



**The 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council**  
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## **Public Safety Committee hears report regarding Chief Justice Herb Yazzie's project, reaffirms Key Bank loan for priority sites**

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – The Public Safety Committee of the 21<sup>st</sup> Navajo Nation Council met today and reaffirmed its stance to use the \$60 million Key Bank loan to finance public safety and judicial facilities at Tuba City, Ariz., and Crownpoint, N.M., as both the Public Safety and Judicial Committees had earlier affirmed the facilities master plan as well as the priorities.

A project by Chief Justice Herb Yazzie of possibly using the Key Bank loan as a funding source for a new Navajo Nation Supreme Court building drew major concern and criticism among committee members and other key personnel who developed a fund management plan for priority public safety and judicial facilities.

Council Delegate Hope McDonald Lone Tree (Coalmine Canyon/Toh Nanees Dizi) expressed concern of the project and asked Delores Greyeyes, director for Navajo Department of Corrections, if she was aware of the chief justice's new priorities.

Greyeyes confirmed a meeting requested by Chief Justice Herb Yazzie occurred last week on June 22 because the chief justice wanted to hear her opinion on his project. Greyeyes has played a role in the master plan of the public safety and judicial facilities.

"You probably know that the Chief Justice has been planning a Supreme Court building for sometime," Greyeyes said when providing an update regarding the project's funding source. "The meeting was on the issue of attaching the Window Rock District Court to the Supreme Court building."

"Basically, my opinion is that we do have a master plan in place which includes the district courts, law enforcement and corrections," Greyeyes added. "Of course, the project is a concern to us since our design is being developed and if additional funds will be developed for more designing."

Council Delegate Benjamin Curley (Kinlichee/Ganado) asked Greyeyes for better clarification. "Is the chief justice saying, 'I am proposing a Supreme Court building and proposing that we fund it with the \$60 million? Does he have an idea of where funding would come from?'"

In response, Greyeyes replied by stating that she did not know the details of the funding source and said the only question asked of her was her opinion on merging the Window Rock District Court and Supreme Court facilities.

"I know for a fact that you have probably talked about the money source of this project," added Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Thoreau). "We need to approve this report and add to the report that this project stays away from the \$60 million loan for the Supreme Court. We are jumping the gun here. I cannot believe we have not started the jails and here we are looking to build another facility."

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Sampson Cowboy, executive director for Navajo Division of Public Safety, said the Navajo Nation Judicial Branch is looking to use the Window District Court as leverage to change the master plan. "We want to stick with the master plan and they should stick with the master plan," Cowboy remarked.

"I just want to say before we take a vote that there has been no change as far as priorities," McDonald Lone Tree said. "I guess our concern is the chief justice thinks he can make changes by going around through back doors and meeting with people to build his Supreme Court. At this time, we are trying to serve our constituents out across Navajo and not him and his palace."

Council Delegate Elmer P. Begay (Dilcon/Teesto) agreed and said the committee is still the governing body of the fund management plan and expressed the need for a directive.

According to the committee's directive, the Key Bank loan will finance priority public safety and judicial facilities in accordance to the fund management plan and not a funding source for a project such as a new Supreme Court building.

A priority list was developed through a fund management plan and consists of Tuba City and Crownpoint sites as the top priority for public safety and judicial facilities; thereafter, it is Chinle, Shiprock and Fort Defiance. Chief Justice Yazzie's project to possibly use the Key Bank loan as a funding source would prevent the development of much needed justice centers on the Navajo Nation. The committee accepted Greyeyes' report, 5-0.

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