



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Budget and Finance Committee receives update on sanctioned chapters

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, the Budget and Finance Committee received an update report from the Navajo Nation Division of Community Development and the Administrative Service Centers' department manager Johnny Johnson, regarding sanctioned Navajo chapters and the division's efforts to help the chapters mitigate their sanctioned status.

In March, the Division of Community Development requested technical assistance from the Office of the Auditor General to aid in a directive issued by the Office of the President and Vice President to expedite the Local Governance Act certification of approximately 65 chapters and to aid nine chapters with their sanctioned statuses.

The report states that the technical assistance would help prevent chapters from deviating from operational and financial prudence, create sound standards, install accountability measures, and to certify chapters in accordance with the Local Governance Act.

BFC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) said Council members have received numerous concerns from Navajo citizens regarding the misuse of funding by chapter officials and the lack of accountability to ensure the funds are being properly expended.

"The chapters get a large amount of money each year in their budget. It's plausible to get them all out of sanction, but then you have two or three more replacing those chapters. There is a ton of misuse of money, and when I go to chapter meetings, you hear Navajo people pleading for assistance. All the money appears to go to travel. At one time I introduced an amendment to the budget that no more than 10-percent of a budget should go to travel, but Council voted it down," said Delegate Tsosie.

Delegate Tsosie urged Johnson to assess the performance of the Administrative Service Centers and to provide recommendations. He stated that the division needs to be transparent in reporting back to their oversight if certain areas of the program are not working.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) raised concerns regarding a funding increase that was allocated to the Division of

Community Development to reorganize the Administrative Service Centers. The \$2.4 million funding increase included a Condition of Appropriation stipulating that the division would create a policy and plan of operation.

“Last summer [the Division of Community Development] made a plea saying ‘give us this money, transfer the money to us, let’s get rid of these planners, let’s revamp the organization, and we can go ahead and move forward on January 1, 2018 when the RDC approves our plan of operation.’ But as of today, April 3, four months later, it still hasn’t been done. That’s a negative reflection on the department and you need to figure this out as soon as possible,” said Delegate Damon.

Delegate Damon acknowledged the understaffing within the Division of Community Development and said it is a large responsibility to try to provide assistance to all 110 chapters, however he stressed that the division needs to work harder at getting the reorganization in place and getting a plan of operation approved, so proper processes are in place for chapters and direct services.

He added that the program would need to report back to the Budget and Finance Committee by the beginning of June and provide a comprehensive report on the sanctioned chapters, as well as the progress of the Administrative Service Centers’ policies and plan of operation.

BFC members voted 4-0 to accept the report.

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