



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Closed Tuba City Community Center awaits red tape clearance, as children wait for new club to open

*50-year-old building plagued with mold, asbestos, bad roof, prompting local
Councilman to seek a team effort to rebuild*

TUBA CITY, Ariz. -- A place for youth to gather after school in Tuba City has been closed for more than a year now, but efforts to bring back the town's community center continues to move forward.

"The planning and efforts to address this closed-down center have been sitting idle for far too long, and I will help to continue to push the project forward as fast as possible," said Councilman Joshua Lavar Butler, To'Nanees'Dizi representative to the Navajo Nation Council. "My chapter elected me to advocate for them; and this community center is just one project that needs my immediate attention. It's used by everyone, our elderly and our children for fund-raising events."

One of the people clearing a way through bureaucratic red tape is Jerome Clarke, department manager for the Boys & Girls Club of Diné Nation, who said the center was closed due to roof damage, water leakage and mold in January 2010. The 50-year-old building is waiting to have a structural integrity assessment completed by Navajo Design and Engineering to determine whether the building has potential to be renovated or reaffirmed condemned.

"The assessments will be evaluated after they are completed. For maximum efficiency and fund usage, the Office of Youth Development (OYD) must weigh costs associated with renovating the old center, versus costs of constructing a new building," Clarke said. "Resources and funds for either scenario must be contemplated as well. Ultimately, OYD seeks to avoid putting an expensive 'Band-Aid' on the old center."

Clarke said his department has continually asked for the structural assessment of the building since last summer, but no contact dates or follow-ups have been provided by Navajo Design and Engineering.

"It'll take a monumental team effort to remedy the problem of getting a community center for the youth going again," said Butler. "I'm urging all Navajo departments involved to make a determination soon, and to fast track the clearing of red tape so this invaluable center can reopen soon or perhaps clear the way for new construction. It is absolutely ridiculous that we are not getting the needed attention. Tuba City, perhaps the largest community on the Navajo Nation, is without a community center and I will do whatever is necessary to help secure funds to either renovate or rebuild. This 50-year-old building is plagued with mold, asbestos, and a bad roof. The building is a serious hazard, it is an unsafe environment."

At the urging of Butler, Clarke explained that once the land issue and determination of the future of the condemned building is made, the next course of action is to proceed with funding requests to Navajo Housing Authority, and other tribal, state and federal level agencies, so the planning can start on the construction of a new building.

“We are hoping the issues that are preventing this will be resolved by this summer,” Clarke said. “In the fall of 2011, we hope to get the site construction ready with a target date of construction beginning in spring or summer of 2012.”

“Strategic planning and collaboration between the entities is essential to make this center become a reality,” Clarke said. “Letters of support can be mailed to our office at P.O. Box 2380, Tuba City, AZ 86045.”

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