



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Navajo-Hopi Land Commission receives update on OHNIR transition efforts, relocation progress, and grazing permit discussions



NHLC Chair Otto Tso emphasized the importance of transferring operational responsibilities in a manner that protects Navajo Nation interests.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Thursday, the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission (NHLC) received a detailed report regarding ongoing efforts tied to the Office of Navajo and Hopi Indian Relocation (OHNIR). Discussions included relocation housing certifications, grazing permit coordination, homesite lease processing, and federal transition discussions involving the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

Navajo Nation Washington Office Executive Director Vince Redhouse briefed commissioners on federal coordination efforts following the transition of several OHNIR-related responsibilities to the BIA. Redhouse said progress continues, resolving relocation matters while federal agencies organize and review decades of records and obligations.

Redhouse reported that approximately 41 individuals have been identified as eligible under the Navajo-Hopi Relocation Act for relocation housing assistance. He explained that many applicants are represented by outside attorneys and that federal officials are determining how benefits or housing obligations will be fulfilled for each case.

Commissioners also discussed the processing of homesite lease records and grazing permits connected to Navajo families residing on New Lands. It was reported that homesite lease records were recently transferred to Navajo Nation legal and land departments for review and digitization to improve accessibility and efficiency. Redhouse added that OHNIR signatures remain one of the final steps needed before several ARPA-funded homes can proceed to construction.

A major portion of the discussion centered on grazing permit concerns and federal staffing shortages affecting permit processing. Commissioners emphasized the need for additional coordination with the BIA and greater responsiveness regarding delayed permit transfers and approvals.

Council Delegate Germaine Simonson called for increased communication with affected communities and requested regional update meetings to address confusion surrounding OHNIR's operational status, relocation eligibility, and future federal actions. She stressed the importance of providing accurate public information as communities continue seeking clarity on relocation policies and outstanding obligations.

Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie addressed transition timelines and their impacts on future funding and administrative oversight under the Department of the Interior. Delegate Yazzie said communities continue to seek answers regarding the long-term structure of the program and future federal responsibilities connected to relocation matters.

Council Delegate Vince James voiced concerns over delays in grazing permit processing and the impact on Navajo families waiting years for approvals and transfers. James emphasized the need for clearer priorities and stronger coordination between federal agencies and Navajo Nation leadership to resolve long-standing land management issues.

Speaker Crystalyne Curley recommended continued advocacy at the federal level to secure additional resources for Navajo-specific relocation and land management responsibilities. Speaker Curley also reiterated support for maintaining the Navajo Region as a separate BIA region, citing the unique scope and complexity of Navajo Nation issues.

NHLC Chair Otto Tso highlighted the importance of transferring properties, leases, and operational responsibilities in a manner that protects Navajo Nation interests while ensuring continuity for affected families and communities. Discussions also included future coordination on facility transfers, inventory reviews, insurance responsibilities, and grazing tally counts.

Redhouse informed commissioners that congressional discussions are underway regarding legislation that could formally close OHNIR and transfer remaining authorities and obligations to the Department of the Interior. While no bill number has been assigned, commissioners said continued consultation and oversight will remain critical as the process develops.

The Navajo-Hopi Land Commission voted unanimously, eight in favor with none opposed, to accept the Washington Office report. Commissioners also noted that additional litigation updates and departmental briefings will be scheduled during future meetings.

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