



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 9, 2014

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Budget and Finance Committee receives update on regionalization plan

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee received an update report regarding the regionalization/decentralization plan, an initiative currently headed by Navajo Nation Division of Community Development executive director Leonard Chee.

According to the report, Chee stated that the initiative has placed an emphasis on developing the staff positions that will operate the Agency Support Centers, as part of the decentralization plan.

“The Local Governance Service Centers will be phased out, so this is a decentralization transition,” said Chee. “The new positions will be created and current positions will transfer, however some positions require [college] degrees and a certain amount of experience.”

Chee said the regionalization plan is an attempt to decentralize the Navajo Nation government to provide direct services to chapters at the local level, to lessen the hurdles that agencies face when trying to obtain services that are generally available in Window Rock, where the central government functions.

BFC chair Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland) expressed his concern regarding the implementation of the regionalization plan.

“How are you going to implement this plan? The reason I ask is I don’t think we all expect this to be a smooth transition all at once because the intent might go away,” said Delegate Bates. “You will need to work through those challenges that you will face when you implement this plan.”

Chee said that preparation for staff positions and the number of Administrative Service Centers are still being finalized, and that the next step is to decide where the ASC’s will be located and when they will begin to function after funding has been allocated for specific purposes.

The Navajo Nation Council approved \$3 million for FY2014 to be used for the regionalization of chapter agencies.

Although BFC members voiced their support for the regionalization/decentralization initiative, Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tse Si’ani, Wide Ruins) expressed

his concerns regarding the lack of timely implementation, while pointing out that Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly's current term concludes within the next year.

"I think we should cease and desist all of this [regionalization] activity until there is a newly elected administration that comes in, if they decide to, they can pick this [initiative] back up again," said Delegate Curley. "It is President Shelly who claims ownership over this [project]."

Despite Delegate Curley's concerns, BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts'ah Bii Kin) voiced his support and appreciation for the continuation of the regionalization initiative.

"I would like to thank Mr. Chee and his team for their hard work on this plan because a power line, water line, or road, does not end at the chapter boundary, so there is a need for regional planning and the opportunity for chapter communities to work together," said Delegate Nez.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate Nez said the vision of the regionalization and decentralization plan is to provide direct services to the Navajo people, and that it is for the betterment of chapter communities.

BFC members voted 5-0 to accept the report.

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