



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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Naabik'iyáti' Committee Conducts Town Halls on NGS, NTEC

KAYENTA and HARDROCK, Ariz. — The 24th Navajo Nation Council Naabik'iyáti' Committee visited two communities to hear testimony from local residents about the possible acquisition of Navajo Generating Station and Peabody Kayenta Mine by Navajo Transitional Energy Company in two town hall forums.

With the closing of NGS and Kayenta Mine looming in nine months, negotiations for NTEC's acquisition of the two properties have slowed, but the Council's effort is in high gear to seek as much information as it can get in preparation of either reaffirming the 23rd Navajo Nation Council's position of support for NTEC's acquisition or supporting a cessation of negotiations.

"We are here to listen to the people and to really understand their issues and concerns," said Speaker Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh). "These town hall meetings should be considered the first of its kind on this matter. It's good that we are going to continue moving down these paths in having more discussions like this so we can start listening to more people on a direct basis."

Delegates visited the communities of Hardrock and Kayenta. Hardrock sits in the southern foothills of Black Mesa, and community members documented their lived experiences with coalmining and land dispute issues dating to the 1970s. Kayenta is northeast of Black Mesa and has a large concentration of Kayenta Mine workers.

On March 8, more than 100 people attended the town hall at Hardrock Chapter to engage in direct dialogue with seven Naabik'iyáti' Committee members. Many testimonies were given voicing their interests in the continued operations of both the mine and power plant.

Other testimonies spoke of environmental concerns for the air and water, clean up and remediation, and the unlimited guarantee asked of the Navajo Nation.

Naabik'iyáti' Committee members addressed the audience and provided their thoughts and responses to some of the questions posed. Resource and Development Committee Chair Rickie Nez (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) explained to attendees that he was sponsoring Legislation 0044-19, which would state the Council's support for NTEC to continue its independent acquisition of the plant without "any financial guarantees" or "waivers or release of claims to the NGS Owners."

“My heart is heavy because I was raised in a community of coalminers,” Delegate Nez said. “I’m worried about the way of life for Black Mesa residents. I’m glad I’m here today to hear your part of the story.”

On March 10, community members from the Kayenta and the surrounding communities packed the Kayenta Township building to address the committee in a second town hall meeting. The town hall had many coal miners and NGS employees present and many people gave testimony on their experiences mining coal and working at the plant.

The Naabik’íyáti’ Committee continues to hold work sessions with executive branch agencies, enterprises, and Navajo organizations.

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