



24th Navajo Nation Council

Office of the Speaker

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RDC Approves Powerline, ROW, Water Legislations

TWIN ARROWS, Ariz. – In a regular meeting at the Navajo Nation Economic Summit, the 24th Navajo Nation Council Resources and Development Committee met Wednesday, April 24 to consider five legislations and several reports on water and energy resources, among other subjects.

Two legislations, 0080-19 and 0081-19, were approved by the committee concerning powerline rights of way in Nageezi and Mariano Lake Chapters, respectively. Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), the sponsor of both legislations, was joined by ROW Agent Lucinda Henry and Mariano Lake Chapter Community Services Coordinator Leandra James in the presentations before the committee.

In addition to the powerline legislations, the committee approved 0085-19, a ROW application for a section of the Navajo Gallup Water Supply Project. The section, called Reach 4C-8, passes through the chapters of Sanostee, Two Grey Hills, Newcomb, Sheep Springs, and Naschitti. It was sponsored by Delegate Amber Kanazbah Crotty (Beclabito, Cove, Gadi'i'áhi/To'Koi, Red Valley, Tooh Haltsooi, Toadlena/Two Grey Hills, Tsé aháoz't'l'í).

The project is a part of the implementation of the San Juan River Water Rights Settlement, testified Jason John, head of the Water Management Branch of the Navajo Nation Department of Water Resources.

Pat Page, project engineer with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, explained that the 300-mile project is moving along ahead of schedule, with water to be delivered to some Navajo families in 2020, four years before the congressionally-mandated project end date.

Delegate Herman Daniels (Shonto, Naa'tsis'áán, Oljato, Ts'áh Bii Kin) asked whether each of the five communities have plans to utilize the water for economic development projects once water starts flowing.

“We want to impress upon the leadership and the communities to aggressively develop an economic plan for their communities. The water is not free, and it will come with a cost to pump the water,” Director John explained to the RDC.

In another water-related legislation, 0087-19, the Council approved increases to the Navajo Nation's commercial water rates.

"I want to be clear that this has nothing to do with NTUA residential water rates," Najam Tariq, principal geologist with the Technical, Construction & Operations Branch of the Water Resources Department.

The legislation will make the Navajo Nation's 6% Sales Tax applicable to commercial water rates and rescind the waiver on the collection of water use fees from commercial water users using less than 40,000 gallons of water during a three-month billing period.

The rates below are per 1,000 gallons.

- Commercial Water Use Fee will go from \$0.27 to \$0.50.
- Government Agency Water Use Fee will go from \$0.135 to \$0.27.
- Construction Industrial and Mining Water Use will go from \$4.00 to \$5.50

All the ROW and water-related legislations passed unanimously and RDC is their final authority.

At the beginning of the meeting, legislation 0093-19 was added to the agenda. It calls upon the U.S. Dept. of the Interior and the Bureau of Reclamation to "ensure that the acquisition of [Navajo Generating Station] and Kayenta Mine is completed and to support both tribes," among other provisions.

The legislation proceeds to the Naabik'iyáti' Committee after a 3-2 vote in the affirmative. Chair Rickie Nez (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, T'iis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse'Daa'Kaan, Upper Fruitland) voted after an initial tie vote.

In a brief report from presenters from Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the Navajo Nation Division of Natural Resources, Kris Mayes, Maren Mahoney, and Karin Wadsack described how they were working with DNR on studying utility-scale renewable energy development on the nation. Chair Nez invited the presenters to meet with the RDC in a work session to discuss their work further.

Chair Nez presided over the meeting with committee members Herman Daniels, Mark Freeland, Wilson Stewart, Jr., and Thomas Walker, Jr. present. Delegate Kee Allen Begay was excused. Other delegates in attendance included Elmer Begay (Dilkon, Greasewood Springs, Indian Wells, Teesto, Whitecone), Paul Begay (Bodaway/Gap, Coppermine, K'ai'biit'ó, LeChee, Tonalea), and Eugenia Charles-Newton (Shiprock).

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