



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives update report on proposed renovation project of senior citizen centers

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received an update report from Indigenous Design Studio + Architecture, LLC, a firm that was tasked with assessing existing senior citizen center facilities on the Navajo Nation and providing recommendations for renovation and construction.

The assessments were conducted in accordance with a Condition of Appropriation that was issued for FY2017 to the Navajo Nation Facilities Maintenance Department. The department then partnered with the Navajo-owned design and architecture firm to aid with the building assessments and cost analysis.

According to the report, the company assessed over 80 senior citizen centers, and using a national rating system for building structure integrity the firm determined that nearly 60 senior centers were deemed to be in “poor” condition.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Nelson S. BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tsé Ch’izhi) inquired about assessments that Navajo chapters have either completed or are ongoing, and recommended that Indigenous Design Studio + Architecture review and include those assessments in their report.

“These assessments are really going to help us out. We have been waiting for some type of report that we can bring back to the [Navajo Nation Council] and look at getting money for the senior centers. Chapters have begun their own assessments and it’s important to include their input regarding this overall effort,” said Delegate BeGaye.

He added that chapters within the Central Navajo Agency have utilized chapter funding to carry out upgrades and minor renovations for their senior centers, however, there is still a shortfall of funding to adequately complete repairs and replacements.

The common trend of issues with senior centers included lack of drainage control or planning, lack of compliance with the standards of the American Disabilities Act in the interior and exterior of the facilities, a need for electrical upgrades, a need for HVAC upgrades, and roof repairs.

The report also stated that the average age of the centers is 27-years, and that overall, senior center buildings are maintained and cared for satisfactorily considering the low budgets that are allocated annually for maintenance.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé alnáoz't'í) informed committee members that she intends to introduce legislation that would request funding from the Síhasin Fund for senior centers across the Navajo Nation.

“In regards to Navajo senior citizens, I think we are all in agreement that they need more attention and they need that maintenance money that is indicated in the report. If we can start this dialogue to begin drafting legislation to get access to some of those monies, then chapters can take this opportunity to fix the issues at the senior centers,” said Delegate Crotty.

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said that an annual set-aside could be established that would be dedicated to building maintenance, renovations, and the construction of senior centers each year.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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