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August 10, 2012

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Resources and Development Committee to host first “Nation Building Summit”

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Resources and Development Committee of the 22nd Navajo Nation Council announces it will be hosting the first “Nation Building Summit” on August 22-24, in coordination with Diné College at its main campus in Tsaile, Ariz.

“This summit is unique in that it presents a great opportunity for Diné citizens, communities, and businesses, along with members of our nation’s governmental programs and departments, to engage in dialogue about how we, as a unified nation, can create a plan to address our basic needs for infrastructure on the Navajo Nation,” said Council Delegate Katherine Benally.

Delegate Benally, the committee’s chairperson, notes that a summit of this kind has never before been held for the nation.

“We would like to hear directly from the Diné people to identify what their infrastructural needs are, and how we can plan for responsible and progressive growth on our nation,” said Delegate Benally.

Whether it is the construction of bridges, centers for veterans, roads, day care centers, or fire stations, we need to generate an overall plan to fund these needs.”

The committee has been actively discussing various types of alternative funding sources the nation can utilize in order to meet the infrastructural needs of Diné communities.

One source the committee has pinpointed for possible use is a portion of the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund, which was established by the Navajo Nation Council in 1985, under then Navajo Nation Chairman Peterson Zah.

In 2010, the fund principal reached \$1 Billion.

Only when the people outline their plan for growth, will the committee pose a referendum question to the Diné people to ask whether a percentage of the principal from the Permanent Trust Fund should be used to build and improve infrastructure and public services, Delegate Benally said.

Pursuant to 12 N.N.C. §904, the fund principal shall not be expended except pursuant to a referendum adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting in an election open to all registered Navajo voters.

The Navajo Nation Council can place such a referendum on the ballot of any general or special election, given that two-thirds (2/3) of the council votes in favor of measure.

“The Diné people have strong ideas of what their needs are, and they have a vision for viable growth in their communities,” said Delegate Benally.

When the peoples' ideas are brought to the summit for in-depth discussion, Delegate Benally says she has confidence that the people will seriously consider and vote to approve the use of a percentage of the Permanent Trust Fund to make their infrastructural vision a reality.

Keynote speakers at the three-day summit are set to include Navajo Nation Speaker Johnny Naize, Budget and Finance Committee Chairperson Council Delegate LoRenzo Bates, former Navajo Nation Chairman Peterson Zah, and other former Navajo leaders who will discuss the Permanent Trust Fund investments and use of the principal.

Summit attendees can expect afternoon break-out sessions in the areas of public safety, health and social services, education, transportation, community and economic development, and housing – to name a few. In total, over 15 topic areas will be covered.

In addition to the sessions, the agenda includes a banquet, several luncheons, and continental breakfast each morning.

The summit begins each day at 8:30 a.m., and is free for anyone who would like to attend.

“Let us all unify at this summit, and strengthen our vision for the future of our Navajo Nation and people,” said Delegate Benally, extending an invitation on behalf of her committee.

For registration and additional information regarding the summit, contact Pauletta Tsosie at (928) 871-6610. Requests for registration forms can be emailed to nsummit@yahoo.com.

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