



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 6, 2016

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### **Resources and Development Committee receives status report from the Navajo Division of Economic Development**

**TSE BONITO, N.M.** – On Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from Navajo Division of Economic Development division director Crystal Deschinny, regarding the Navajo Business and Industrial Development Fund, 2017 NNDED budget, Sales Tax Fund, Plans of Operation, and the Navajo Regional Business Development Offices. The RDC serves as the legislative oversight for NNDED.

“The briefing and update regarding NNDED’s initiatives are helpful and important information for the committee. It gives the committee a direction to prioritize goals and strategies for the division,” stated RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Ttsidi To ii), “I would also like to see the accurate summaries on the BDIF.”

Deschinny stated that the BDIF program provides loans to qualified Navajo individuals or Navajo-owned businesses, but all loan activity was halted in April 2016 due to an audit that was conducted. Majority of loans were done prior to 2005 and NNDED staff has completed 90-95% review of the 10 to 15 year loan files. Policy and legislation will be necessary to improve the loan program, added Deschinny.

RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) raised an issue over providing a draft of revised Plans of Operations.

“I need to see the new proposed organizational chart. I know NNDED is planning to close several RDBOs, including Northern Agency RBDO. We need to know which offices NNDED is planning to close or restructure. The committee has not seen any plans from NNDED or from the Office of the President and Vice President,” stated Delegate Filfred.

According to Deschinny, the last known NNDED Plans of Operation was approved in April 2007 and the current draft of changes is being reviewed.

“Closing the eastern RBDO would upset the 31 eastern agency local chapter governments. A lot of our Navajo people have the mindset to contribute to the Navajo economy, but closing the office would send a wrong message. NNDED needs to expand their services and offices to the rural communities. Some of our Navajo people do not have the luxury to travel to Window Rock to conduct business. Closing RBDO’s will also create a bigger gap between Window Rock government

and chapter governments,” stated RDC member Council Delegate Jonathan Perry (Becenti, Crownpoint, Huerfano, Lake Valley, Nageezi, Nahodishgish, Tse’ii’ahi, Whiterock).

“I agree that NNDED is not out there in the local communities. I have very little activity at eastern RBDO and they haven’t started any new businesses. My plan is to bring them back to central government and train the employees. When they are fully trained, they will be sent back to the local communities. The RBDO program should be successful, but the current conditions are not good enough. The programs needs a change,” stated Deschinny.

RDC vice chair Council Delegate Benjamin L. Bennett (Crystal, Fort Defiance, Red Lake, Sawmill) questioned if NNDED’s actions to eliminate RBDO’s is within the division’s authority.

“NNDED is currently working with the existing Plans of Operations and the decision to eliminate the RBDO is not in the current plan. The division also does not have the Conditions of Appropriation to do this change,” stated Delegate Bennett.

Delegate Phelps recommended that NNDED hold a work session with the committee to review all the concerns and develop a strategic plan to address economic development on the Nation.

The Resources and Development Committee approved NNDED’s report with a 3-0 vote with a scheduled work session in February.

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