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Budget and Finance Committee votes down supplemental funding for the demolition of former Tuba City District Court Building

WINDOW ROCK – The Budget and Finance Committee met Tuesday to discuss Legislation No. 0144-13, which sought to approve supplemental funding from the Undesignated, Unreserved Fund Balance in the amount of $150,000 to demolish the former Tuba City District Court Building.

In Nov. 2012, the Tuba City Local Government approved a resolution supporting the efforts to demolish the former Tuba City District Court Building, citing environmental and safety concerns, and its infringement on the new Tuba City Judicial Complex.

“The building is at a point where it is condemned,” said director of the Navajo Nation Judicial Administration Edward Martin.

“This building is located about ten feet from the brand new courthouse and we’re afraid [that] at some point if it’s not demolished, it could [collapse and] damage the new court building,” Martin added.

In Jan. 2013, Program Supervisor III Herman Shorty from the Navajo Nation Division of Health’s Office of Environmental Health/Code Enforcement, issued an Order of Closure for the former Tuba City District Court building.

The legislation garnered opposition from BFC members including BFC vice chair Council Delegate Jonathan Nez (Shonto, Navajo Mountain, Oljato, Ts’ah Bii Kin).

“Today, we all know that there is a need for office space,” said Delegate Nez.

Delegate Nez added that the poor condition of the building is likely due to a lack of upkeep and maintenance, and that renovating the office space could be a feasible task instead of demolition.

BFC member Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil, Tsé Si áni, Wide Ruins) also opposed the legislation saying, “Saving the building is a cheaper alternative.”

The former judicial complex was transferred from the Navajo Nation Courts to Navajo Nation Property, and no maintenance to the building continued thereafter, according to Martin.
Council Delegate Mel Begay (Coyote Canyon, Mexican Springs, Naschitti, Tohatchi, Bahastl’aa’) recommended that an assessment and report be conducted on the building by Navajo Nation Property.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Russell Begaye (Shiprock) pointed out that an assessment of the closed property had already taken place by a certified building inspector.

“There is a liability issue with having someone move in there, which I think is a huge concern,” stressed Delegate Begaye.

Despite the completion of the building assessment and official closure of the former district court complex, BFC members recommended the Navajo Nation Property Department consider renovating the facility for future use.

At the conclusion of the discussion, BFC members opposed Legislation No. 0144-13 with a 0-3 vote.

The legislation now moves on to the Naabik’iyáti’ Committee for consideration.

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