



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee considers Navajo Fire and Rescue budget reallocation

WINDOW ROCK – On Monday, the Law and Order Committee considered Legislation No. 0285-16, which seeks to approve a budget reallocation in the amount of \$417,000 within the Navajo Nation Department of Fire and Rescue Services to continue program operations and to replenish funds for fire and rescue services provided by San Juan County in New Mexico.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) stated that the internal budget transfer would be used to pay San Juan County for continued fire and rescue operations in Shiprock, Newcomb, and Ojo Amarillo, New Mexico.

The Memorandum of Agreement developed months after the county informed the Navajo Nation that due to decreasing revenues, the county could no longer afford to provide emergency services to the three Navajo communities.

According to the MOA approved in April between NNDFR and San Juan County, the county agreed to operate the three fire stations located in Shiprock, Newcomb, and Ojo Amarillo and indicated that the Nation will pay for overall cost of \$810,000 a year until the Nation can assume the control of the fire stations.

LOC vice chair Council Delegate Raymond Smith, Jr. (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) questioned which budget accounts would be used for the reallocation and if it would become a recurring cost.

NNDFR chief Larry Chee said \$417,000 would be transferred from the program's personnel and fringe account to cover operation cost deficits. He added that it would be a one-time budget transfer because NNDFR is expected to assume full control over the three fire stations in the next fiscal year and fire and rescue services will not be needed from San Juan County.

"The department hired nine permanent full-time firefighters and they will be transferred to the three fire departments. So far, Shiprock is lacking one supervisor, Newcomb is lacking three firefighters, and Ojo Amarillo is lacking four firefighters. The department has six positions open and our goal is to increase the man power," stated Chee.

The Law and Order Committee approved Legislation No. 0285-16 with a 4-0 vote. The Navajo Nation Council serves as the final authority for the bill.

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