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COALMINE CANYON POWER LINE PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

WINDOW ROCK-On November 23, 2014, Coalmine Canyon Chapter unanimously passed a resolution to obtain power line extensions for 33 area residences that had gone without power since the implementation of the Bennett Freeze.

The project had been started under the former Shelly-Jim Administration.

Although the resolution addressed the 33 residences as a whole, implementation is often determined on a case-by-case basis according to right of ways, clearances and wiring assessments on each individual home. The vast majority of homesites were not ready for power lines to be installed.

The project was stalemate for over a year when brought to the attention of the Begaye-Nez administration.

“By the time the project was brought to OPVP’s attention, NTUA was ready to pull their matching funds,” President Russell Begaye said. “We revived the project so we would not lose funds.”

When the Begaye-Nez administration had secured Indian Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, there was only one home on the project list that had been fully cleared for power line installation. This was the home of Edward Begay.

“Once a project is ready, we immediately act, because no one should wait for basic infrastructure such as water and electricity,” said President Begaye.

This was a special situation because Begay is an elder and a Cancer patient. Because of his medical condition and needs, power is a necessity. It was Begay’s wish to spend his last days with his wife in his home where he has lived for 60 years.

This project was prioritized because it was the most ready after much work had gone into the project by NTUA, Division of Community Development and Council Delegates. Even after the project was brought to the attention of Office of the President and Vice-President it took an additional 6 months.

“It is clear our process is dysfunctional and needs to be fixed,” said President Begaye

President Begaye along with Council Delegate Walter Phelps traveled to Coalmine Canyon Chapter to explain the legislation implementing the initial installation. “We went out there to explain that all 32 homes would receive power line extensions and the OPVP’s goal was to get it done by the end of February.”

As of Tuesday, Feb. 15, all 33 projects have been awarded funding with an approximate implementation date of April of this year. Of the homes, 27 still need to be cleared of wiring assessments. It is the responsibility of the chapter to assure the homes are ready to be hooked up to power.

“I let the community know that I would return to the chapter when the rest of houses were ready for installation which would be in Spring 2016. I have kept that promise to the community and look forward to seeing all these homes receive the power needed.”

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