23rd Navajo Nation Council
Office of the Speaker

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$554 million settlement funds continue to create progress with the opening of new public safety and first responder facility

LEUPP, Ariz. – On Monday, members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by the Navajo Nation Gaming Enterprise to celebrate the opening of new Twin Arrows Public Safety Building, which will help provide public safety and emergency response services for Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort and Navajo communities.

PHOTO: Members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council during the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Twin Arrows Public Safety building near Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort in Leupp, Ariz. on Sept. 25, 2017.

Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland), who was a guest speaker at the event, described the new facility as a "sign of progress" for economic and community development, and most importantly, for providing public safety for all local communities.

"Seeing the results of the Nation's investments is exciting and marks a significant and historical movement toward growth, stronger partnerships, and prosperity," said Speaker Bates, who also described how the Navajo Nation's investments are fulfilling the priorities as set forth by the establishment of the Síhasin Fund. He also thanked the NNGE for helping the Nation to leverage the funds by paying all of the pre-construction costs associated for the new development.

The Council adopted legislation to create the Síhasin Fund in 2014, when the Navajo Nation received $554 million from the federal government as part of a settlement agreement related to litigation over the historical mismanagement of the Navajo Nation's trust assets. The settlement funds were deposited in the Síhasin Fund in order to earn interest and to grow the balance.

Based off of the results of seven public hearings conducted by the Council, the Síhasin Fund Subcommittee was created and tasked with developing expenditure plans to utilize the funds to address several critical needs including community and economic development.

In April 2016, the Síhasin Fund Twin Arrows Police and Fire Substation Economic/Community Development Expenditure Plan was supported by the Navajo Nation Council through legislation sponsored by Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh), which approved $4.5 million from the Síhasin Fund for the new facility.

Síhasin Fund Subcommittee chair Leonard Tsosie (Baca/Prewitt, Casamero Lake, Counselor, Littlewater, Ojo Encino, Pueblo Pintado, Torreon, Whitehorse Lake), said during Monday's event that the new substation further strengthens the Navajo Nation's self-determination.

"We are proud that this project was fully funded by the Nation. This project is a reflection of self-determination, because we built this facility without assistance. This completed project illustrates that the Nation can achieve on our own," said Delegate Tsosie, who added that he wants to see the construction of a new travel center near the casino facility, which the Council also approved.

Law and Order Committee chair Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), stated that the new facility will help first responders who often deal with the challenges of providing public safety in local communities. Before the new facility was constructed, communities had to rely on the nearest substation located approximately 25-miles from the casino facility.

"The new substation will create more opportunities and encourage the Division of Public Safety to build more substations throughout the Nation. We the people, and leadership have reached this goal together," added Delegate Yazzie.

The 15,000 square-foot facility, located northwest of the Twin Arrows Navajo Casino Resort, will provide office space, living quarters for personnel, holding cells for inmates, training rooms, and a garage bay for fire trucks. The substation will house police officers along with a sergeant, five firefighters, and emergency medical services personnel, who will also provide services within the surrounding communities of Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii, and Dilkon.

Division of Public Safety executive director Jesse Delmar, thanked Council members and the Office of the President and Vice President for investing in and supporting public safety initiatives.

"The Council worked very hard for the substation to become a reality. The division wants to thank them for being here with us today to celebrate another milestone for public safety," said Delmar.

NNGE director of development Mary West also recognized and thanked the various entities who contributed to the development including the NNGE board of directors, NNDPS, Leupp Chapter, Navajo Gaming Regulatory Office, SICON – LLC, Arviso Construction, and others.

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