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Resources and Development Committee approves three legislations, furthering progress on proposed community development projects

WINDOW ROCK – With no receiving reports on their regular meeting agenda this past Tuesday, the Resources and Development Committee proceeded straight to legislating, approving three pieces of legislation within their purview.

With a vote of 3-0, the committee approved Legislation No. 0051-13, sponsored by Council Delegate Kenneth Maryboy (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teec Nos Pos, Tólikan, Red Mesa), which will enable the land withdrawal of 17.76 acres of Navajo Nation trust land for the development of a proposed recreational complex within the Red Mesa Chapter vicinity.

The proposed recreational complex is intended to be a mixed-use facility for youth, elders, family gatherings, and wellness.

It is slated for construction in the Ratherford Community, which is located in Montezuma Creek, Utah, and will be owned and monitored by the Red Mesa Chapter.

RDC also approved Legislation No. 0062-13 with a vote of 5-0, allowing the granting of a right-of-way to Jemez Mountain Electric Cooperative, Inc. to construct, operate, and maintain an electrical distribution line for a power line project that will benefit Diné residents on Navajo Nation trust lands within Torreon Chapter.

The legislation's prime sponsor was Council Delegate Charles Damon II (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Łichíí'), but it was co-sponsor and RDC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) who presented the bill to the committee that morning.

Pursuant to 2 N.N.C. §501(B)(2), the RDC has authority to give final approval of all land withdrawals, non-mineral leases, rights-of-way, surface easements, and bonding requirements on Navajo Nation land and fee land.

Council Delegate Jonathan Hale (Oak Springs, St. Michaels) presented the third bill to garner RDC approval, which was Legislation 0064-13, a bill approving the Fiscal Year 2012 carryover amount of \$1.2 million for the Navajo Water Resources Department for Fiscal Year 2013.

Najam H. Tariq, Water Resources Department director, said the funds would only be used for general operating supplies, fuel, and equipment repair.

Delegate Tsosie was the first RDC member to offer comments on the proposed carryover.

“What bothers me about this is that when I go home and I give a report, I tell people, ‘We approved this much for the windmills, for the earth dams, and others...that you will pretty soon see tractors and trucks coming to work on your windmill,’” Delegate Tsosie said.

“You make a liar out of me by not spending these monies and tending to needed infrastructure maintenance,” Delegate Tsosie continued, stating that community members get upset and frustrated when maintenance and repair activities are not carried out as reported.

“When you see an emergency out there, you should be out there until the job gets done,” Delegate Tsosie said, directing his comment to Tariq.

“We are not sitting on our hands,” Tariq said, explaining that it took time for the Navajo Nation Office of Management and Budget to put the department’s money into the tribe’s financial system.

Tariq assured the committee that his department has to spend funds wisely and in accordance with the Nation’s need.

“If you could tell us about the issues you are running into, give us some proposed solutions,” said Delegate Tsosie. “Let us know so that we can try to tackle them.”

Delegate Tsosie ended his commentary with encouragement for the water resources department to “do good for the Navajo people.”

At the end of the discussion, Delegate Leonard Pete (Chinle) requested to see a status report from the department on the Nation’s earthen dams.

According to Tariq, the department repaired 29 dams in 2012. The average number of dams repaired on an annual basis is 16.

The RDC voted to approve the department’s carryover request with a vote of 5-0.

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