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President Shelly fights Sanders liquor license renewal, transfer



Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with chapter officials from Nahata Dzil Commission Governance and the Renewal of Hope Task Force to discuss the recent decision by the Apache County Board of Supervisors to renew Gary MacDonald's liquor licenses in Sanders. (Photos by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.— The meeting began with prayer.

The prayer was for smart decision-making, tribal leadership unity and most importantly, sobriety.

On Tuesday, Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly met with the Nahata Dzil Renewal of Hope Task Force to discuss

a recent decision by Apache County Board of Supervisors to renew the liquor license for Gary MacDonald.

“I cannot believe they renewed his license,” President Shelly said. “The Navajo Nation stands in opposition to this decision.”

The task force members spoke of the liquor license

renewal with frustration, especially with the cloud of legal allegations looming over MacDonald.

On Jan. 23, 2014, MacDonald was allegedly arrested for the second time in a two-year period for drug charges. His first arrest was in Oct. 2012, when he was accused of operating a meth

lab and was in position of more than 20 firearms.

Ina Noggle, a member of the task force, said the real insult wasn't only the Apache County Board of Supervisors' decision to renew the license, but the fact that MacDonald sold it to acquaintance.

“He sold it to George Ryan, a man who is now managing

it for him, for \$10. He sold it to him for \$10,” Noggle said.

Wayne Lynch, vice president of Nahata Dzil Chapter Governance, said the community needs an attorney to speak on their behalf.

“We need them to request for a denial on this new license,” Lynch said.

He added that an attorney could also be used to speed up the criminal charges against MacDonald, which are currently at the Office of the Arizona Attorney General.

The group provided President Shelly with a copy of Resolution No. NDCG-2014-03-025, which requests for \$30,000 from the Navajo-Hopi Land Commission to assist with securing an Arizona Bar certified attorney.

It was passed by a vote of 3-0-1 on March 22, 2014.

Lauren Bernally has also been assisting the task force with their opposition to the liquor license renewals. She is a policy analyst with the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission.

“One of the things we’re looking at is the human rights violations and obviously, we believe that liquors being sold in this community that is inhabited by people who have been relocated is a gross human rights violation,” Bernally said.

The state of Arizona does not care with the concerns of Nahata Dzil community she said, and is instead pushing down statutes that are limiting the ability of community members to respond.

“When you look at those statutes and the burden of proof that must be met, there is now way we can do that without the help of the federal

government or someone interfacing with the state of Arizona,” she said.

President Shelly said he is sending a letter to Gov. Jan Brewer and state legislators regarding the issue with the license renewal and subsequent transfer. He is also going to contact Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick and Sen. Jeff Flake for support.

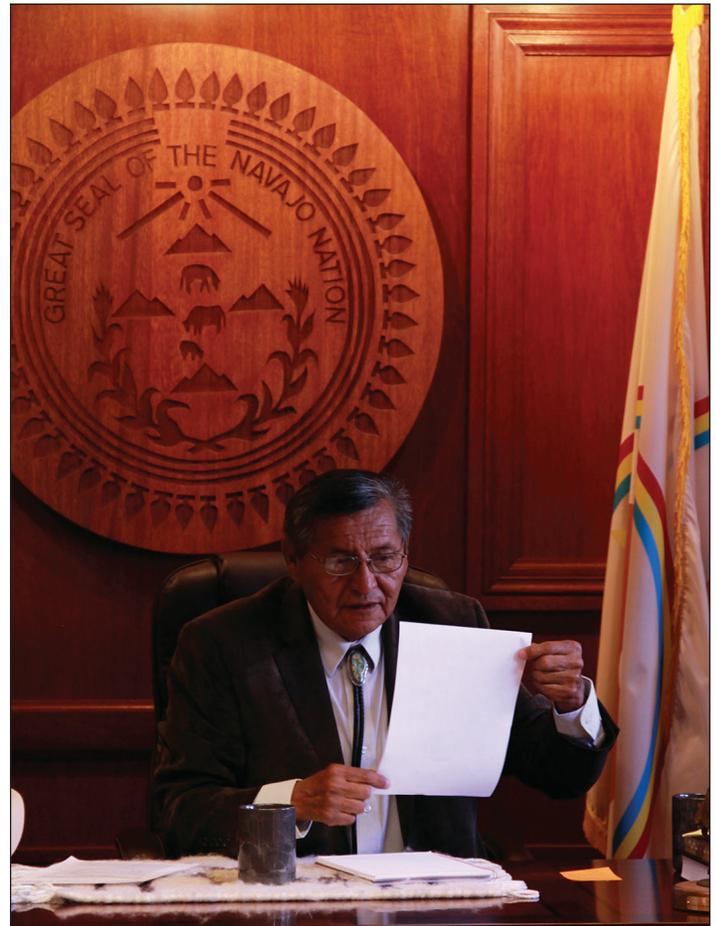
“We will look into the land status and how it was acquired,” President Shelly said. “A lot of these lands were acquired through the railroad right-of-way, which is 50 miles on each side. (The railroads) have been selling it to ranchers and private parties.”

“The President of the United States can issue an executive order, like the New York case when President Clinton gave back stolen land to the Indians. It could go that far,” he said.

On June 10, President Shelly received a letter from the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control stating that they received his letter from May 22 regarding the Sanders and Chambers, Ariz. liquor licenses.

“After a careful and thorough review, in coordination with the Arizona Attorney General’s office, the licenses have been renewed. At this point in time the department did not have sufficient cause to refuse to renew,” stated director Alan Everett.

President Shelly, the Navajo Nation Council, Nahata Dzil Chapter, and Renewal of Hope Task Force will continue their fight against MacDonald and the liquor establishments bordering the Navajo Nation.



President Shelly shared a copy of the letter currently being drafted for Gov. Brewer, Arizona legislators, and congressional members in opposition to the liquor license renewals and transfer. (Photos by Rick Abasta)



Task force member Ina Noggle was appalled at MacDonald’s actions when he sold the liquor licenses to one of his acquaintances for \$10. She said the Nation must protest the action. (Photos by Rick Abasta)