



The 24TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
Office of the Speaker

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Resources and Development Committee meets at Lake Valley Chapter



PHOTO: Council Delegate Mark Freeland commended the work of Red Valley Chapter and White Rock Chapter for working together to address the needs of their neighboring communities.

LAKE VALLEY, N.M. — The Resources and Development Committee met for their regular meeting at Lake Valley Chapter Feb. 26. The committee received six reports from the Lake Valley Chapter, Lake Valley Senior Citizen Center, White Rock Chapter, Administrative Service Centers, D14HC report from Chester Carl, and the Heritage Program regarding the Chaco Canyon boundary.

The committee suspended the floor rules and began with old business after approving the agenda. Legislation No. 0292, sponsored by Council Delegate Mark Freeland, was posted Sept. 26, 2019 for amending RDCD-97-18 for non-profit electric utility companies providing service in the Eastern Navajo Agency to be provided a waiver for right-of-way expenses related to tribal compliance.

Council Delegate Freeland said the legislation was created to address electric utility needs for residents in the Eastern Navajo Agency receiving service from Jemez Mountain Electric Cooperative and Continental Divide Electric Cooperative. “This legislation was to help eastern agency chapters, especially those that receive Tribal Infrastructure Funding and Capital Outlay from the state of New Mexico. These cooperatives are non-profit and they don’t have money for right-of-way costs,” he said. The committee did not debate the legislation and voted unanimously 5-0 to approve the waiver.



PHOTO: Council Delegate Otto Tso sponsored Legislation No. 0035-20, which was for a business site lease modification for Cavesas Car Wash in Tuba City.

Under new business, Legislation No. 0034-20, sponsored by Council Delegate Wilson Stewart Jr., was for declaring a vacancy for the Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise Board of Directors. The former board member, Eugene Crawford, resigned his board appointment due to health issues. “The Navajo Nation Council and Office of the President and Vice President will work together to fill this position under the marketing seat for the NACE Board,” Council Delegate Stewart said.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. said the Kayenta store was closed and asked, “Is this because of the board or management not doing their job?” Council Delegate Stewart said the store was closed for renovations to the flooring. He added that the Cameron store would be reopening in the spring after replacement of the roof. “NACE had a good profit in 2019, we just had a board meeting last week,” he said. The committee unanimously approved the vacancy announcement by a vote of 5-0.

Legislation No. 0035-20, sponsored by Council Delegate Otto Tso, was for approval of business site lease modification for Cavesas Car Wash within To’Nanees’ Dizi Chapter vicinity. The car wash is owned by Navajo entrepreneurs Deborah Martinez and Jose Akee. Council Delegate Tso said, “The owners are transferring the possessory intent to Cavesas Car Wash. They want to add a restaurant, public showers, rest room, automotive parts, and automotive repairs.” Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr. asked why the issue was not approved administratively by the Regional Business Development Office in Tuba City.

Office of the Legislative Counsel attorney Marianna Kahn said the issue started decades ago and was addressed by the BIA about a decade ago when the Navajo Nation was given authority to approve their own business site leases. “At that time, those businesses had a choice to come under the authority of the Navajo Nation or remain with the BIA. These resolutions, called novations, often come before the Council. This business decided to stay with the BIA and that’s why you see this legislation today,” she said. The committee passed the legislation by a vote of 5-0.

Legislation No. 0038-20, sponsored by Council Delegate Carl Slater, was for approval of Tacitus, LLC to extract helium from the Gadiiahi-To’Koi Chapter and North Rattlesnake area. “We are presented with this excellent opportunity to diversify the Nation’s revenue stream,” he said. “This legislation essentially provides for an operating agreement to extract helium from two areas.” He noted that the helium is extracted from porous stone located about 7,000 feet underground and then transported to a nearby purification site to increase the gas concentration up to 90 to 99 percent pure helium.

Tacitus will be operating gas extraction at the two locations for about 2,000 acres. If approved, the Navajo Nation will receive a \$1,087,750 bonus and \$86,540 annually. In addition to the 40 percent royalty payment to the Navajo Nation, Tacitus would also provide \$10,000 annually for scholarships and community reinvestment of the funds from .75 percent of the gross revenue. “The policies for the community reinvestment would be provided by this committee, the RDC. It’s critical that we take the opportunity to work with an able and willing partner,” Council Delegate Slater said. Over a 10-year period, Tacitus projects \$445 million. Forty-four percent would be paid to the Navajo Nation and eight percent to the state of N.M.

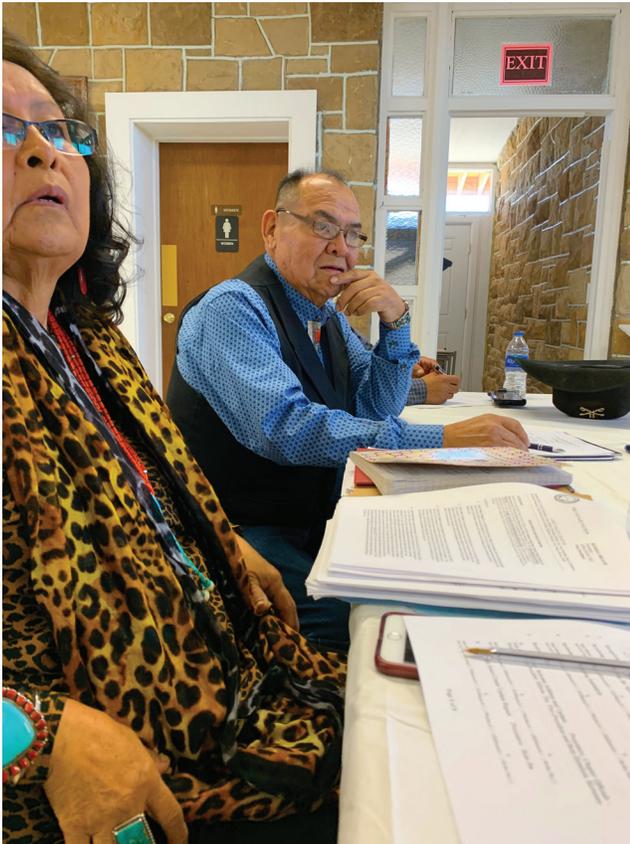


PHOTO: Red Valley Chapter President Tony Padilla Jr. and Secretary-Treasurer Betty S. Dennison expressed appreciation to the Resources and Development Committee for coming to their community to listen to the chapter issues firsthand.

Tacitus receives investment from Dallas and is headquartered in Farmington. Council Delegate Wilson Stewart Jr. had a concern with the two supporting resolutions from the chapters. According to Navajo Nation Oil and Gas, there are resolutions from Tse Alnaozti’i’ Chapter, one rescinding the chapter support and the other asking questions about the proposal. Council Delegate Herman Daniels said a work session with NNOG and the Navajo Nation Minerals Department was needed to address the issues. “I fully support our Navajo Nation enterprises,” he said. “We need to keep the money here. I don’t support dollars going off the Navajo Nation. The legislation passed by a vote of 3-2.

Legislation No. 0037-20, sponsored by Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay Jr., was for amending Resolution No. RDCS-96-17 to provide right of way for NTUA’s Light Up Navajo II project. The Office of Legislative Counsel advised that the legislation should be rewritten. “Reviewing this legislation, I find that it is not written to do what the sponsor wants it to do. This needs to be rewritten to amend both of the exhibits. Also, it is my opinion that the executive review process be followed very carefully,” Kahn said. Council Delegate Begay withdrew the resolution.

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