



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin (928) 221-9253
Jolene Holgate (928) 380-4174
Crystalyn Curley (928) 286-7918
nmb.communications@gmail.com

Resources and Development Committee encourages chapters to include community cemeteries within community-based land use plans

PINON, Ariz. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0402-17, recertifying Pinon Chapter’s Community-Based Land Use Plan, which re-evaluated and adjusted the chapter’s first community plan.

Pursuant to Navajo Nation Code Title 26 section 2004, chapter governments shall re-evaluate and readjust their community land use plan every five years to meet the changing needs of their local community.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon (Black Mesa, Forest Lake, Hardrock, Pinon, Whippoorwill), who represents the community of Pinon, asked for the committee to support the plan, which the chapter has worked diligently to re-evaluate to reflect the community’s goals, concerns, and developments.

“The chapter and CLUPC collaboratively completed the community plan. A chapter resolution is included in the legislation to show that the community supported the plan, which outlines future projects and community land needs in the areas of residential, commercial, and industrial,” said Delegate Witherspoon.

Pinon CLUPC president Juan T. Begaye, presented the community plan that included scattered housing development, an open space plan, community facilities plan, and an infrastructure plan.

During the discussion RDC member Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle), raised concerns regarding the chapter’s plans for cemetery plots, which have been at the center of land issues and have delayed development in many communities throughout the Navajo Nation. In some instances, families create family plots in remote areas.

“As I reviewed the community plans I did not notice any plans or proposals for a community cemetery. Burial sites and graves have become a major challenge within the Nation. I highly encourage the chapter to include a community cemetery in the plan,” said Delegate Pete.

According to Pinon Chapter president Bessie S. Allen, the chapter currently utilizes a community cemetery and family plots. The chapter needs a new community cemetery, but the proposed cemetery is not included in the community plan, added Allen.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) urged the chapter to withdraw land for the proposed community cemetery.

“All 110 chapters need to address this issue. Constantly, we hear many complaints about land disputes regarding burial sites and graves. Community cemeteries should be utilized to avoid any disputes among community members and families,” said Delegate Shepherd.

He added that the new home site lease regulations also state that modern burial sites and graves are prohibited within the home site lease premises and all burial sites should be in a community-approved cemetery.

The Resources and Development Committee approved Legislation No. 0402-17 with a vote of 3-0 with a recommendation for Pinon Chapter to add the proposed community cemetery in the community plan within one year.

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