



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee hears concerns from Cameron roadside vendors



PHOTO: Council Delegate Walter Phelps, Council Delegate Benjamin Bennett, and Council Delegate Davis Filfred visit the Little Colorado River Gorge vending site with LCR-CCVA co president Candis Yazzie on Aug. 23, 2017.

CAMERON, Ariz. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee received reports from the Little Colorado River-Cameron Community Vendors Association, Cameron Chapter officials, and Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department regarding issues and concerns of roadside vending in Cameron.

Cameron community is located approximately 53-miles north of Flagstaff, Ariz., and centered at the intersection of US Highway 89 and State Route 64. The community is located at the eastern boundary of the Grand Canyon National Park.

RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii) stated that the uniqueness of the community's location attracts tourists from all over the world.

“Due to the millions of tourists traveling through Cameron every year, community members and surrounding community members have established roadside businesses to sustain their livelihoods. The goal of today’s meeting is to communicate with all parties and find solutions to address the vendor’s concerns,” stated Delegate Phelps, who represents the community of Cameron.

According to LCR-CCVA co president Candis Yazzie, roadside vending began in the 1920’s and there are currently 14 vendor sites that are family operated businesses.

Yazzie also highlighted that the vendors’ businesses are threatened because of developments and projects planned by the Parks and Recreation Department. The vendors requested to be involved with all developments that affect their roadside businesses, added Yazzie.

According to Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department executive director Martin Begaye, the department plans to improve the Little Colorado River Gorge site, which is designated as a Navajo Tribal Park, by reconstructing the road access and providing a paved parking lot.

The Little Colorado River Gorge is located approximately nine-miles east of Cameron on State Route 64 toward the Grand Canyon National Park. The narrow steep gorge overlooks the Little Colorado River, limestone cliffs, massive sandstones, and shows the evidence of a shallow sea 250 million years ago. The gorge overlook has rest areas, ramadas, tables, a visitor center, and numerous Navajo vendors at the edge of the gorge.

RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) recommended for the Parks and Recreation Department to reconsider the concerns of the vendors before construction begins.

“It’s clear to me that the Parks and Recreation Departments needs to reexamine the plans for the area. The vendors are highly concerned that they will lose business with the new project plans. There has to be a consensus for any developments,” said Delegate Filfred.

RDC member Council Delegate Leonard H. Pete (Chinle) stated that vending issues and concerns are present at all tribal and national parks in the Nation.

“Canyon De Chelly, Monument Valley, Antelope Point, and others are dealing with the same vendor issues. There has to be a mechanism to all the concerns that could benefit the vendors and the tourists,” stated Delegate Pete, “The other issues that needs to be explored in depth are grazing permits and homesite leases within tribal and national park areas. That is another obstacle that needs to be addressed and solved.”

The Resources and Development Committee approved the reports with a vote of 3-0 with one directive for all involved parties to report to the committee with possible solutions and coordination.

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