



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 7, 2024

25th Navajo Nation Council Standing Committees host special meeting to address community involvement and public safety



Council Delegate George Tolth emphasized the need for a self-sustaining Diné police force independent of federal programs

MANY FARMS, Ariz. — The Law and Order Committee (LOC) and the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) convened a special meeting at the Many Farms Chapter House to address pressing public safety issues affecting the community. Community members voiced concerns regarding drug trafficking, alcohol abuse, and the critical shortage of law enforcement personnel.

“Addressing the community’s public safety concerns is paramount,” said Law and Order Committee Chair Eugenia Charles-Newton. “We came to listen, take action, and ensure that the voices of Many Farms and other Diné communities are informed of our approach to increasing law enforcement and decreasing crime.”

The LOC session highlighted community involvement and proposed youth programs aimed at fostering interest in public safety careers. Many Farms residents advocated for a Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) program in local schools, which would provide Diné youth with early exposure to law enforcement values and responsibilities.

Council Delegate Steven Arviso highlighted operational gaps and areas needing improvement, questioning current approaches to public safety in Many Farms and surrounding areas. He emphasized the need for additional law enforcement personnel to enhance visibility and improve response times.

“Our communities are asking for visible support,” Delegate Arviso stated. “We need clear answers on filling law enforcement vacancies and determining where new officers will be stationed to better serve the area.”

Council Delegate George Tolth echoed Arviso’s sentiments, focusing on the need for a self-sustaining Diné police force independent of federal programs. Tolth argued that relying on federal 638 contracts restricts the Navajo Nation’s ability to address its unique safety challenges fully.

“The community of Many Farms and others across Navajo Nation have very specific needs that federal programs don’t always address,” Tolth said. “It’s time for a Diné-led, Diné-staffed law enforcement agency that reflects our people’s values and priorities.”

Tolth further advocated for initiatives to reduce federal dependency over time by creating specialized training programs tailored to Navajo needs. He noted, “If we want to address the root causes of crime, like drug trafficking and violence, we need a law enforcement structure that understands Diné traditions and community realities.”

Chair Charles-Newton discussed the federal funding process for tribal public safety, noting that funds that come from the federal government gets allocated to every federally recognized tribe which then gets voted on by the Tribal Interior Budget Council. Despite being the largest U.S. tribal nation, Navajo public safety operations face constant challenges due to limited funding. Charles-Newton stressed the importance of advocacy with federal agencies to secure resources for effective law enforcement.

Council Delegate Nathan Notah underscored the role of community partnership in achieving safer neighborhoods saying, “Building a safer community is not just about law enforcement; it’s a shared responsibility.”

In a pivotal decision, the LOC unanimously passed Legislation 0233-24, which will advance to the Naabik’iyati’ Committee for further review and, if approved, move on to a Navajo Nation Council vote. Introduced by Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw, Legislation 0233-24 aims to bolster law enforcement recruitment, enhance infrastructure, and support community health initiatives.

“I’ve heard from countless community members about the need to foster resilience, promote positive self-identity, and reintegrate traditional parenting and teaching practices,” said Delegate Claw.

The committees’ collaborative efforts represent a significant step forward in addressing public safety issues and enhancing the quality of life in Many Farms and the broader Navajo Nation.

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