



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Law and Order Committee addresses the need for public safety services in Pueblo Pintado and surrounding communities

PUEBLO PINTADO, N.M. – During a special Law and Order Committee meeting on Tuesday, the committee received two separate reports from Crownpoint Judicial Branch court administrator Rena Thompson, and Pueblo Pintado chapter officials regarding the Pueblo Pintado court building and public safety issues within the community and surrounding communities. Pueblo Pintado is approximately 45-miles northeast of Crownpoint, N.M.

LOC chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), who sympathized with the concerns of the community, stated that the purpose of the meeting was to identify specific barriers and work collaboratively to resolve them.

“There are many public safety concerns throughout the Nation, but the committee has been working aggressively to improve public safety services. The committee, the Navajo Division of Public Safety, and local governments need to work together to address all the challenges,” said Delegate Yazzie.

During her report Thompson, stated that the new Pueblo Pintado circuit court building has not been opened or occupied due to water damages. In the past couple months, Navajo Risk Management has repaired the damages and is now awaiting inspections, however, if the court building opens, there will be no staff to occupy the building, added Thompson.

LOC member Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood) stated that insufficient federal funding results in many of the challenges for the courts and police department.

“The committee has been urging the NNDPS and the Judicial Branch to stand firm and continue advocating for adequate funding for public safety services and the courts during the intergovernmental contract negotiations with the federal government,” said Delegate Begay, adding that the Pueblo Pintado circuit court should also be a district court to serve all the surrounding communities.

Pueblo Pintado Chapter president Rena Murphy stated that judicial and public safety services are highly needed due to the high rate of crimes that includes bootlegging, drug trades, human

trafficking, elder and child abuse, domestic violence, and vandalism. Justice is not served without the court and absence of police officers, added Murphy.

According to Crownpoint police district lieutenant Martin Page, there are only 176 commissioned officers in the Nation and approximately 25 officers at each of the seven police districts. Only 30 to 35 officers cover 27,000-square miles per eight-hour shift, he added.

Delegate Yazzie stated that many of the rural communities came forth to the committee regarding the need of public safety services, therefore, the committee has planned to organize a public safety summit with NNDPS and all 110-chapters to address the needs of public safety.

The Law and Order Committee approved both reports with a 4-0 vote with the recommendation for the chapter to provide resolutions to expedite the process to open the court building and a directive for NNDPS to explore possibilities to create a police district in Pueblo Pintado.

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