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Navajo Nation Council leaders highlight the advancement of Navajo Tribal Utility Authority at groundbreaking ceremony



PHOTO: Speaker LoRenzo Bates, Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, and Vice President Jonathan Nez take part in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Navajo Tribal Utility Authority headquarters complex in Fort Defiance, Ariz. on March 14, 2017.

FT. DEFIANCE, Ariz. – On Tuesday, Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat), and Vice President Jonathan Nez were among dozens who participated in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new headquarters complex for Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, which will be located in the community of Fort Defiance, north of Tséhootsooí Medical Center. NTUA currently operates in a facility that was constructed in 1960.

NTUA is one of 11 enterprises of the Navajo Nation, which supplies electricity, water, natural gas, wastewater treatment, and solar power services to residents and businesses throughout the Navajo Nation. According to their website, NTUA serves over 56,000 electric, 39,000 water, 13,000 water waste, 7,900 natural gas, and 200 solar power customers.

Speaker Bates said that NTUA will play a vital role in advancing the Navajo Nation's economy and technology, especially when the Nation is faced with uncertainties such as the continuation of Navajo Generating Station and the new Trump administration.

According to NTUA general manager Walter W. Haase, construction of the new 80,000 square-foot facility was made possible from a combination of funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and loan financing. In addition to new and expanded office space, the facility will offer conference rooms and a cafeteria that will be open to the public.

In January 2016, the Navajo Nation Council approved over \$180 million for water infrastructure projects with a portion of the funding allocated for NTUA projects, which Speaker Bates will be a major part of expanding water development across the Nation.

"To all of the employees here, I thank each of you because you make NTUA what it is," said Speaker Bates.

Delegate Shepherd, who serves as the chair of the Resources and Development Committee which is the oversight authority for all enterprises, also thanked the NTUA employees, management, and the NTUA Board for their leadership and for having the vision to "think outside the box" to move in the right direction. He said that he views the facility from a traditional perspective, as a new home for the employees to work hard and further advance the enterprise.

He also recognized the efforts and leadership of general manager Haase and the board that has led to advances in new products, increases in solar power production, and other initiatives. Haase said along with the new facility, NTUA is looking to increase their call center staff and to add a few more positions in other areas to provide better services.

According to officials, the new NTUA headquarters complex is scheduled to be completed in in December 2018.

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