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Budget and Finance Committee thanks NAPI and DDC enterprises for dividend contributions to the Navajo Nation

Photo: Navajo Agricultural Products Industry officials presented a $250,000 dividend contribution to the Navajo Nation in Tohajiilee, N.M. on June 19, 2018.

TOHAJIILEE, N.M. – On Tuesday during their regular meeting, the Budget and Finance Committee accepted two dividend payment contributions on behalf of the Navajo Nation from Navajo Agricultural Products Industry and Diné Development Corporation, which will be deposited into the Nation's General Fund. The Navajo Nation wholly owns both enterprises.

During the meeting held in Tohajiilee, Navajo Agricultural Products Industry officials presented a $250,000 dividend payment to the Navajo Nation. The enterprise said it received a $10 million financial capital infusion in 2000 from the Nation, and expressed their appreciation stating they were happy to now be able to provide dividend payments back to the Navajo Nation.

Presenting the check to the committee was NAPI interim chief executive officer Lionel Haskie, chief financial officer Darryl Multine, and NAPI Board of Directors members Delane Atcitty and Lawrence R. Platero.

BFC member Council Delegate Tom Chee (Shiprock) expressed his appreciation and said NAPI is an enterprise that has done a lot for Navajo people in terms of agricultural business and progressing for a stronger future in farming.

"You have so much potential out there. No Navajo citizen should be hungry, no animal should be starving—and you have that challenge before you. That is now one of your missions, not to necessarily create produce for people, but for animals as well. The state and care of our animals reflects us as a Nation and we must be successful in that regard too," said Delegate Chee.

NAPI was established in 1970 by the Navajo Nation Council with the goal of developing an agri-business to create employment and profitable income through farming and providing produce across the nation and internationally. NAPI employs 200-500 individuals during any crop season and has developed approximately 72,000-acres of farmland. Their main products include alfalfa, corn, small grains, potatoes, beans, and most recently began producing organic vegetables.

BFC member Council Delegate Tuchoney Slim, Jr. (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'Bii'Tó, LeChee, Tonalea/Red Lake) said another type of contribution NAPI may consider is providing educational opportunities across the Nation by demonstrating how families and communities can create their own successful agricultural businesses.

"I represent communities in the Western Navajo Agency. There are a lot of farms that are fenced up, so there needs to be more agricultural education out that way. We are trying to negotiate with individuals out there to farm, or allow others to farm if they are not utilizing the land. We have approved money to get water to chapters and they want to start their own farming projects," said Delegate Slim.

Additionally, during a report from the Diné Development Corporation, chief executive officer Austin Tsosie reported that the enterprise contributed a $300,000 dividend payment on June 6 and was disbursed to the Nation on June 19.

The corporation was established in 2004 to facilitate opportunities for the Navajo Nation through the creation of subsidiary corporations, joint ventures, and partnerships. Their business portfolio includes five companies: Nova Corp., BRIC, DDC-ITS, Diné Source, and DDC-4C.

BFC chair Council Delegate Seth Damon (Bááháálí, Chichiltah, Manuelito, Tsé Lichíí', Rock Springs, Tsayatoh) thanked the enterprises and stressed that although they went through "tough times," it is encouraging when enterprises are finally able to contribute back to the Navajo Nation.

"Thank you for not only making sure that this process starts, but I know when we started putting this together we said we need to start asking why and what the enterprises were built for. It was [Council Delegate Dwight Witherspoon] who brought up these questions in order to assist the Navajo Nation. We helped build you up and now you are coming up to contribute back and we thank you for that," said Delegate Damon.

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