23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL
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Council members congratulate the Shonto community on the opening of the Shonto Marketplace

Photo: Council Delegate Seth Damon and President Russell Begaye cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the Shonto Marketplace on May 2, 2017 in Shonto, Ariz., along with other members of Council and Shonto Community Governance officials.

SHONTO, Ariz. – 23rd Navajo Nation Council members attended the grand opening of the Shonto Marketplace last Tuesday, which has been in planning and development for several years by the Shonto Community Governance, Shonto Economic Development Corporation, and Shonto Commercial, LLC.

The Shonto Marketplace is located at the intersection of U.S. Highway 160 and Arizona Highway 98, and is approximately 33-miles southwest of Kayenta, Ariz.

Budget and Finance Committee chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááhaálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) congratulated the community of Shonto for the opening of a new convenience store and said that he had concerns regarding the location of the store until the committee was provided an opportunity to visit Shonto.

"Congratulations to the Shonto community. You all have raised a significant amount of leaders that have made the responsibilities, the leadership, and the moral dedication to have the vision and goal to know that what the needs are for the next seven generations, and they will be the people who will march forward in success," said Delegate Damon.

Delegate Damon also commended former tribal chairman Peterson Zah for aiding in establishment of the Navajo Nation Permanent Trust Fund in the mid 1980's, and said "if it weren't for leadership in the 1980's, the Shonto store would not have been possible."

The Shonto Marketplace was partially funded by the Permanent Fund Income Five-Year Expenditure Plan, which is derived from the accrued income, or interest, earned from the Navajo Nation's Permanent Trust Fund's principal balance. Council approved the expenditure plan in Jan. 2016, which was sponsored by Delegate Damon.

In 1985, the Navajo Nation created the Permanent Trust Fund and invested $26 million that has grown to nearly $2 billion, said Delegate Damon. The creation of the trust fund also mandated that no income from the fund could be used for a period of 20 years from the time of its creation, however, the income has been available for use since 2005.

Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizí) praised the community of Shonto and encouraged local leadership and citizens to continue building "the road to economic stability for elders, children, and future generations."

"This is yours and you should be proud. It took several years, but it is here today and you should be proud. Your desire to improve this community is evident in what your ancestors wanted for the community of Shonto. I want to thank you for inviting me and sharing this celebration with you," said Delegate Tso.

Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) thanked the community for inviting the Budget and Finance Committee to celebrate the opening of the store and encouraged local citizens to continue pushing for economic development within their community.

"I am very thankful to be here. Please, do not just bypass our Navajo businesses—buy Navajo! It helps our taxes and provides services for the whole Navajo Nation. Your dollars contribute to the economic well-being of our Nation, so let's support each other and be thankful for the good things we have going forward," said Delegate Chee.

He added that the cooperation and teamwork between the BFC, the Office of the President and Vice President, Shonto Community Governance, and staff enabled the successful opening of the marketplace and thanked everyone involved with the project.

Also in attendance to the Shonto Marketplace grand opening included Council Delegate Herman Daniels, Jr., Delegate Lee Jack, Sr., President Russell Begaye, and Vice President Jonathan Nez.

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