



Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

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NEWS RELEASE:

Special election scheduled April 24 for To’Nanees’Dizi Chapter

Election for two member positions of Council of Naataanii

TUBA CITY, Ariz. — The beginning of a new chapter in the community of To’Nanees’Dizi—Tuba City is set to embark April 24, with the special election of two new members to the Council of Naataanii.

Five candidates are on the ballot for the two open positions on the five-member leadership panel of the To’Nanees’Dizi Chapter, the candidates are: Angie Williams, Benjamin Davis, Marie Acothley, Melissa Natoni, and Priscilla Kanaswood.

The two elected leaders will be the first to take the reins in a new chapter administration in this Western Navajo Agency chapter after the previous five leaders were removed from office after allegations of mismanaging chapter funds.

Angie Williams is a program director at the Navajo Nation Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention Program, and has been a lifelong Tuba City resident. Williams says she wants to restore dignity to the chapter, enable transparency within the new leadership, including raising the quorum limit to having 25 people on hand before conducting official business. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from the University of New Mexico.

Marie Acothley works in the administration of the Western Navajo Area Agency on Aging as a statistical technician. Originally from Tonalea, she went to high school in Tuba City, attended Diné College, and has lived in Tuba City for 28 years. Her goal as a member of the Council of Naataanii is to educate the community to become more active in the chapter government, and to watch for accountability among new members of the Council.

“My goal for the chapter is to have the majority of our community inclusive in the decision making that affects the community we live in,” Acothley said.

Benjamin Davis, Melissa Natoni and Priscilla Kanaswood could not be reached for comment.

Two member positions on the Council of Naataanii are vacant after a one-year investigation by the Navajo Ethics and Rules Office. The investigation found that five chapter officials were misappropriating chapter funds by awarding monetary bonuses to themselves.

The special election will replace former chapter leaders Helen Herbert and Jimmy Holgate who were removed from office as a result of the investigation. Former chapter President Max

Goldtooth Sr., and Vice President Robert Yazzie were also removed, but have filed appeals with the Navajo Nation Supreme Court. One case has been dismissed and the other awaits a Supreme Court decision. The Navajo Elections Administration plans to announce a vacancy for one position and will wait for a disposition on the other.

The fifth chapter official accused of wrongdoing was a key part of initiating the investigation. Charlene Nez, former Secretary-Treasurer, agreed to resign her position by April 7, and to repay \$20,000 in restitution to the chapter. She served 60-days during the interim period.

Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler encourages registered voters to get out and vote. Walk-in voting ends on Friday, April 20. Voters can simply go into any office of the Navajo Elections Administration before 5 p.m.

“I encourage all registered voters of the To’Nanees’Dizi Chapter to exercise their right to vote on April 24. Plan ahead, get to the polls early, make sure to get our elderly to the polls, help drive them there,” Butler said. “We must elect the right people that promote transparency and accountability of our chapter.”

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