



25TH NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL

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MEDIA CONTACT:

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

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Resources and Development Committee receives Navajo Housing Authority report, raises concerns on leadership, vacancies, and transparency



The Resources and Development Committee receives the Navajo Housing Authority.

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. — In a recent meeting, the Resources and Development Committee (RDC) received a report from the Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) regarding the state of the housing crisis across the Navajo Nation. During in-person session, committee members raised concerns about board accountability, housing vacancies, third-party hiring, and the use of federal funds, while demanding clarity on current partnerships and future housing strategies.

Council Delegate Shawna Ann Claw questioned NHA officials about the lack of progress in renovating aging and vandalized housing units in her district. “What is the priority and current status of renovating homes within my district of Chinle?” Claw asked. “These units have not been addressed in years and are being vandalized and broken into.”

Claw also expressed skepticism about NHA’s potential transition to a nonprofit structure and requested clarity on studies that support the move, noting that such a shift could significantly impact the Navajo Nation.

Council Delegate Danny Simpson pressed NHA leadership on their commitment to supporting rural Navajo families and new graduates seeking employment on the Nation.

“We need to ensure our young people who choose to return and work on Navajo land have places to live,” said Simpson. “There needs to be a strategic partnership between RDC and NHA to build for the next generation.” The RDC recommended declaring a housing

emergency to temporarily lift procurement restrictions and expedite construction.

Council Delegate Rickie Nez focused his comments on systemic leadership challenges. “Why are CEOs consistently being let go by the board after we start seeing progress?” Nez asked.

He raised alarms about conflicts of interest among long-serving board members and called for consideration of term limits. “If board members are signing contracts with the organizations they oversee, that’s a major conflict. We need to look at all plans of operation and push for amendments where needed.”

NHA officials announced that two board commissioner seats are currently vacant, with a third member’s term set to expire soon. RDC members called for swift replacements and questioned whether expired members were still receiving stipends. “If one has termed out, they should not be receiving a stipend,” Claw stated. “That’s my interpretation, and it has legal implications.”

Committee Chair Brenda Jesus emphasized that the RDC would follow up with NHA after September to assess progress on the authority’s projected \$30 million expenditure plan. “Housing is a clear need, but we also need to diversify our approach to support middle- and higher-income families across the Nation,” said Jesus. “We have workforce members who don’t qualify under low-income guidelines, and that gap continues to grow.”

The committee also requested a 30-day report from NHA outlining the challenges related to the Indian Housing Block Grant and potential funding impacts from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Additionally, RDC requested legal reviews of NHA’s hiring policies, third-party recruitment practices, and board compensation structure, citing inconsistencies and potential audit concerns.

Discussion also touched on long-term planning, including a proposed student housing initiative near Northern Arizona University, as well as issues with housing data visibility, vacant property turnover, and the prioritization of residents in new developments.

Chair Jesus reiterated the importance of coordinated advocacy efforts, stating, “We need to present a united front in Washington, D.C., with both leadership and NHA management advocating together on these issues.”

The RDC concluded the meeting by committing to schedule follow-ups on board appointments, MOAs with IDSA and Native Community Capital, and updates on key housing developments across the Nation. The RDC approved the report with a vote of four in favor and none opposed.

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