



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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Navajo Nation seeks to increase broadband accessibility

WINDOW ROCK – On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Speaker Seth Damon, and several members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council met to discuss the progress of the newly-created “cyber team” that is tasked to work together to evaluate and advise the executive and legislative branches on future policies related to IT, telecom, and broadband issues in order to close the “digital divide” and ensure that Navajo residents have access to broadband services, including safety communications.

Under the guidance of the Nez-Lizer Administration, 24th Navajo Nation Council, and Navajo Nation Chief Justice JoAnn Jayne, the cyber team is tasked with the assessment of IT conditions and necessary improvements for public safety and services, analysis of commercial telecom and broadband markets, and the development of a Navajo broadband policy act and subsequent broadband development plan.

“It’s apparent that we have informational technology experts within the Navajo Nation, but prior to the Nez-Lizer Administration and the 24th Navajo Nation Council taking office in January these individuals were working on initiatives to improve broadband access and we felt the need to bring them together to develop a comprehensive plan that helps the Navajo government and our communities,” said President Nez.

The cyber group is also working in partnership with the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission Office, under the leadership of Executive Director Christopher Becenti and commission members.



PHOTO: President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Speaker Seth Damon, and members of the 24th Navajo Nation Council meet at the Office of the President and Vice President in Window Rock, Ariz. on July 2, 2019.

“We are very thankful to the 24th Navajo Nation Council, Speaker Damon, and many others who are eager to develop greater broadband capacity for schools, businesses, government, public safety, and many other entities that are essential to building strong communities and increasing economic development opportunities on the Navajo Nation,” stated Vice President Lizer.

Council Delegates Otto Tso, Kee Allen Begay, Jr., Rickie Nez, and Nathaniel Brown were also part of Monday’s discussion, which also focused on developing much-needed telecommunications infrastructure to implement a 911-emergency response system and to implement the federal FirstNet emergency response network on the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. has long advocated for FirstNet implementation to provide a network solely dedicated to emergency first responders such as police officers, EMT’s, and fire fighters. Delegate Begay sponsored legislation requesting FirstNet and AT&T to recognize and accept nation-to-nation relations for the development of a public safety broadband network.

“My priority in working with FirstNet is to help our emergency personnel and first responders across the Navajo Nation in order to help provide better services and to protect our communities as well,” stated Delegate Begay.

The branch chiefs have directed the cyber group to incorporate several provisions in the proposed Navajo broadband policy act to modernize the broadband regulatory environment in regards to land use codes, promote competition and incentivize broadband investment by outside providers, strengthen the authority of the Navajo Nation Telecommunications Regulatory Commission, and implement regulated, low-cost, open access middle mile infrastructure to expand broadband market opportunities.

The cyber group members stated that they intend to provide a final report and action plan by October of this year.

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