Bii’To community is one of the nine proposed sites listed on NNDPS’s priority list. Other proposed locations for police sub-stations are Dilkon, Pinon, Tohajiilee, Shiprock, Fort Defiance, Alamo, Aneth, and Tachee/Blue Gap.

According to K'ai'Bii'To Chapter Vice President Ernest Goatson, the K'ai'Bii'To community is in need of a public safety sub-station and the chapter has taken responsibility to ensure the proposed sub-station site is ready.

“This is a priority for the community of K'ai'Bii'To. We don't have police officers, fire fighters, or emergency helicopter pads. The average police response call takes two hours. Public safety should be a priority for communities that have NHA housings and schools. The chapter has completed all the land clearances and infrastructure planning for the proposed site of the sub-station. We need Council's support,” stated Goatson.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) said the proposed K'ai'Bii'To sub-station is essential to providing public safety services for the community because of its rural location, similar to the other eight proposed sub-station sites.

“Communities that are in rural areas are in need of police officers. The Nation has built new agency public safety facilities, now it's time to plan and build sub-stations throughout the Nation. The next step is to start looking for funds for the proposed nine locations,” stated Delegate Begay.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) recommended that the eight communities provide an updated report to the committee.

“The committee needs to get progress reports on all the proposed sub-stations. Some of them are shovel-ready and some are still in the planning stage. They also need to provide crime statistics. We need to create a priority list based on their progress,” stated Delegate Smith.

K'ai'Bii'To Chapter has completed all right-aways, archeological, environmental, and biological clearances, zoning ordinances, chapter land withdrawals, and leases for the proposed police sub-station.

“We need the Council's support because our community has worked hard on this project,” added Goatson.

The Law and Order Committee accepted the report from K'ai'Bii'To Chapter with a 4-0 vote.

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