

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# An overview: What is happening with our money?

When I served on the Navajo Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, a rigorous application and interview process had gone through and the results were 59 out of 139 applicants who applied. Yours truly was one of the eight selected by a group of interviewers who sit as Council delegates today.

Remember, my Diné people, during that time Ben Shelly was on the way out and the election was in full force with delegates and 17 president candidates running around, ready to be put in office. (Prior to that, summer of 2014, I was in support of Russell Begaye and a free T-shirt was in store while at Breadsprings Chapter, and I just knew.)

As the sitting New Mexico tenant and homebuyers representative board member, I was selected to serve a one-year term, which lasted until July of 2016. The 1.5 years serving as NHA commissioner was an awesome experience from which I gained executive, blue-collar time in meetings, work sessions and policy writing. Some of our leaders who were elected seemed to prefer to travel off the reservation rather than stay on their own land (a referendum is needed on that today).

We eight newly appointed commissioners were given a "mess, within a mess" that only a full board can debate and properly make decisions on housing as well as satisfying the Navajo Nation Code of Federal Regulations (605 and 606) also U.S. Housing and Urban Development regulations as the Tribal Designated Housing Entity. (Lots to learn!)

We, the NHA BOC, had inherited an infection (and with all means trying to cure it, one at a time) from the previous board of only five serving with expired terms, making decisions that we never heard about in previous executive sessions and NHA resolutions, being misinformed from NHA administration chief officers (executive, financial, administration, operating) at that time.

It was halfway corrected as the

chief administration officer and chief operating officer were replaced. The CEO and chief financial officer had a contract that the BOC finally received in 2015 and were astounded by the contents. The BOC rectified that really fast.

With that, we then updated the travel, veterans and employee performance evaluation policies. Come to find out the last time some of these policies were revised was in 1994.

So, yes, my Diné people, we had a lot of work to do and learn and at the same time raise the morale of NHA employees by raising the minimum wage to \$12, all the while learning how to deal with our leaders' questions and issues.

From winter 2104-15 to spring, moving right along as the election was over and we had several new incoming 23rd Council delegates whom NHA BOC sponsored the inauguration with, and a few months later with President Begaye.

Chief operating officer, Robert Joe, came to our board meeting and requested help, and yes, we did, with a \$19,500 resolution, which contributed towards his inauguration and reception in Washington, D.C., at the Navajo Nation Washington Office building in June 2015.

The NHA BOC gladly "listened" during confirmation and during the transition, or was that when we began misinforming? How can you make bold statements like that when the president's office may or may not have all the information? Do not put the "cart before the horse" time and time again, "business and politics don't mix!"

If President Begaye continues down that path, he will not win if he runs again.

Now, there is a delegate out there that has the experience, dedication, is truthful, honest and who should run, it's honorable Walter Phelps from Leupp, Arizona.

Today, we live in the United States of America and here within our Navajo

Nation we follow what is the "norm." And today is that nepotism or the only person you can trust?

I'll tell you something I learned, or that you may already know. There are some smart people out there that can manipulate a system to benefit only them in the future, even years, or decades, so where do these kickbacks start, my Diné people? Should this be the real forensic audit?

Yes, in 2003-2004, NHA was still learning the HUD rules and regulations, where I never got to learn all of NHA in the 1.5 years I sat on board. No one has a grasp on housing, especially here on the 27 million-acre reservation. NHA and HUD didn't teach us efficiently enough and did not keep the board in unison. It was the other way around as this full board of eight kept a unified voice and got NAHASDA reauthorized in 2015.

Now I know, shi ba'hasin. Nishaa'?

I heard that on May 15, 2018, a tour is to be scheduled for the Wolf Springs Ranch in Westcliffe, Colorado, my Diné people. It's your ranch and money used for the purchase.

Just the other day Mr. Zah stated in the Navajo Times (Dec. 28 issue) that we have up to \$10,000 per person in the Permanent Trust Fund account and is good for the Navajo Nation, right now. Meaning, ask your chapters to rent tour buses and we can all go up there and tour it?

This was heard during the Resource and Development meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 2, at the Navajo Division of Transportation building. The president's office was hastily and presumptuously trying to get it past due to operation and maintenance and payroll. Thought there was a plan?

The Navajo Nation Department of Property and Management were informed and told to "tag" the new Navajo Nation property. All they found was the Navajo Nation executive legal team vacationing out there and had to

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be told to vacate so they can do their job.

And this is in response to your report in yesterday's Navajo Times (Jan. 4 issue) that the media makes NHA look like a criminal enterprise. The Navajo Nation is buying land for speculative purposes, and the Navajo Nation is not telling us about any return in investment, if any?

Before the Diné people could inhale the news, these particular ranches were consummated (Wolf Springs and Boyer Ranch). What, now there are two ranches?

The media's explanation of legal landscape affecting the purchase (from \$49 million down to \$23 million) and the use of Land Acquisition Trust Fund was inadequate, based on Navajo land laws. The purchase was not authorized by our statutes as written. Bottom line is, what is the purpose for this particular land?

The president's office is buying land for speculative purposes. Navajo Nation law would require due diligence for the proposed venture, for which is

the land being bought, has to satisfy due diligence scrutiny. Here, there was no sign of due diligence because there is no certainty as what specific land usage would go on the real estate?

This practice of speculative land purchase is sanctioned land purchase and is speculation sanctioned by Navajo Nation law, not for speculative land purchases that are far from Navajo Nation can be removed from land consolidation plan. Is it a case of buy it, sit on it, and maybe in the future it becomes valuable?

Also, why is President Begaye making land decisions based on the color of a map and not for its intended purpose, while he was on travel in Washington, D.C.?

The Fort Wingate Army Depot lands are in effect, and can and will affect those three chapters: Iyanbito, Church Rock and Breadsprings chapters as well as each of you voting Navajos.

There is a three-line correction needed to fix the problem. The three-line correction" was in one hand and a previous map in the other. President Begaye chose with his lips to be the wrong plat to be used? Or how was his decision?

The Zuni tribe is aware of it as they show it on their map. The Bureau of Land Management also knows and will survey it accordingly by lot precedence.

Now, the job is to get the correct map/plat into the hands of our Congressman Martin Heinrich as he is in support of this movement.

Wow, the color of a map. These are land-surveying issues. Please, Mr. President, let us know what is happening with our money?

Marvin Murphy  
Iyanbito, N.M.

### Looking for my mother

My name is Samuel Richard Banks from the Crow Agency Indian Reservation. My biological mother is Sandy James from Window Rock, and I've been looking for her for a while now.

I haven't seen her since I was 4 years old and I'm currently missing her. I've got three boys now and I want to get us together.

My contact information is 406-263-1234. Thank you.

Samuel Richard Banks  
Crow Agency, Mont.

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