FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Budget and Finance Committee approves U.S.
Environmental Protection Agency grant application

WINDOW ROCK – The Budget and Finance Committee held a special meeting on Monday and approved a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant application for approximately $177,000 for FY2014, which would not require a cash match by the Navajo Nation.

Currently, the Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency is conducting cleanups of abandoned uranium mines throughout the Navajo Nation through the General Assistance Program funded by grants from the U.S. EPA.

“The EPA General Assistance Program focuses on outreach for abandoned uranium mines in Navajo communities,” said NNEPA Agency Sr. Public Information Officer Lillie Lane. “Now, we want to add job development in our upcoming budget through this grant.”

Legislation prime sponsor Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichii, Steamboat) asked to waive the Indirect Cost of the grant because an IDC rate has yet to be determined for FY2014, which is a requirement by the U.S. EPA.

The Nation is then entitled to collect IDC recovery costs from the federal government through an approved IDC rate, which applies to federal grants, contracts, and agreements.

Although the legislation’s intent was met with support, the request to waive the IDC rate for the U.S. EPA grant drew skepticism from several BFC members.

“No cost match [for the grant] is great, but why are we waiving IDC rates?” asked BFC member Council Delegate Nelson BeGaye (Lukachukai, Rock Point, Round Rock, Tsaile/Wheatfields, Tse Ch’izhi).

In response, Office of Contracts and Grants contracting manager Cordell Shorty said that the U.S. EPA is allowing the Navajo Nation to collect 10 percent in IDC recovery costs for salaries only.

“We should not be granting IDC waiver requests, even if we are recovering 10 percent because the [U.S. EPA] program is not paying its fair share and that should be a huge concern for the committee,” said BFC member Council Delegate Lorenzo Curley (Houck, Klagetoh, Nahata Dziil,
Tse Si’ani, Wide Ruins). “Should we even accept these types of grants if it is not bringing IDC funds back to the Navajo Nation?”

Delegate Shepherd explained that the Navajo Nation has the ability to collect the full Indirect Cost amount at a later time when an IDC rate has been negotiated and implemented for FY2014.

At the conclusion of the discussion, Delegate BeGaye requested a directive to have Shorty develop a memorandum to clarify the future of the grant and IDC recovery costs.

BFC voted 3-0 to approve Legislation No. 0253-13. The legislation now goes to the Naabik’iyátí Committee for final consideration.

The Resources and Development Committee initially considered the legislation on Sept. 12, which referred it to the Budget and Finance Committee with a “do pass” recommendation with no amendments.

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