



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee receives report from Tohatchi Chapter regarding the need of public safety services

TOHATCHI, N.M. – On Wednesday, the Law and Order Committee received a report from the Tohatchi Chapter officials regarding the demolition of the former Tohatchi Youth Detention Center and police sub-station for the purpose of developing a new public safety complex. The proposed public safety complex would be located in Tohatchi, approximately 25-miles north of Gallup, N.M.

Council Delegate Petterson Yazzie (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl'a'a'), who represents the community of Tohatchi, recommended the LOC members to consider the pleas of the chapter and surrounding communities.

“The need of public safety services should be highly considered and recommended at each community that have commercial development and school districts. We need to be prepared if any emergency arises, but we are not prepared because we don’t have law enforcement or a fire station. That’s why we need this public safety complex,” stated Delegate Yazzie.

The Crownpoint Police District, located approximately 50-miles east of Tohatchi, currently provides public safety services.

LOC member Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) asked several questions regarding the former Tohatchi Youth Detention Center and the chapter’s progress and plan to address the new public safety complex.

“Who is going to demolish the detention center? Is the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development willing to help with this plan and the budget? Why was the detention shut down? There are many questions that need to be considered before we move forward with the new complex. Has the chapter withdrawn land for the proposed site of the complex? Are their supporting chapter resolutions from the surrounding communities?” asked Delegate Tso.

According to Tohatchi Chapter president Julie Badonie, the demolition of the youth detention center has been a lengthy process because the oversight of the building is not clearly identified and there is no timeline and cost evaluation for the demolition project.

The proposed public safety complex will house a fire station, police sub-station, and emergency medical service and the chapter has withdrawn six-acres of land, which is shovel ready for the project, added Badonie.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) questioned why the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President and executive departments have not address the demolition project.

“The detention center is under the NNDPS. We need to ask OPVP why the initiatives for this project have been delayed? The plan and the budget need to be made clear. The executive branch needs to address these concerns to the chapter in a letter format,” stated Delegate Begay.

Delegate Begay recommended that the chapter also include the public safety complex in the chapter’s capital improvement plan.

NNDPS executive director Jesse Delmar explained that the demolition would be costly because the building would also need asbestos clean up before demolition begins.

LOC Chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) recommended the chapter to continue to communicate with the NNDPS to plan the proposed public safety complex.

The Law and Order Committee accepted the report with a 3-0 vote.

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