



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Jolene Holgate | 928.380.4174
Chrissy Largo | 928.637.5603
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

Law and Order Committee receives update report on Chinle Judicial Facility

GANADO, Ariz. – On Tuesday, the Law and Order Committee received an update status report regarding the Chinle judicial facility, the active cleanup of the proposed construction site, and the operation and maintenance costs.

Bureau of Indian Affairs Navajo Regional Office director, Sharon Pinto, reported to the committee that the land relinquishment of approximately eight acres for the facility has been completed, and currently cleanup of the site is the primary focus.

“The BIA has contributed about \$500,000 to the cleanup of the [proposed] building site, and it will cost an additional \$1 million to complete the cleanup,” said Pinto.

Pinto added that the cleanup of the site must meet the stringent standards of the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency’s protocols prior to the start of construction.

LOC vice chair Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) suggested a follow up meeting with the Navajo Nation Department of Corrections and Navajo Nation Division of Public Safety, to discuss the operation and maintenance needs of the Chinle project, as well as the facilities in Crownpoint and Tuba City.

“The Navajo Nation has put a lot of investment into the judicial facilities and we need to examine the specific needs of each site so we can prepare for the future facilities to be built,” said Delegate Shepherd.

In agreement, Pinto added that all entities involved with the judicial facilities should reevaluate the needs for each facility because it may not be cost effective for the Nation.

“We also need to be reasonable and realistic regarding the design and location of the judicial facilities. If we replicate the facilities, it will cost the Navajo Nation more to build and operate them because they are very large structures,” added Pinto.

According to the report, the Crownpoint facility is not receiving sufficient operation and maintenance funding and is not being used to its full capacity yet, whereas another area could have benefited from the same type of facility and services.

LOC member Council Delegate Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone) expressed his support for the judicial facility projects, and said he hopes that Chinle will serve as an example to the Nation as a well-planned complex that will serve the needs of Navajo communities.

LOC members voted 2-0 to accept the report.

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