



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee receives report regarding business development at Antelope Point by LeChee Chapter

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee received a report from the LeChee Chapter officials regarding proposed business plans to develop a Lower Antelope Canyon Visitor Center and Campground near Page, Ariz.

According to LeChee Chapter officials, the chapter is currently in the process of establishing its “limited liability corporation” status, have completed a feasibility and archaeological study of the proposed site in 2009, and plan to partner with the Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation to manage the visitor center and camping site.

BFC member Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K’ai’Bii’To, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake), who represents the LeChee Chapter on the Navajo Nation Council, said one of the main concerns regarding the project is tapping into water resources.

“The Navajo Nation needs to look at aiding the chapter in obtaining a waterline to the project, or tapping into water wells within the LeChee area. The Nation will get revenue from the taxes made at the proposed business site, so it will take partnership to achieve the completion of this project,” said Delegate Slim.

Delegate Slim commended the chapter for taking the initiative to create the business site plan and said it has been “a long time coming,” and believes it will generate a significant amount of revenue for the Navajo Nation.

BFC vice chair Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) expressed his support of the business initiative, and provided recommendations to the chapter to aid in ensuring the proposed project is successful and will draw national and world attention.

“When tourists come to Navajo land, we have to show case who we are and that has to be done through the uniqueness of our language, culture, and our beautiful landscapes. They do not want to see Americanized communities, they come to see our Navajo communities who still thrive culturally and traditionally,” said Delegate Chee.

Delegate Chee added that many of the tourists who visit the Navajo Nation are from foreign countries, and the visitor center would provide an opportunity to educate them on the Navajo people and culture.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) said the chapter's proposed project is a "great idea," but it would be good to look into a larger venture that could capitalize on the tourism in the area.

"I really, really think if we could turn back the hands of time, we should've put Twin Arrows [Navajo Casino Resort] in LeChee. There is an untapped resource up there and it has been ignored for far too long. If the chapter can find matching dollars, we could possibly even put a casino-resort in that area and other businesses," said Delegate Damon.

He added that the chapter should reach out to the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise and start researching what gaming ventures could be developed in the LeChee Chapter area. Delegate Damon said the visitor center and campground is a good idea, but they should begin to think of the "bigger picture" that can create more jobs in the area and increase economic development.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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