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MEDIA CONTACTS
Jerome Clark | 928.637.5603
Carmenlita Chief | 928.255.3428
nlnb.communications@gmail.com

**Naa’bik’iyati’ Committee decision: alcohol will not
be served in hotel area of Twin Arrows casino resort**
Committee also takes action on seven legislations

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Members of the Naa’bik’iyati’ Committee of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council assembled on June 14 at the Navajo Nation Council Chambers, taking action on eight legislations and tabling one.

Legislation 0173-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Mel R. Begay, aimed to make adjustments to Title 17 Section 412 of the Navajo Nation Code pertaining to intoxicating liquors and exceptions.

The legislation was one of the afternoon’s more heavily discussed topics because of its intent to adjust the law, allowing for the serving of alcohol in the hotel area connected to the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino facility.

As the law currently reads, liquor is only allowed to be served within a food establishment in a casino, stated Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise (NNGE) general counsel Raymond Etsitty.

As part of the proposed law amendments, certain lines in Title 17 were also struck out to enable “the enterprise to obtain a liquor license as required by the gaming compact,” said Etsitty, referring to the agreement between the Navajo Nation and the state of Arizona.

The Twin Arrows casino is being touted as a “destination resort.” The allowance of alcohol within the hotel area would guarantee a hotel rating of at least three and a half stars, which NNGE reasons would magnify the attraction of non-Indian tourists, foreigners, and visitors from the Phoenix valley to the casino and hotel resort.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie, who advised the enterprise to be more careful in its planning, was not pleased with how the issue seemed to have been brought up “at the last minute,” just as the project was near completion.

“We trust you to protect the interest of Navajo gaming operations. You can’t say ‘Oops,’ and then come in and say, ‘We need to change the law,’” Delegate Tsosie stated to the gaming enterprise.

Delegate Simpson and Delegate Tsosie both motioned for amendments to language changes that were originally proposed by legislation 0173-12.

Only after the committee passed amendments #1 and #2, which respectively, would restrict the sale of alcoholic beverages to the confines of the dining area of the Navajo casino facility, and limit the applicability of state general liquor laws on the Navajo Nation, the main motion passed.

With the inclusion of the two amendments, legislation 0173-12 was passed with thirteen (13) supporting and one (1) opposing.

The committee approved legislation 0120-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Jonathan Hale and co-sponsored by Council Delegate Walter Phelps, confirming the appointment of Theresa S. Hatathlie to the Diné College Board of Regents for a six-year term, representing the Western Navajo Agency.

Hatathlie is from Coalmine Chapter, and has worked for six years serving and mentoring the Navajo youth population at the Boys and Girls Club – Tó Naneesdizi Unit in Tuba City.

Addressing the committee, Hatathlie stated, "I look forward to working with you, and will report in an objective and honest fashion in the advocacy of the Diné College and Diné nation students."

A number of committee members offered Hatathlie encouraging words, but also voiced their concerns for the current state of Diné College (DC), advocating for certain improvements.

Noting the increasing enrollment of students at the DC branch in Tuba City, Council Delegate Joshua Lavar Butler stated, "As the Western Navajo Agency representative, I urge you to support Tuba City in completing the phases of construction...we need the campus completed. We really need that done for the students."

Hatathlie was also asked to consider creating partnerships with the three main universities in Arizona.

Advocating for the tribal college to expand its bachelor's and master's degree levels, Delegate Russell Begaye said, "We need our trustees to be visionaries. It's time to move it up to a higher level."

The confirmation of Hatathlie's appointment passed, with thirteen (13) in favor and zero (0) opposed.

Legislation 0154-12, sponsored by Council Delegate Butler, passed with thirteen (13) in favor and zero (0) opposing. The legislation approves concurrence with President Ben Shelly's acceptance of gifts of three modular buildings from the Navajo Bureau of Indian Affairs Regional Office. The buildings will be used as office buildings by the Navajo Division of Social Services programs in Chinle, Fort Defiance, and Pueblo Pintada, N.M.

Legislations 0123-12, 0164-12, 0205-12, and 0164-12 were all approved. The sponsor and co-sponsor for these legislations was Council Delegate Hale and co-sponsored by Council Delegate Phelps, respectively.

Legislation 0123-12 passed with fourteen (14) supporting and zero (0) opposing. The legislation approves the acceptance of 45 acres of surface rights 160 acres of mineral rights from the state of Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration to the Navajo Nation. It also allows the request that the Secretary of the Interior convey the property to the United States in trust for the Navajo Nation.

Legislation 0164-12 passed with twelve (12) supporting and zero (0) opposing. The legislation approves and recommends the submission of the Fiscal Year 2012 Navajo Nation Division of Social Services issues and recommendations to the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Legislation 0205-12 passed with twelve (12) supporting and zero (0) opposing. The legislation approves concurrence with the President Shelly's acceptance of gifts of six vehicles from the State of Arizona Apache County Government. The vehicles will be used by the Chinle and Fort Defiance Agencies, Navajo Area Agency on Aging, Navajo Division of Social Services, for daily operations such as home-delivered and congregate meals.

Legislation 0164-12 passed with twelve (12) in favor and zero (0) opposed. The legislation opposes mandatory enrollment of Medicaid-eligible American Indian and Alaska Native individuals into the managed care organizations (MCO).

It also urges the New Mexico Human Services Department and the Medical Assistance Division to require MCOs to contract with the Indian Health Service, Tribal, and 638 Tribal organization facilities as a provider network to the following: reimburse them at a Medicaid all-inclusive rate, contract directly with the Navajo Nation for a Health Home Pilot project, and support and recommend the Navajo Nation comments and recommendations to the New Mexico's state human services department.

Tabled until the next Naa'bi'iyati' committee meeting was Legislation 0119-12, regarding the appointment of Dr. Carolyn Thomas Morris to the Navajo Technical College Board of Trustees, for a four-year term representing the Northern Navajo Agency.

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