



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee receives update on home site lease amendments

TSE BONITO, N.M. – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from the Navajo Land Department regarding the proposed Navajo Nation home site lease regulation amendments. The proposed amendments to the home site lease regulations have been an on-going initiative since 2008.

In November 2015, RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) introduced Legislation No. 0380-15, which outlines the proposed amendments. However, the bill has been tabled to allow for additional input and increased public awareness.

“Making improvements on the existing home site lease regulations has been a long process. The initial amendments were made in 2009 after numerous public hearings, agency council presentations, and grazing official presentations. The major changes are based from all the comments and recommendations that were collected,” stated NLD Department Manager Mike Halona.

According to NLD, the regulation changes will make the leasing process efficient and clearer for new applicants, leaseholders, and the home site lease administrators. The proposed amendments will benefit qualified applicants who are seeking housing or infrastructure assistance and benefit individuals obtaining a lease and seeking home loan financing.

Other proposed amendments include the establishment of a proprietary fund account, which seeks to provide better services to the public, an increase in the home site lease application fee, the approval of home site lease penalties and fine fees, such as illegal parking of mobile homes, storage sheds, corrals, and burial sites, creating new five Compliance Officer positions, changes to the forms for Navajo Trust Land and Fee Lands, and home site lease location restrictions. The proposed changes must be considered and approved by RDC before it is implemented.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) commended NLD for presenting the current amendments, adding that the home site lease regulation revisions will restore some cultural teachings regarding land.

“There are many changes that will improve the process and operation. Most importantly, it will restore some cultural teachings of how to respect our land and kinship. For example, an elder woman complained to me about her young neighbor, a home site leaseholder, who told the elder woman not to graze her sheep near his home site. This is not right, a home site lease does not give authority for grazing. There is a loss of respect, but hopefully this change will improve our communities,” stated Delegate Tsosie.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) said it is important for home site leases to be issued in areas near existing infrastructure, including highways.

“It is very important for new home site leases to be near infrastructure development because it is very expensive to fund utility and water lines. Chapters cannot afford to bring these services to homes that are located in insolated areas. Also, having leases near major highways causes many issues, such as cutting fences to make new access roads,” stated Delegate Pete.

NLD Senior Program and Project Specialist Harlan Charley said the proposed amendments would address the restrictions for home site lease locations. The current cost for water and utility lines is \$24,000 per mile.

“The proposed amendments need further in-depth discussions. There are many questions to be answered regarding the changes. We need the revisions to be a great working document for NLD,” stated RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tófikán, Red Mesa)

The Resources and Development Committee approved the report by a 4-0 vote. Legislation 0380-15 is scheduled to be considered on August 9 for final approval, following more input and discussions.

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