



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Health, Education, and Human Services Committee receives update report from Navajo Food Distribution Program

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee received an update report from the Navajo Food Distribution Program regarding concerns with fleet vehicle insurance, funding issues, and the state of the food distribution warehouses.

The NFDPP provides commodity food to eligible low-income households living on the Navajo Nation, as well as supplemental foods such as canned food, fresh produce, and frozen meats. The program also offers nutrition education to recipients on the usage of the commodity foods.

Claudeen Tallwood, program manager for the NFDPP, reported to committee members that her department received a two-year infrastructure grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in the amount of approximately \$825,000. The funding would be utilized to replace above-ground fuel tanks and purchase five delivery trucks

HEHSC chair Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) said he received reports regarding concerns with the warehouse buildings in which the commodity foods are stored at and the need to replace them.

“In reference to your warehouses, can we get an outline of the monies needed to upgrade those facilities? They have been neglected for so long and it’s come time to drop legislation for a supplemental appropriation,” said Delegate Hale.

Delegate Hale also recommended to the NFDPP to identify lands for potential withdrawals and provide a land status report to the committee from the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. He added that the committee has begun considering budget formulations to be proposed to the BIA and encouraged the NFDPP to participate in the consultation to communicate all the needs of the program.

HEHSC member Council Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi’i’áhi/To’Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé alnáoz’t’í) said that NFDPP would need to begin drafting proposals to request new building warehouses, and to gain support from local chapters who may be able to designate land for the new warehouses.

“I think this a program that has been neglected for far too long and is at the mercy of federal funding. It should be time that the Navajo Nation start creating a source of funding as a buffer, in terms of reimbursement, and I don’t think this program has ever been provided that opportunity,” said Delegate Crotty.

Delegate Crotty said that the NFDLP should gather demographic data to illustrate the number of clients and families they serve. She added that an update report also be provided to the committee by the Office of the President and Vice President to discern how they have been supporting the program.

Delegate Hale recommended a directive regarding the programs \$7 million fixed-cost/cash match funding and how the allocation could be utilized for the NFDLP operational needs.

“What is the status of the determination of the \$7 million and how it will be carried out going forward? We want to avoid receiving a report that there is a deficiency because the monies are not being expended,” said Delegate Hale.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to approve the directive.

Delegate Hale said that the committee would also submit a request to the USDA to hold a one-on-one consultation with the Navajo Nation regarding its food distribution program because it is one of the largest entities that serve a large population in a vast land area with unique needs.

HEHSC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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