



The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

CONTACTS:

Jared Touchin, Communications Director
(928) 274-4275

Crystalyne Curley, Sr. Public Information Officer
(928) 274-2758

nnopvp.communications@gmail.com

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Navajo Nation moves forward with hogan-style housing manufacturing facility

TSE BONITO, N.M. — Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer recently visited a newly-established housing manufacturing facility where the first Navajo hogan-style home is being constructed to serve as the prototype for the Nez-Lizer Administration's housing development initiative to produce much-needed homes for Navajo families, veterans, elders, and others.



PHOTO: Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez, Vice President Myron Lizer, Office of the President and Vice President Chief of Staff Paulson Chaco, and Navajo Nation Veterans Administration Executive Director James D. Zwierlein at the housing facility in Tse Bonito, N.M. on July 30, 2020.

Since being appointed to serve as the Executive Director of the Navajo Nation Veterans Administration

under the Nez-Lizer Administration last year, James D. Zwierlein has taken on the challenging task of developing and implementing housing manufacturing facilities on the Navajo Nation that can mass produce quality homes in a timely manner. The first site located in Tse Bonito, N.M. was previously used as a lumber yard warehouse and has since been converted to a manufacturing facility that can produce one home a day with a small work crew.

“We envisioned having several housing manufacturing facilities on the Navajo Nation for several years. Now, we are seeing tremendous progress under Director Zwierlein and his staff members. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the need for more housing for families. Currently, we have multiple generations living under one roof and that creates many issues and concerns during a

public health emergency. With the federal CARES Act dollars, we are looking to use a portion of those funds to expand this housing initiative,” said President Nez.

The 1,200 square-foot prototype currently being constructed will have two-bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchen, and a living room with the option of adding more bedrooms. The home will meet ADA accessibility standards as well. Under the plan, Zwierlein intends to hire Navajo veterans to construct the homes, including those with no carpentry experience who are willing to learn how to build homes.

In 2013, the 22nd Navajo Nation Council approved legislation sponsored by former Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd that amended the Navajo Nation Veterans Trust Fund, to provide funding specifically for the construction of homes for Navajo veterans.

Each two-bedroom home will cost approximately \$130,000, which includes the costs of materials, labor, and transporting the homes out to communities. Zwierlein added that the cost of building materials has increased over the years and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prices have increased even more. The increased costs now require the program’s core legislation to be amended to reflect current costs of construction.

“We look to our Nation’s lawmakers to help make this housing initiative successful and beneficial to as many families as possible and that requires amending the existing legislation to make it more efficient. We also welcome all of the members of the Council to stop by the facility and see the progress that is being made. By working together, we can produce 10 to 15 homes per day if we are able to expand the current operation, hire enough workers, secure supplies and a large facility to operate from,” stated Vice President Lizer.

The housing manufacturing facility is modeled after the United Brotherhood of Carpenters’ International Training Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, which offers training through the Carpenters International Training Fund that is dedicated to job training and certification programs to increase the number of construction professionals. In August 2019, President Nez and Vice President Lizer visited the 1.2 million square-foot “world-class” International Training Center where many members of the Navajo Nation participate in the program.

“It’s amazing to be a part of bringing a vision to life. My Grandfather taught me many years ago to measure twice, cut once. We have been measuring housing on the Nation for years. It’s high time we started cutting. This first cut is a thing to see. I cannot wait to deliver this first home to a veteran,” Zwierlein stated.

“We have many Navajo carpenters who can become employed through this initiative while also giving back to our Navajo people. For those with little to no carpentry experience, we are willing to give them the opportunity to learn as well. We look forward to seeing this housing program grow to provide homes for many Navajo families,” added President Nez.

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