



25th Navajo Nation Council

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo Hopi Land Commission presents priorities issues to Interim Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director



PHOTO: Interim Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office Executive Director, Sarah Slim, provided an introductory report before the Navajo Hopi Land Commission.

Window Rock, Ariz. - Interim Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office (NHLCO) Executive Director, Sarah Slim, presented an introductory report and overview on NHLCO plans before the Navajo Hopi Land Commission (NHLC) during a regular meeting held on Thursday, Oct. 5.

Slim was appointed to the position of NHLCO Executive Director on Monday, Oct. 2, by Navajo Nation President Dr. Buu Nygren. She officially started on Monday, Oct. 9.

“Since being appointed, I’ve been able to meet with the Navajo Land Commission Office and the staff. There is a lot of good work that has been put toward the population groups that fall under our purview,” Slim said.

Several members of the Commission addressed the need for a collaborative roadmap and increased communication between NHLCO and the Legislative Branch. Slim said she has been assessing the current project list to report back to the Commission with a roadmap that prioritizes longstanding projects and projects addressing current needs.

"It's a matter of reorganizing and prioritizing. It's important to look at the budget and assess the amounts," Slim said. "I need to look at demographics and the policies because times have changed since the lifting of the Bennett Freeze in 2009 and also since the legislation to establish the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office was put in motion in the 80s."

Wilbert Goy, NHLCO Community Involvement Specialist, said that communication between the Commission and the Office is key in making progress on the project roadmap.

"The number one concern I see is the communication between the Navajo Hopi Land Commission and Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office. We haven't had the same understanding on a lot of these projects," he said. "Some of these projects that are going on, extend back beyond 20 years. Communication is key in addressing these issues."

NHLC Chair Delegate Otto Tso (To' Nanees Dizi) said the Navajo Nation government is set up in a way that does not allow branches to overstep each other's authority but that often there is confusion in oversight.

"What the Commission is charged with lies under the overview of the Speaker's Office. We don't need permission from the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office Commissioner," Chair Tso said. "I want to make sure that we're able to facilitate communication and dialogue."

The Commission requested Slim to prioritize visitation of Chapters that have projects that exist within the scope of the Navajo Hopi Land Commission Office, information regarding the American Rescue Plan Act funding contract as it relates to relocatees, an update on the status of housing projects, housing escrow funds, addressing 2nd and 3rd generation beneficiaries, an update on how the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation will be carried out, and the balance of funds allocated to chapter projects.

"There are many policies at the chapter level that need to be revamped and there are many funding pots that are out there. I'm putting my finger on the issues in terms of leadership at chapter level. It's hard to say if they have the necessary tools," Slim said. "We have plans to visit the chapters that fall under the NHLC. It's a matter of assessing where their skill sets are and assessing where the chapter's prioritized projects are currently at. I see that there are population numbers that are not a part of these plans moving forward. I'm very vigilant about including these populations. We all want inclusion to where no one is out there being neglected."

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