



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 27, 2013

MEDIA CONTACTS

Jared Touchin | 928.221.9253
Krista Thompson | 928.637.5603
Jolene Holgate | 928.871.7160
nnlb.communications@gmail.com

**Naabik'iyáti Committee receives update regarding the
scheduled closure of the Na'Nizhoozhi Center, Inc. due to funding shortfalls**

Na'Nizhoozhi Center, Inc. set to close its doors on July 15

WINDOW ROCK – Representatives from the Na'Nizhoozhi Center Inc., the City of Gallup, and McKinley County discussed funding shortfalls with Naabik'iyáti Committee members on Thursday, which may result in the closure of NCI on July 16.

NCI was established in 1992, through an intergovernmental agreement between the city of Gallup, the Pueblo of Zuni, the Navajo Nation, and McKinley County to serve as a non-medical alcohol crisis intervention and treatment center for the city of Gallup and McKinley County.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau) expressed urgency in funding NCI to continue its services, and urged other entities to become involved in addressing the issue.

"We need to help this cause as soon as possible," said Delegate Yazzie. "We need to get the Zuni Tribe involved along with the bar owners in Gallup."

Also in attendance was the City of Gallup Mayor Jackie McKinney, who informed the committee that city officials have talked with several entities including the Navajo Nation Division of Health about the possibility of assuming operations at the facility.

"We want services to continue, but we feel we might have to go with another operator in the future," said Mayor McKinney.

Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) inquired as to whether any tax revenue from the McKinley County liquor excise tax, a five-percent tax on alcohol sales imposed on retailers, would be allocated for NCI in the future.

McKinley County Commissioner Carol Bowman-Muskett, explained that New Mexico State Senator George K. Munoz is sponsoring S.B. 397, aiming to increase the liquor excise tax rate from five to six-percent.

Commissioner Bowman-Muskett added that if S.B. 397 becomes law, revenue collected from the increased tax rate may benefit prevention and treatment programs such as NCI.

Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) acknowledged the need to address the funding issues, and pressed the need to reduce the number of liquor licenses in the city of Gallup.

“When you allow liquor retailers to continue selling alcohol even when they’ve violated laws and ordinances, it perpetuates the alcohol problem,” said Delegate Tsosie.

Delegate Tsosie urged Gallup city officials and Navajo leaders to meet and work together to address the funding issue and other issues affecting Navajo people in and near the city of Gallup.

“Navajos are being targeted on their way home from Gallup, especially on the Arizona side. You never see roadblocks in the city of Gallup, or in the affluent areas,” said Delegate Tsosie. “In this government to government dialogue, we need to talk about it.”

Speaker Johnny Naize (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), Mayor McKinney, Commissioner Bowman-Muskett, and NCI officials said they will continue to work together to discuss and resolve the issues.

Naabik’íyátí Committee members voted 14-0 to accept the report.

A meeting between city, county, NCI, and Navajo officials to discuss the possible closure of NCI is scheduled to take place on Tuesday.

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