



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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RDC reviews NHA operations, housing development and leadership concerns



Members of the Resource and Development Committee received a quarterly report on housing development, operations, and leadership concerns.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — On Monday, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) received a quarterly report from the Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) on efforts to provide affordable housing and housing services for Navajo families and communities.

NHA Interim Chief Executive Officer Nellie Gilmore, NHA Chief Operations Officer Ernest Franklin Jr., and Board of Commissioners Chairman Marcus Denetdale provided the report covering April through July.

During the reporting period, NHA advanced housing development, rehabilitation and infrastructure projects while strengthening procurement, financial management and operations. Accomplishments included completing and submitting the 2027 Indian Housing Plan and restructuring project management.

Through July 31, NHA reported \$80.5 million in operating revenue and \$61.1 million in expenditures, resulting in approximately \$19.4 million in net operating revenue. NHA identified infrastructure limitations, contractor capacity and material shortages as challenges affecting housing development. For FY2027, NHA plans to focus on housing construction and rehabilitation, financial and compliance matters, workforce capacity, internal controls and technology modernization.

RDC Chair Brenda Jesus addressed the need for stronger coordination among NHA leadership, the Navajo Nation Council and the RDC. She stated that 10 applicants are being considered for the NHA Board of Commissioners and that the Navajo Nation president, Council speaker and RDC need to come together to select board members based on NHA's current plan of operation.

The committee emphasized selecting a qualified Board of Commissioners president who can provide effective leadership, ensure accountability, understand U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development policies, advocate for housing funding and oversee project expenditures. The committee noted that all current board members have reached the end of their terms.

Chair Jesus called for greater attention to new housing construction in populated communities in addition to rehabilitating existing homes. She asked NHA to address constraints involving resources, development timelines and scheduling.

Chair Jesus stated that NHA's Board of Commissioners and upper management should work with the RDC and Navajo Nation Council to identify policy changes addressing barriers to housing development, including water capacity and coordination with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority.

"There are challenges and barriers that need policy changes and recommendations. The Board of Commissioners and upper management have never reached out to the Resources and Development Committee or the Navajo Nation Council to discuss policy amendments that could assist NTUA or other entities," Chair Jesus said.

To address outstanding issues, Council Delegate Danny Simpson called for a leadership meeting involving Navajo Nation entities to expedite solutions. He said the RDC can use its oversight role to work with NHA leadership and pointed to leadership meetings with the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority as an example of effective collaboration.

The need for long-term stability within NHA leadership was also raised by Council Delegate Rickie Nez. Nez called for solutions to strengthen NHA and address its leadership structure, noting that the Authority has historically struggled to retain chief executive officers.

Concerns about the NHA Board of Commissioners and frequent CEO changes were also raised by Council Delegate Otto Tso. He called for consideration of changes to the board and greater coordination to determine issues affecting NHA leadership.

The Resources and Development Committee voted five in favor and none opposed to accept the report.

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