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Budget and Finance Committee receives report regarding energy development and manufacturing proposal from Indian Energy

LEUPP, Ariz. – Last Thursday, the Budget and Finance Committee received a report from Indian Energy proposing an economic development consultancy plan in which they would collaborate with utility, housing, and economic development entities on the Navajo Nation to create a "Navajo Microgrid Solutions" business plan.

Indian Energy is a Native American owned microgrid developer and energy infrastructure engineering, design, and integration company. According to the chief executive officer of Indian Energy, Allen Cadreau, the proposed "Navajo Microgrid Solutions" would manufacture flywheels to power homes on the Navajo Nation and sell the product on the national market.

According to the report, flywheel energy storage provides uninterrupted power supply in a facility microgrid, and is considered an alternative to traditional battery storage technologies regardless of where the energy is derived from such as power plants, solar, wind, and renewable energy sources.

Cadreau stated that if the Navajo Nation began manufacturing flywheels, the goal would be for Indian Energy to partner with the Nation to create jobs, keep money on the Navajo Nation, and sustain economic development, as well as provide propriety technology that allows for remote "off-grid" community development.

BFC member Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake) stressed the need for Indian Energy to reach out to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, Navajo Housing Authority, and the Navajo Transitional Energy Company to collaborate on the proposed energy plan to decide if the proposal is feasible for the Navajo Nation.

"If you strongly endorse this, then there will be a big swing from this committee. We are looking at energy independence, and if there is energy that can be corralled and marketed, then we can use it here or sell it. If you feel like we can do this, then we can move forward and we can begin looking at the money part of it. Please, we need that analysis from you," said Delegate Tsosie.

Delegate Tsosie added that all the entities involved would need to consult with one another and develop an expert analysis regarding the proposed plan, and recommended that Indian Energy also present to the NHA Board, who recently confirmed new members to the commission.

BFC member Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) raised concerns regarding the proposal, stating that if they are requesting to utilize millions of dollars from the Navajo Nation to start the initiative, due diligence must be carried out before any funds are dedicated to the project.

"We have a two-year extension for the Navajo Generating Station, and we are so quick to settle back into our comfort zone and say we will be okay. Our entities need to tap into alternative sources of energy because we can't pull off another miracle when NGS comes knocking again. We are not moving fast enough to figure out solutions," said Delegate Chee.

Delegate Chee recommended a directive to Indian Energy, NTUA, NHA, NTEC, and Navajo Shopping Centers to meet for a work session to develop an expert analysis and strategic plan to determine if the production of flywheels and utilization and sale of them is a feasible project for economic development on the Navajo Nation.

BFC members voted 5-0 to approve the report from Indian Energy, with one directive in which the entities will provide a report back to the BFC on Aug. 31.

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