



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee continues support for Navajo Housing Authority's administration and board of commissioners

SANTA ANA PUEBLO, N.M. – Last Thursday, the Resources and Development Committee held a work session with the Navajo Housing Authority's administration and board of commissioners regarding ongoing initiatives, progress, and barriers that may hinder housing development.

NHA interim chief executive officer Roberta Roberts reviewed the fiscal year 2017 performance report, the 2018 Indian Housing Plan, fiscal year 2018 appropriations, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development updates. Other NHA administrators presented updates regarding grants management, model activities, procurement requirements, projects, land information management system, and chapter master planning.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) said that the purpose of the meeting is to receive in-depth updates on NHA's recent initiatives and to continue to work adjacently with the administration and board of directors.

"The updated reports clearly demonstrate that the new administration and newly appointed board of commissioners is headed in the right direction for NHA's progression. Now, the committee has to assist to identify the barriers that NHA faces for homes to be built and the challenges must be explored and resolved—that is why we are here today," said Delegate Shepherd.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) raised several questions regarding the FY2017 expenditures and the upcoming FY2018 appropriations from HUD.

"I am concerned about how much money was spent last year. How much was spent? Is NHA going to use the 2018 HIP this year and how much is NHA going to spend?" asked Delegate Pete.

According to Roberts, NHA has expended to-date approximately \$69 million in FY2017, which funded planning, administration, development and construction, facilities, housing providers, and housing management. She added that NHA is expected to receive an estimated allocation of \$71 million in FY2018 from HUD, and NHA seeks to expend approximately \$94 million in FY2018.

RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) commended Roberts for leading NHA in the right direction, but also questioned what challenges could hinder proposed housing developments.

“What are the critical barriers that needs to be addressed that would require policy changes, because we need many homes built as quickly as we can,” said Delegate Filfred.

NHA board chair Kris Beecher said the biggest challenge NHA encounters is the availability of land areas to construct homes on. According to NHA’s land information system, there is only 17-percent of land within the Nation that is “buildable.”

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsiidi To ii) said that the majority of the Nation is “unbuildable” because the Nation has accepted federal regulations, which classified the majority of the land as unsuitable for constructing homes.

“This is a huge barrier for NHA. How can NHA build homes if they have to comply with federal regulations? We expect so much from them when they have their hands tied behind their back. Policy changes need to be made to address unbuildable lands,” said Delegate Phelps.

At the end of the work session, the committee recommended NHA to invite all appropriate tribal entities and departments involved with constructing homes to address the barriers and challenges. A follow-up work session will be scheduled later in November.

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