



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee receives report from Naatsis'áán Chapter

NAVAJO MOUNTAIN, Utah – The Budget and Finance Committee met last week with the Naatsis'áán Chapter to discuss an update report regarding the chapter's financial status, current and upcoming projects, and recommendations to lessen the bureaucratic process to enhance self-sufficiency at the chapter level. Naatsis'áán, also known as Navajo Mountain, is located approximately 91-miles northeast of Page, Ariz.

Naatsis'áán Chapter president Hank Stevens and community services coordinator Lorena Atene, provided the report to the committee, and stated that they have been rebuilding and strengthening the status of their chapter after coming out of their sanctioned status last September. They reported that chapter officials, staff, and community members now enforce the Five Management System and financial processes to ensure daily operations remain in compliance with Navajo policies.

In 2013, an audit report conducted by the Navajo Nation Office of the Auditor General found that the chapter had reported deficiencies in their financial processes and system, and follow-up reports in 2015 and 2016 found that the audit issues were not resolved, which resulted in the chapter being sanctioned.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) commended the Naatsis'áán Chapter officials and staff for working diligently to resolve their sanctioned status and thanked them for inviting the committee to their area to present their projects and inform the committee on how they are serving their community members.

"Throughout the Navajo Nation, you see local newspapers and only see the negative things. There will never be a front-page headline about Naatsis'áán getting out of sanction and pushing forward for their people. We know that communities being led by chapter members are doing their best as well as the staff. You work as a team and it took a lot of time and a lot of hard work to get out of sanction. I know it's going to need integrity to continue the momentum of this chapter," said Delegate Damon.

He also encouraged the chapter to look at developing larger road and utility infrastructure projects for the community, adding that the funding that was withheld from the chapter during

their sanctioned status could be utilized to continue capital outlay projects and renovations for buildings and community homes.

According to the report, some of the projects that the chapter is working on include updating their Community Land Use Plan, continuing house wiring and power line extension projects, completing chapter renovations, renovating and upgrading to USDA-504 for community members' homes, and planning for a new water line to the chapter, senior center, and social services building.

Additionally, the chapter seeks to demolish and rebuild a new senior center building with a new parking lot, and to construct a community greenhouse to promote traditional food sustainability. The report adds that the chapter continues to meet with entities regarding road infrastructure to connect a road from N16 to Kaibeto Highway, and N16 to Oljato Road #264.

BFC member Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) thanked the chapter for their report and the historical background that was provided to the committee regarding the land area and the importance of significant places such as Bears Ears and Canyonlands.

"The beauty and sacredness of each area on our nation, our young people need to capture what is being expressed here. Our younger generations are not tied to the land and are not collecting this information. The stories you told us are valid and how it is told is true. Thank you for the local history and the landscape, and it is as real to the people here as it would be to the world," said Delegate Chee.

He added that the success of the chapter is not only based on the finances and projects that are carried out, but how they are able to connect to the people and younger generations in terms of promoting culture, language, and history of their ancestral land areas.

BFC members voted 3-0 to accept the report.

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