



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee seeks input from LeChee Chapter regarding economic development

LECHEE, Ariz. – Last week, the Budget and Finance Committee met with LeChee Chapter officials and community members in the community of LeChee, regarding the proposed development plans for Antelope Point located near the city of Page.

Chapter officials reported that the community completed its rural addressing project in 2016 with the aid of college students, a significant increase of Navajo touring businesses in the Antelope Point area, and the recent opening of the LeChee Health Facility that operates under the Tuba City Regional Health Care Corporation.

BFC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said the LeChee Chapter area is a prime location for economic development in terms of tourism and recommended that the community enter into a partnership with the city of Page.

“This area is a gold mine for tourism and economic development. I will be honest and say that I have been disappointed that it hasn’t taken off,” said Delegate Tsosie. “Page receives a lot of money from Navajo patrons, so that should open the door to establishing a working relationship between both communities.”

Delegate Tsosie also raised concerns with the local preschool being closed and asked when it would reopen, stressing that Head Start programs are critical because it provides children the opportunity to advance quickly when they begin attending K-12 schools.

In response, former LeChee Chapter president Irene Whitekiller, said the chapter has made attempts to reopen the preschool, however there are not enough students to enroll and have had difficulty recruiting teachers.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí’, Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) expressed disappointment in the lack of representation from the Navajo Nation Division of Economic Development to aid the chapter in developing the Antelope Point area.

“As indicated before, this area is a priority in terms of economic development, and I am disappointed that the newly elected LeChee Chapter officials are not present at this meeting, nor are staff from the Division of Economic Development,” said Delegate Damon. “The committee’s purpose in coming here was to discuss an economic plan, but now what is the point of us being here?”

Delegate Damon also noted to the chapter officials that the future of the Navajo Generating Station is unclear, and if it should shut down, over 1,300 jobs would be lost and it is imperative that the surrounding chapters begin proposing ways to create jobs and increase revenue for their communities.

Committee members made a directive to request a discussion regarding further detail in establishing an economic plan that would include the NNDED, Navajo Department of Justice, Navajo Office of the Controller, and the Office of the President and Vice President on Jan. 31.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept both reports regarding the chapter and the development of Antelope Point, with one directive.

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