



The 21st Navajo Nation Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Economic Development Committee approves Division of Economic Development's five year plan

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Legislators from the Economic Development Committee of the 21st Navajo Nation Council met May 14 for a special meeting and passed several pieces of legislation including the approval of the Navajo Division of Economic Development's five year economic development plan.

Council Delegate Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon/Mexican Springs) sponsored legislation (Legislation No. 0290-10) for the Navajo Division of Economic Development's five year economic plan, which passed the committee, 4-1. This committee's subcommittee worked with the Division of Economic Development staff and the seven Regional Business Development Offices to develop the five year plan and its project priority listing.

"This legislation reflects the business and economic development activities of the Navajo Nation," Begay said. "We have identified project-readies and formulated business plans. We are identifying resources for business opportunities with some of the tax credits that are available nationwide."

Allan Begay, executive director for the Navajo Division of Economic Development, agreed and thanked the committee for its leadership and support.

"We want to extend our appreciation to the subcommittee and full Economic Development Committee for the leadership in this endeavor to resolve the lack of financing of projects."

"It's a special day the way I look at. With the effort and support from this committee, we look forward to funding these projects for our entrepreneurs; maintaining and recycling money on the Navajo Nation is what I am excited about," added Wilson Gilmore, department manager for Small Business Development Department. "This will be the first time it will happen on the Nation and we hope to maintain that down the road to be self-sustainable."

According to the plan, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009 brings forth more creative ways of providing capital funding for economic-depressed areas like the Navajo Nation and creates "an opportunity whereby private equity investments will play a greater role in financing economic development projects."

Some of the projects in the five year plan include convenient stores (groceries, post office and laundry), general stores, public facilities, commercial infrastructure, a hotel and a restaurant among projects to be constructed and located in Navajo communities throughout Navajo Nation. Projects selected for the five year plan are shovel-ready projects and revenue generating projects, which are determined by an entrepreneur's business plan.

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"This plan is dynamic and allows for other projects to be introduced at any time," explained delegate Begay. "There are guidelines and a checklist that applications have to go through for business sites and to have those business plans part of the five year plan. Those criteria have to be accommodated and are critical."

Projects are generated through regional development offices and are tied to business site leases. In order to get a business site lease, an individual would need land use consent, chapter resolution, survey plat, environmental assessment, land clearance, archeological survey, lease number, road clearance and utility clearance.

In other action, the committee passed two pieces of legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Lawrence R. Platero (Tohajilee).

The committee passed one of Platero's measures (Legislation No.0286-10), which requests the U.S. Department of Interior to restore funding to the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project.

"I want to go up to Washington with legislation from IGR and support from this committee to meet with Mr. Echohawk and with members of Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI) to see if we can get them to change the annual amount to where it was in the past," Platero explained. "NAPI used to get \$24 million in the past and right now NAPI gets \$12 million."

Council Delegate Tom Lapahe (Tachee/Blue Gap/Whippoorwill) agreed and said, "This is the most critical area where we need to have our chair take action."

The committee also passed legislation (Legislation No. 0289-10) approving the reallocation of \$308,802 within the Navajo Gaming Regulatory Office for personnel expenses, fringe benefits and insurance premiums for new Navajo Gaming Regulatory Office personnel at the Class II bingo facility in Chinle, Ariz., which is scheduled to be opened by October 2012.

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