



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 28, 2015

President Shelly meets with Council to iron out letter of agreement



President Shelly sat down with members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council at Quality Inn in Window Rock to discuss the presidency. The group agreed President Shelly would remain in office. (Photo by Rick Abasta)

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—A Jan. 24 meeting between Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly and members of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council at Quality Inn resulted in a letter of agreement that President Shelly remains in office until somebody was elected and installed into office.

The president signed the agreement along with delegates Kee Allen Begay, Seth Damon, Norman Begay, Mel Begay, Tom Chee, Amber Crotty, Davis Filfred, Tuchoney Slim, Raymond Smith, Otto Tso, Leonard Tsosie and Nelson Begay.

“What I hear from the people is, ‘Let’s get the election done.’ We need to continue working together to keep the Nation running,” President Shelly said.

Speaker Pro Tem Kee Allen Begay agreed with the president and said both branches need to work together to quickly have the election resolved. He said having leaders sit down and meet to discuss the issues is the way business should be conducted.

Once the floor was opened

up for comments, Tsosie was the first to speak.

“I don’t mind the agreement, it captures what we talked about. I ask the president to keep your door open to resolve this problem,” Tsosie said. “In defense of the council, we didn’t start this.”

He said it was two disgruntled former candidates running for the presidency that filed a lawsuit in court that started it.

“Council only came in to try and provide a solution,” he said.

Filfred said the agreement to keep President Shelly in office should be direct and simple.

“If we start adding on to it, it’s only going to make us look bad,” he said.

Begay thanked the president for promoting unity and coming to the table to work out the issue of the presidency. He said the president and former council needed to be thanked for bringing stability back to the Nation.

However, he cautioned against losing track of the budget and going on a spending spree that will be questioned by the public

and council.

“If the expenditures are shared with us, that would be good,” he said.

Chee took a traditional approach and said the Navajo way must be embraced. He was leery about western education and asked why traditional values took the backseat to the western way of thinking.

“Who convinced us to be educated? We were already educated. This (meeting) is a return to our values,” he said.

Basic teachings like listening to our elders, treating people with decency and Navajo kinship are slipping through the cracks, he maintained.

“We have a complete breakdown of values. When we move from Navajo to English (language), we lose sight of that. We become enculturated,” he said. “Let’s honor the Office of the President. The Legislative Branch. The Judicial Branch.”

Begay had respecting the president’s office in mind too and questioned why the meeting was taking place.

“I don’t like this agreement. He’s sworn in already. If we want the president to respect us, then by golly, we got to respect him too. That’s basically what Ke’ is. Let president do his job,” Begay said.

Tso said there are other more pressing needs by the people that need to be addressed aside from the presidency.

“People want new homes, firewood and jobs. Hozho’ and Ke’ are very sacred. We must have respect for one another,” he said. “The teachings come from our elders. I’m thankful to

be sitting together because that’s working together.

Slim said the issue was bigger than any one person.

“This isn’t about us. Out there, our constituents have given us the responsibility of looking out for them. Our president is worried. He doesn’t want people attacking him,” Slim said. “We need to do this right way to appoint a leader.”

President Shelly thanked the council and said he will be in close communication with them. He said the OPVP spent seven percent of its FY 2015 budget for the first quarter and the office would be mindful of spending.

“I like what you’re doing: coming together like this, working together. I like what I hear,” President Shelly said.

The agreement stated, “In the spirit of K’e and in consideration of the fact that both parties believe in a stable Navajo Nation government, the parties agree to following goals:

“The parties agree that President Shelly will remain in the Office of the President until such time that there is an election and a President-Elect and Vice President-Elect are installed in office.

“The parties agree that the election is of the utmost concern. As such, the parties will encourage, facilitate and expedite the conduct of an election so as to promote the stability of the Navajo Nation. Both parties agree to efficiently work towards an election for the President and Vice President and to enable that process in whatever way possible.”