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Delegate Phelps participates in groundbreaking ceremony for the Little Singer Community School



Photo: Council Delegate Walter Phelps, Vice President Jonathan Nez, Little Singer Community School Board, and others involved with the planning and design of the new school broke ground for the school's new site in Birdsprings, Ariz. on Friday, May 19, 2017.

BIRDSPRINGS, Ariz. – On Friday, Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsiidi To'ii) served as the master of ceremony for the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Little Singer Community School facility, and provided the opening address. The school site is located approximately five-miles south of the community of Birdsprings.

The groundbreaking ceremony commenced with Delegate Phelps thanking the Little Singer Community School Board, school staff and administrators, parents, and students for supporting the project. He extended his appreciation to them for serving as the driving force behind the project, adding that they deserve recognition for their community involvement.

“We advocated the best we could at the federal level, but it was this community who gave us the motivation to see this project through. Their perseverance should be recognized and I am happy to have been a part of this amazing initiative as it has come to fruition,” said Delegate Phelps.

Delegate Phelps made several trips to meet with U.S. Bureau of Indian Education officials along with the school board to ensure the school was placed on the priority listing for funding.



Photo: Little Singer Community School project manager Jeremiah LaMesa, Vice President Jonathan Nez, BIE representative Dan Galvan, and Council Delegate Walter Phelps pose for a picture after the groundbreaking for the new site of the Little Singer Community School in Birdsprinas, Ariz. on Friday, May 19, 2017.

The school received approximately \$28 million to fund the project in its entirety, as well as a three-phase power line project that will connect directly to the school and can also be utilized by the community for development and expansion efforts, said Delegate Phelps.

According to the Little Singer Community School Board president Leslie Williams, the current school was constructed in 1976, and plans to construct the new school began over 15-years ago when the school was believed to be situated within a flood-plane area.

Williams said that the new school obtained funding for planning and construction when the site was determined it was not within a flood-plane area, and eventually met the requirements for the BIE funding. He thanked Delegate Phelps and his school board colleagues for their advocacy at the federal level to get the project approved.

“This has been a long time coming, and if it wasn’t for the advocacy in Washington D.C. by Delegate Phelps and my board colleagues, we would not have come this far. Through the issues that occurred, we worked them out the best we could and we worked as a team. Our parents and students are excited for the new school to be built,” said Williams.

Williams said construction for the new school could begin as early as July 2017, and is scheduled for completion by the end of Dec. 2018. The school is a K-6 school and includes a comprehensive curriculum that includes Navajo immersion language and culture classes for students.

Delegate Phelps also thanked the Little Singer Community School project manager Jeremiah LaMesa, Eaton Architecture, and the BIE representatives for their involvement in the planning and designing of the new school.

“This new school is for the students and teachers. They will have an exceptional place of learning and a building they will be proud of for many years to come,” said Delegate Phelps. “This is the beginning of a positive chapter for this community.”

Delegate Phelps said the construction of the N-71 road, which connects the school to the N-15 highway, would begin at the end of this month, allowing easier access and a maintained road for school buses and residents to access the community school.

Also in attendance at the groundbreaking ceremony included Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez, congressional staff from the office of Congressman Tom O’Halleran (D – AZ), and staff from the BIE and U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs.

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