



June 09, 2025 10:00 A.M.

PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

TELECONFERENCE: 219-803-8769 PIN: 160 108 500#

Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/ahs-epsf-aep>

- I. **MEETING CALL TO ORDER: 10:20am**
- II. **ROLL CALL:** President Elvis Bitsilly, Vice President Lee Rodgers, Secretary/Treasurer Jean Crawford, Grazing Officer Gerald Moore.
- III. **INVOCATION:** Priscilla Duncan
- IV. **REVIEW OF THE AGENDA**
- V. **COMMUNITY REQUESTS AND PRESENTERS:**
- VI. **REPORTS:**
 1. **Howard Leonard Jr – with Fish & Wildlife.** I'm here to talk about the restoration projects we hope to be doing here in Tohatchi. The last time I was here at this chapter, I talked about climate change. The restoration projects that I plan to be working on is of "low pact" projects, not project which require heavy equipment. A lot of the issues with drainage is cause by humans; we block the channel way for water to flow. We have a resolution which will be voted on during the regular chapter meeting to do some restoration projects here in Tohatchi. This will involve slowing down the water from the mountain runoffs during the spring months. We are looking at this as a low impact restoration project to get the community involve to assist our department. We will need to do some observation of the water channel way and the surrounding landscape including the maintenance of the project.
Geneva Begay – Community members said a sheepherder had one of their animals fall into the canal or channel way behind the high school. It was reported NTUA was doing some work in the area and had made a road which back filled in two places with dirt. This caused the area to flood when the rain came down hard and rain ran down the canal. The emergent dam is closed up, if it were open, it would have caused more flooding in the community. It did flood the new construction of the high school which the workers had to clean up. We've asked the Chapter for assistance to remove the back fill of the dirt in the canal. Also Red Willow Farm is requesting an updated resolution for 'in-kind services' for the use of the Chapter's heavy equipment.
Secretary/Treasurer Crawford – So, did NTUA take responsibility of the road the constructed across the canal?
Geneva Begay – I did call NTUA to let them know by making that road across the canal, it caused a lot of flooding in our community. NTUA did send out someone to build a berm on "one" of the roads they created across the canal but not on the 2nd one, but hopefully they will be out today to complete that work.
Howard Leonard Jr. – I just want to mention, the canals should never be dam. The main purpose why we are here is to move the resolution forward. Once the resolution is passed, we can start looking or observation the area to see what is doable on a smaller scale. Also, we are already on a flood plan throughout the mountain and if a new construction is occurring in the area, there should always be a berm in place.
Elvis Bitsilly – I will be writing NTUA about this incident and I ask the Red Willow Farm Board to monitor the canals as best as you can. Also, we have money for the channel way in the amount of \$400,000 from the Water Resource Department. I'm asking RWFB to get with Water Resource so they can start working on that area. There will have to be a plan and design for the channel way immediately. You can also start work with Fish & Wildlife, Mr. Leonard Jr.
Secretary/Treasurer Crawford – Mr. Leonard, the resolution you are requesting is so you and your department will be assisting with "low impact" projects with Red Willow? Correct?

Howard Leonard Jr. – My initial plan was to look into the burn areas from the wildfire that started in Asaayi Canyon and came over the Chooshgai mountain and burn 14,000 plus acres. It was important to me to tackle this project as a low impact project. We put stones down to keep the erosion from occurring because the roots of the vegetation and trees died in the fire which cause mud to slide down the mountainside. The Chapters Mexican Springs and Sheepsprings have agreed to have our department assist with low impact projects in their areas. But as far as Tohatchi is concern, I would like to do some observation of the channel way before the monsoon season starts which should in a couple of weeks, around June 15. We can divert water at strategic points using the Tohatchi Chapter grader and with the assist of someone from the community who know is familiar with terrain of the water way.

Priscilla Duncan – I'm wondering when the eradication of the Chooshgai Lake will start?

Geneva Begay – BIA has a process, and we did a survey asking the community what they wanted as far as the chemical to be used. Or do they want just to have the trees and scrubs cut and dried out and burned? The inventory project came at the beginning of the year and they counted all the trees that will be removed from the canal all the way down to the lake. Ashley Curley will be selecting the contractor who will be doing the work. She oversees this BIA department and we have already used \$400,000, \$200,000 the 1st year and another \$200,000 the following year to remove all the scrubs and trees, but it will not stop there because these scrubs and trees will grow back and this project will be continuing. Getting our lake back without all the scrubs and trees is our goal. We ask the community members who are familiar with the canal way which around 2.5 miles to let us know if they see any issues with the canal.

Howard Leonard Jr. – The perennials run all year long and these are the ones we want to take care of. The government works with the Army Corp of Engineering and they have to be consultant first.

Geneva Begay - I would like to request water and maybe sandwiches for the Fish & Wildlife staff when we walk the water way down to the lake.

2. **Lucinda Frank** - Requesting for mobile home renovation (interior renovation).

Maria CSC, - she would need to submit an application, if she has a doctor's referral, she can attach that to the application. She will need to provide pictures of the areas she wants renovation in her mobile home. If she can get a family member to do the cost estimates of the materials needed, that would be great since our PEP are still out. Then she can so the 3 price quotes from 3 different lumber companies. Also, a homesite lease is required.

3. **Nancy Allison** – Requesting for house renovation. States main beam has broken in ceiling; House has burned out electrical wires from a house fire. House was built in 2018 and it's falling apart. I was sent to the VA office in W/R to request for assistance and I was working with Olin K. but he is no longer employed with the VA so I'm back to square one. When my husband passed the homesite lease was put into my son's name which cause the VA Administration to refused my request because my name was not on the lease. Now, I'm asking for assistance from the Chapter again. My husband received money from the late President Russell Begay under the VA funding and last I heard there was \$2,200 left over.

Maria, CSC – We had sent a resolution to the VA Administration to Olin K. and he was working with the family, but since Olin's departure, I'll have to find out who take his place with the VA. I will send an email to the VA Administration to get some information today.

4. **Darlene Mike** – Asking for update on her husband's request for a walk-in shower.

Maria, CSC – Darlene's application for a walk-in shower has been sent to DCD along with 9 other applicants. The funding is coming from ARPA which means it will take some time before the projects begin.

5. **Herman Yazzie** – Requesting for update on his Housing Discretionary Funds. May need a resolution.

Maria, CSC – Herman has submitted all the documents required to request for Housing Discretionary Funds. He is there to make the request in person so the Chapter can vote on it during the regular Chapter meeting on June 25th.

Priscilla Duncan – I'm wondering if someone is doing follow-ups on the CHID homes. I understand the selections of the families to receive homes has been made and now when does the families get

notified and when will they be receiving the new homes? I would like to know what phase we are in?
Maria, CSC – We need to understand CPMD is going through staff changes and they currently got a new manager to oversee the department. We have up to the end of the year to have the homes delivered and I did mention in my last update; there are 5 phases. We've completed the 1st two phases, now the 3rd phase is to contact the families who were selected by mail. There were 4 families named, but we were informed only 3 of the 4 will be receiving a home. The Chapter administration doesn't know who have been selected.

6. **Laris Manuelito** – Requesting for resolution to change amount initially requested for the construction of her store from \$15 million to \$20 million. She states because of all the constant littering occurring on the road to my father's place. I plan to work with the Chapter to make this road a private road. I have an RMU permit (Range Management Unit) in the amount of 1,800 square miles which has a water system and will be fenced in. I am currently working on a conservation plan for my RMU with the BIA. I also have plans in place for the new store which will be on the outside of the RMU fence. The Bitsilly family also uses this road to their place, but I've been asking around and I was told they were using the Red Willow Road years ago. My decision to make it a private road was because of all the littering and people drinking and hanging out down that road. I don't want this occurring next to my store. I have tourism coming in 2 weeks to take a look at the site. I also have plans for 2 more stores sitting on the side of the grocery store.
7. **Vice President Rodgers** – requesting the Chapter to accept Marie Allison's request for Housing Discretionary Funds to build a wheelchair ramp for her to use.

***Council Delegate's Report given by LDA Moore –**

LDA Sonny Moore – I work with Council Delegate Notah, there are actually two of us. The other LDA is Casey Begay who mostly works in W/R. I take care of the Chapters in District 14 and do my best to monitor to RDC (Resource Department Committee), LOC (Law & Order Committee), and B&F (Budget & Finance). I understand they are having hearing on next year's budget 2026. I learned that only 70% of what's budgeted for the entire NN is actually used. The rest of the funds go back into the "undesignated, unreserved fund balance" (UUFB). The most current amount going back into UUFB is \$70 million and \$238 million is already in the UUFB account. So, there is some money there. I was able to speak at the meeting to bring up "permanent employees" which the Chapter has been requesting for. The Chapters could use a permanent heavy equipment operator and a carpenter. We have a resolution in place speaking to this topic and I'm asking the Chapter to help me with this. There is a deadline of June 20th to get your request in. I also asked B&F to make the budget that is received annually more flexible so the chapter can choose which fund accounts to apply, other words to loosen up the restricted funds. They had our resolutions for septic tank cleaning and unhealthy food tax.

I did get an email from Vice President Rodgers stating she is having problems getting answers from DCD. I know they just recently got a new director, Candice Yazzie, and a new ICIP/CPMD head who is Michelle Peterson. What I would like to do is to get everybody in one room to go over the ICIP projects. I believe our Council Delegate will be asking us soon about our projects, what projects do we have, how much are we short or is it ready for construction. If the Chapter can work on this as a spreadsheet, it will be very helpful.

With all of the chaos happening in Washington and Trump cutting funds for programs, we are concerned about the Gallup-Navajo Water line funding being taken away so we have to move to complete this project. Also the San Juan Lateral funding will be facing the same issues and I had asked President Bitsilly to bring Ty Tsinnijinnie in to give us an update on the San Juan Lateral project. I had a meeting with NNDOT last week and realized how hard they are to work with on projects. When we talked about the highway lighting for some reason they left out Tohatchi Chapter. We have to work with Priscilla Lee and Council Delegate Notah to see why Tohatchi was left out for highway lighting. We will have to make amendments to the resolution to add 5% to the amount listed on the new amended resolution per Priscilla Lee. Total cost is \$3 million so you would add 5% to this amount on new resolution. I hope this resolution can be added to your June meeting. You would do the same with the warehouse project which is now estimated at \$1.7 million will also require a new resolution.

The 15-mile designation by NNDOT is still not settled and the leadership here will have to tackle this

project as well. Also chapters are complaining about windmills and storage tanks not working. Former Vice President Mike Halona is asking to have all the windmills and storage tanks identified in District 14. We need to bring these broken windmills to the attention of Water Resources and Resource and Development departments. I would like to ask the Grazing Officer to share the file of the windmills listing with Red Willow Farm as well.

Secretary/Treasurer Crawford – I like to know what W/R is doing to get more project managers hired to work with non-certified chapters. Since W/R makes it impossible for chapters to obtain a project manager, we can't get our projects started here using State funds. Also, I understand there are 2 projects for bathroom additions and bathroom renovations which Maria sent a list of names of community members from Tohatchi to Council Delegate Notah who I believe is working with DCD on these projects. I would like an update as to when these projects will get started?

LDA Sonny Moore – Council Delegate Parrish is the one who encourage me to have our Chapter submit names of community who are in need of bathroom additions. I believe the list from this Chapter is at DCD, but as far as when these bathrooms construction will begin, I don't have an answer. During the Budget & Finance meeting, and individual got up to say that DCD has never really assisted the Chapters. There is \$35 million in the Personnel Lapse Fund and I like to know why some of this funding can't be moved to chapters so we can hire permanent employees. Why isn't the Navajo Nation doing much more to assist the Chapters.

Another topic is the TEP (Tuson Electric Power), I'm currently picking up resolutions from the chapters and each Chapter is requesting something different from TEP.

Rural Addressing – There will be a meeting on June 24th regarding rural address at Twin Lakes Chapter. Tohatchi Chapter has been working with Taylor Frazier to start the rural addressing project going. The nation has put aside \$35 million for this project.

Also, I just learned this morning Tohatchi Chapter has received their 2nd half of their budget.

Geneva Begay – Just to let the community know, there is another internet service being offered by Sacred Winds called "Starlink. It is suppose to be faster than what is available to us currently.

Laris Manuelito – To improve highway 491 to withstand semi's coming through with heavy loads, the chapter and I have to have unilateral interest in this project. I have to find private funding to do my own part to access my store. What I'm saying is I'm already looking for funding, chapters have the LGFRP funding which is sitting there to do their part. From a business part of view, I don't know how I'm going to improve just that little part for the grocery store's access and the rest of the freeway is crap. I'm just giving the Chapter ideas of funding that is available under Department of Transportation.

LDA Sonny Moore – I would like to make a recommendation on how we setup for the meetings. I would like to have the officials sit with us down here while we are making plans for Tohatchi. I know other Chapters are doing this and I feel it works better for everyone.

President Bitsilly – We need to get our funding from W/R here at the local Chapter level. It starts with our Council Delegate and upper management. They are responsible for expending those dollars on our behalf. As new leadership, we doing what LDA Moore just mentioned. We are hitting every area that the Chapter needs to work on like projects, funding, budget, unfinished business, and things that are pending. There is funding out there that we can tap into but will involve the team process. I will be providing a 90 days report to our community and let you know what our plans for the community of Tohatchi. My mindset is on Tohatchi community and what we need to do here. Also I would like to say, we welcome the other chapters in District 14 to see what we are doing as well.

Laris Manuelito – I just want to mention, my business site lease has finally got through the process and will be at the approving committee on June 16th. It's pretty much done and after that we set a time with the NN President. I would like to invite leadership to the signing and I also would like to ask to have my resolution amended from \$10 million to \$20 million.

***Community Service Coordinator/Officials' Report:**

1. Update on status of Senior Center –

Maria, CSC – I received an email from the supervisor who is planning the re-opening of our Senior Center. We'll be meeting with her some time this week to discuss activities for the opening.

2. Report on Safety Complex –

President Bitsilly – We are moving forward with this project. We've had several meetings with the architect and his team to complete the design of the safety complex. I believe a final draft of the drawing is near complete according to LAM (Loren Miller architect). We are waiting to see the final drawing at our next meeting. Our next meeting is on June 11th in Window Rock. We are coordinating with the Department of Correction and Public Safety in the design of the complex. We still need funding to construct the building so we are looking for \$15 million.

Laris Manuelito – Again, I would like to recommendation the Chapter submit a resolution to ask for UUFB funding for the complex. It was just mentioned there is money in the UUFB account.

3. Update on the Bike Trail -

Maria, CSC – All the required documents are sitting on Buu Nygren's desk waiting his signature which is all that's needed to start construction. I did email W/R again to ask if the documents have been signed.

4. Update on Chapter Audit -

Maria, CSC – Our policies have been approved by DOJ and resolution has been submitted. These policies are in DOJ's web page files currently. I have reached out to Freida with DOJ to let her know the Chapter is ready for another audit update. I believe this will happen sometime in July.

5. Update on Culverts -

Maria, CSC – The Chapter is requesting for 6 culverts from an Albuquerque Office, but I have not heard from the office as of yet. I will be doing a memo to NNDOT requesting for their assistance in transporting these culverts from Albuquerque.

6. Update on the East flat projects -

Maria, CSC – They are now at Pamela Dennison's residence to start the drilling. Brad with the drilling company had questions about Charlene Manuelito's paperwork for homesite lease. I contacted Charlene and she stated she submitted her homesite application to Sonny Moore last year. I told Charlene, Sonny does not handle homesite lease applications. The application needs to go to Land Administration to get the application processed. I reached out to Byron Bitsioie, manager for the homesite department in W/R to ask if Charlene had a pending application for a homesite. He said no application has been submitted. I don't know if the Chapter wants to continue to wait on her to get her paperwork started. She also needs a homesite lease to have NTUA hookup electricity to the home. It has been actually over 2 years; the Chapter has been waiting for Charlene to get started. We are also waiting on Vincent Natonabah who needs electricity hookup to his home. I called NTUA and they said they were working on the right-of-way and hopefully he will get his utilities soon. The other 7 residences who had water drilled are now having the pipes put into their homes from the well.

7. Update on the Cemetery policy -

Maria, CSC – I am currently working on the changes that I need to make on the policy to get it completed. I will then send it out to the officials for them to review and make edits. We hope to have the policy ready during the Chapter meeting on June 25th. I will need to go to DOJ for their approval as well.

Update on the bathroom additions, like it was mentioned 10 names were submitted and it is being cross reference with IHS' list. So far, Benson Badonie is the only person who I know is eligible, but they are still cross referencing the other 9 names. As far as the bathroom renovations, 10 names were submitted and we are just waiting to hear when the projects will begin. Also, the 13 summer youth students will have their interviews tomorrow. We do have worksites setup for them. They will start their employment on Monday, June 16th. I also have two students from workforce who are working at the Chapter. I did send an addendum resolution for our 2025 budget last week and I follow up this morning and saw that the check has been posted. It will take about 3-5 days for the money to come into our account. The heavy equipment operator is currently still "on call" basis and our Fund 01 account is very low so we have to be careful as to provide working hours for the operator. Currently, he is being paid a flat rate of \$100 per day which is only for burials. I have Oscar back at the transfer station 3 times a week and Janice the office aide is also back to assist with daily operation.

Geneva Begay – I like to ask if a non-profit organization wanted to request for the Chapter operator to do some work for them using the Chapter's heavy equipment, and the organization would pay the operator? Is this something that can be done? The work would be done at RWF.

Maria, CSC – No, there is always the liability (insurance) that would be of concern.

***Red Willow Farm Report –**

Geneva Begay – The electricity is back on at the pump house. It was knocked out by thunder and lightning last year. I'm currently working to get irrigation to 5 of our farmers. I have 2 farm board working at RWF. Also, Hazel James is planning to have a 5K run here in our community which will benefit RWF and I have plans for a workshop with the Grazing Officer Moore. Remember, there is still time to plant.

***Grazing Officer Moore's Report:**

Grazing Officer Moore – We had our monthly grazing meeting here at Tohatchi Chapter. We entertained transfers, probate for grazing permits and land use permits. We did have one homesite disputes, but we don't really get into the homesite disputes but we do what we can. If it needs mediation, we set that up and we try to find what the concerns are of both parties. If it can't be settled by mediation, it goes to the office of appeals. Also, BIA give us a list of permittees who have not done a tally count within in the last 5-10 years. These individuals are in jeopardy or in danger of losing their permits. We currently have 130 grazing permit holders in the Tohatchi grazing boundaries and I only have 35-40 active permittees which leaves 100 permit holders who are not getting tally counts done annually. These grazing permits could get cancelled at the end of the year. Along with the tally counts, the Department of Agriculture is requesting a record of their animals, for example; what color, what breed, where are the markings on the animal, and if the ears are marked. This new process came about because of incidents that occurred in western Navajo. Some cattle were stolen and the owner could not identify their animals. The Navajo Nation also is requiring that your animal have a Bar N brand by the end of the year. Navajo Nation cannot defend you and your animals in court if you are hauling off reservation. This grazing code has always been in the "red book." Also, if you are selling your livestock, just remember the animals have to be inspected on Navajo by our inspectors. If you are going to the Cow House, their auction is on Monday afternoon. If you are going Monday morning, the livestock inspector will be at Shiprock Chapter House. If you are going to Sun Valley, inspectors will be at Indian Wells. If you are going to Belen, you will need to go to W/R for inspector. These are the new regulations. There will be a NN wool buying event on July 9th-11th at W/R Fair grounds at 9am. Wool will be purchased at 35-37 cents a pound and of course the checks will be sent out later. The wool will have a grading system by the Dine College agents. We also were asked to assist with SCU to identify individual family burial plots. We will be encouraging families to do a land withdrawal for the burial plots. There will be no new plots. Come July I will be hosting another Farm & Ranch workshop here in Tohatchi.

Jeannie Benally – When will they be issuing out grazing permits again?

Grazing Officer Moore - There will not be anymore grazing permits issued.

VII. RESOLUTIONS:

1. Resolution to approve and initiate field observations and restoration projects to implement low impact watershed restoration practices within Tohatchi community.
2. Resolution to approve Housing Discretionary Funds for Herman Yazzie and Marie Allison.
3. Resolution to approve the ICIP list for the 2025 funding year.
4. Resolution supporting and approving "In-Kind Services" for Red Willow Farm.
5. Resolution to approve the CLUPC's plan of operation for the current year.
6. Resolution to amend resolution # 025-01-2025 for the construction of the Ii'ni MarketPlace from \$5 million to \$20 million.
7. Resolution to approve Summer Youth Employment for 13 students, 11 high school students and 2 college students for the month of June and July.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dog & Cat vaccination clinic will be held at Tohatchi Chapter on June 20th through the 23rd.

Laris Manuelito – Just a heads up, I will be doing community surveys regarding my store in August. I want to hear your thoughts and ideas on the store. What the community likes to see on the shelves and what they want in the grocery store. Red Willow Meeting tomorrow at 1pm.

IX. NEXT CHAPTER MEETING DATE: June 25, 2025 @ 9am

X. ADJOURNMENT: 1:0 pm

Submitted by;

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jean Crawford". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jean" and last name "Crawford" clearly legible.

Jean Crawford, Secretary/Treasurer, Tohatchi Chapter – June 19, 2025

cc: Mr. Elvis Bitsilly, President

Ms. Lee Rodgers, Vice President

Mr. Gerald Moore, Grazing Officer

Ms. Maria Allison, CSC

Mr. Nathan Notah, Council Delegate