



July 07, 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: 9:15 am**
- II. **ROLL CALL:** President Elvis Bitsilly, Vice President Lee Rodgers, Secretary/Treasurer Jean Crawford, and CLUPC members: Priscilla Duncan and Pernell Halona.
- III. **INVOCATION: Effie Barney**
- IV. **REVIEW OF THE AGENDA**
- V. **COMMUNITY REQUESTS AND PRESENTERS:**

Maria, CSC – I have application for Housing Discretionary Assistance for Minor Assistance for Franklin Sandoval. I am also requesting for scholarships for our students. Several of them are here and the others are going to school out of state, two in Colorado and one in New York. I'll have the students who are here come up and introduce themselves and they can tell us what their majors are and where they plan to attend school. Currently, I have 9 students who applied and provided all required documents. There were 2 others but they did not provide their documents in time. The deadline was on July 3rd at 4pm. I have 2 freshman, 3 juniors and 4 seniors.

Franklin Sandoval – I'm from Buffalo Springs and married to Sylvia Sandoval. I'm requesting for housing discretionary funds to weatherize our hogan which will be used for many traditional events. I would like to provide comfort to the people who will be joining us for our traditional events.
- VI. **REPORTS:**

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

After yesterday's meeting at Twin Lakes, the Oak Ridge fire is 26% contained. Twin Lakes is working on establishing a District 14 color guard. I'm not sure what our local veteran's organization is working on but they do have a meeting on Friday here at Chapter. Naschitti will also be having their meeting on Friday as well and the Veteran's Agency meeting will be held on Friday too in Houck, Az. I know our commander Shirleson has been dealing with some personal issues so he has missed several meetings.

The repair and maintenance of the heavy equipment can be very expensive like Maria mention earlier. \$9,500, we were trying to expand on governmental purpose in Sales Tax. Can we look into that again officials? We were trying to get repair and maintenance as a line item plus diesel fuel in Sales Tax. I think we need to schedule a meeting with Patricia Begay to talk about this.

Maria, CSC – I was informed that fund 23 is only for "Economy Development."

LDA Moore – We sent a letter from the District 14 Chapters to Budget and Finance regarding roads because we know it's going to be an issue. I would like to ask the officials to keep scheduling meeting with NNDOT. It seems NNDOT is more concern over rights-of-way then actually assisting. The 3-miles on the road 9653 down toward the eastflats is in constant need of grading but NNDOT is telling they can't touch the road until we have clearance from the BIA. The only 2 roads that is listed with NNDOT is Halona Canyon and Hot Springs roads. We are trying to add 3 more roads to their list which are Antelope Pass Road, 9653 road, and the Bitsilly Road (old route 11) which they claim should be under Mexican Springs. We need to straighten this out and if rights-of-way are needed, we need to include them.

This letter that we drafted to Budget and Finance says to give the Chapters more flexibility, give us a position for permanent carpenter, a heavy equipment operator, and a planner (project coordinator). Back in 2014 was the last time the Chapter received a permanent which was for the accountant (AMS position). So, there are only 2 permanent positions with the Chapter, the AMS and the CSC.

I am requesting the Chapter to submit a new resolution to amend the cost of the highway lighting to reflect the new cost currently. The Council Delegate wants to talk to the State Secretary of Transportation about our highway lighting project to see if we can get funding for the project.

The Chapter can do the same for the warehouse project as well. I know there is a shortfall but we need to get the current cost for this project and resubmit a resolution with all current information. I'm going to take a guess and say it's going to cost around \$400,000.

I want to thank the officials for going to DCD to knock on their doors in W/R. Lee Rodgers, VP has scheduled some meeting with them because we definitely need them at the table.

Rural Addressing is another project we have been discussing and the good news is there are finally implementing this project. I hope they can get all the inventory on these roads and I don't know if our CLUPC or the CSC will be involved. There are meetings being held for the rural addressing and I would like to see CLUPC attend these meetings. The next meeting will be held in 2 weeks.

Franklin Sandoval – They were out at Buffalo Springs yesterday driving around getting GPS readings.

LDA Moore – I attended a BIA Eastern Roads meeting which occurs quarterly and I can get you involved with their meetings. **Herb Larson** with the Gallup office stated if you have an emergency and need assistance, you can reach out to me.

As far as our Council Delegate Notah is concerned. He is a very busy person with the committee he is currently on, Law and Order including several obligations with the Council. This makes it difficult for him to attend all our meetings here at the Chapter.

Charles Arviso – I still live down at eastflats and I have a homesite lease there. I have not seen a grader out there working on the road. Also, an update on the veteran organization, we tried doing a color guard/honor guard in District 14 but we couldn't get anyone interested. Right now we only have 4 honor guards. Previously, we had 21 honor guard members and we could do 2 color guard ceremony in one day. These 4 members are getting up in years and I would like to encourage our younger veterans to join our organization.

Cecelia Yazzie – I'm following up on my request for a culvert. My road gets so muddy when it rains that we have to walk home at times. I've seen a couple of culverts over at Mexican Springs and I am wondering if we could get one from there?

Also, I used the Halona Canyon Road often and I hear BIA will be grading the road up the canyon. Will they be grading pass Mr. Pernell Halona's residence?

Priscilla Duncan – I would like to know the status of the bike trail. Can we get an update on this project?

Maria, CSC – As far as the culverts are concern, those culverts you see do belong to Mexican Springs Chapter and they are not selling the culverts. I am working on purchasing 6 culverts which will cost \$7,000 and we only have \$2,000 in the budget. So, this will require a budget transfer in house. I did send a letter to NNDOT to ask them for assistance to transport the culverts back from Albuquerque once we make the purchase. I have not received a response from NNDOT but I know they received my request in writing. The bike trail was approved by Cynthia Friedman with DOJ and she sent it to the Office of the President for President Nygren's approval and signature. The document was kicked back stating the document has to go through the 164 process now. With the help of my boss, Patricia Begay, we started the process for the 164. I did meet with Michelle Peterson who works in W/R who says she can help move the documents along a lot quicker for us. We'll have to keep following up on this. I did run into President Nygren and gave him an update on our bike trail and letting him know we need to get this project off the ground. He told me to give it to his administrative assistants to review and if she says it's good to go, I can sign off on this project.

As far as the grading of the roads quarterly, I'm just putting a monthly schedule together based on who all lives in each area of our community. If your road was missed, please report it to the Chapter so we can add your name to the list. You will not be required to come in to fill out a form to request to have your road graded unless it's an emergency where your road becomes flooded that you would need to come to the Chapter to complete a request form.

Sam Natonabah Jr. – What about the in-kind services for Red Willow? How would we proceed?

Maria, CSC - Red Willow would have to come in to complete a form to request for the heavy equipment.

Franklin Sandoval – Since LDA Moore is attending meetings area wide, I like to know what happen to

the fuel excise tax fund NNDOT had? Where is that money going? That money should have been identified for roads and culverts. What is it that NNDOT can do now is in matching funds with Chapter to buy culverts?

LDA Moore – A letter was given to Mr. Tom Platero requesting for his department's assistance with the culverts. We need to bring this up again when we meet with NNDOT again. Tohatchi Chapter did do a resolution to request for the fuel excise tax funds to be used at the Chapter level. We can probably look for the original resolution addressing the fuel excise tax.

Pricilla Duncan – I would like an update on the CHID homes for our community. I heard the process is done in stages, so what stage are we at?

Maria, CSC – We are at stage 3 currently and the homes for stages 1,2,3 have been delivered which are Naschitti and Twin Lakes. Tohatchi Chapter and Mexican Springs Chapter are under stages 4 and 5 and I will be scheduling another meeting with the CHID office to get more updates.

Pernell Halona – I would like an update on the continental bridge. Any word on this project? I know they came out to survey but no follow up since.

President Bitsilly – I was informed from the last meeting I attended; BIA is waiting on a document. One of their staff members will submit the document as soon as it's located. The project is fully funded but I can follow up on this.

I would like to make a request to our Council Delegate or the LDA to provide some information on our ARPA projects for example; the bathroom additions. We need to concentrate on expending these funds. The Chapter has provided to the Council Delegate all the required documents for these projects.

Also, there was a legislation dropped by Council Delegate Cherilyn Yazzie who is requesting for funds for our Safety Complex. I also want to mention the San Juan Lateral. The last meeting I attended, the discussion was mostly about the eastern agency chapters. So, I'm wondering what the status is on our San Juan Lateral water project here? All I learned was \$5 million was allocated for Tohatchi and another \$2.5 million to Mexican Springs for the project.

As far as rural addressing, they were having an issue with the number system. Tohatchi community and San Juan were using the same 9000 numbers which they are working on currently. I understand the people who are working on the rural addressing will be coming in after they complete the numbering system for our community. They will be meeting with us here at the Chapter.

LDA Moore – There is still **\$835 million** from ARPA that is just sitting there. NN Council is talking about what to do with this money. So, I like to ask the Chapter to be ready with a wish list in case more funds are allocated to the Chapters. On the other hand, if this does not workout, they will be considering hardship checks to tribal members again. **\$521 million** has been earmarked for the ARPA projects which includes the bathroom additions. Maria will be very busy keeping account of all the activities and funding which will need to be reported back to the FRF office.

The council session will happen in about 2 weeks and there are 5 Navajo Nation Directors who are not confirmed. This will be on the agenda to have them confirmed. One of the unconfirmed directors is the Candice Yazzie who is the director for DCD. What happens if she is not confirmed, we will be looking for another director. Also, our very own Mike Halona will be on the agenda who the council has dropped legislation to remove. I ask, not as a LDA but as a colleague to support Mr. Mike Halona.

The Navajo Nation received a budget every year where they do not spend all their funding. There is \$35 million in the "personnel lapse fund" which should be used for NN personnel but not being used. \$70 million of FY 2024 is unspent which will go back into the UUFBA account. So, we have money in the Sihasin funds. As far as the legislation that was dropped by Council Delegate Yazzie, its to fund all the plan and design of all the new Safety Complexes across Navajo. The plans & design for our Safety Complex is almost completed.

Franklin Sandoval – On our road here in the community, N-108 which connects the schools, school zones, and clinic, we don't see any stop signs and speed limit signs. For insurance purpose, we need to make sure this road is identified so our insurance carriers can make proper claims on our behalf.

Vice President Rodgers – LDA Moore has encouraged us to schedule a meeting with BIA and NNDOT to see if we can get an MOA drafted. If the BIA can't grade the roads, they are responsible for then they need to just give the roads back to the tribe. Senator Pinto pointed out to me that the roads to the schools

do not have curves. This is a project she recommends we as a Chapter work on by tapping into some available funds.

President Bitsilly – Two weeks ago I submitted a work order to Clarence Tsosie with the BIA on this N108 road. You are correct there are safety issue without signs on this road.

Lucinda Barney – I would like to go over some concerns and issues that I see. The artesian well near our homestead is attracting feral animals who are eating up the new foliage from the recent rain. The feral horses and the cows which are coming from Standing Rock hang around this well for water. There was once a cement block which covered the well, I'm wondering if this cement block can be put back on the well to discourage the feral animals who are looking for water. I also like the dam which surrounds the well to be dismantled because the water is unfit for the animals to drink. I've noticed several livestock dead near the dam. The rain water will accumulate around the dam and form some type of grease which I believe is killing the animals.

Other concern is the Speedway store where I see all the bird poop settling in the entrance of the store. I don't understand why the workers at the store cannot clean up that mess by hosing down the entrance to the store. I feel it's a big sore eye and a safety issue and Speedway needs to clean up around their store. Our post office also need attention. The trees surrounding the post office is getting out of hand and I would like to know if the Chapter can be of help. Maybe the PEP workers can do some cleanup and tree trimming.

I also want to mention someone made a road through my niece, Charlene Tom's homesite which is just on the other side of my sister's homesite next to the old water resource yard. I'm not sure if this is where the bike trail will be going through, I just hope it's not. I would like to ask the Chapter if they can put up a barrier there to keep people from driving through the homesite.

Lastly, who takes care of all the illegal dumping signs. There is a sign put up down eastflat way and this sign is broken up and needs to be replaced. Were these signs reported to EPA?

I want to have my road graded again, but I have not submitted my request to BIA. I did call NNDOT but because of the rights-of-way issues, they will not do the grading. So Charles, the reason I don't ask to have your road graded too is because I have people who want to party down that road. They come around drinking and causing havoc and sometimes they will come to our gate honking to get some help when they get their vehicle stuck in the sand.

I also want to say thank you to the late Julie Badonie who started this water project for us back in 2017. It continues on with the previous administration, President Sonny Moore and we now have water. We are waiting to have them install the water filters under the sinks in the house so we can have drinking water (potable drinking water). I want to mention, I am currently looking for someone to help put up siding and someone to help with re-installing my windows. If you can help or if you know of anyone who is a carpenter, please refer them to me.

Virginia Harvey – I am requesting for a support resolution for my husband which will be submitted to the Veterans Administration. We did receive a support resolution from the Chapter about 8 years ago. The VA approved us for a home but we never received the home. Now, we are going to ask again and go through the same process for a home.

LDA Moore – I remember this resolution that Virginia has brought up. Our council delegate has been working closely with the Veteran Administration at the State level and feels the pueblos around the city of Albuquerque are getting more attention. He wants to bring the committee out to Tohatchi to have a District 14 Veterans conference. The representative in W/R with Offices of Legislative Services, Art Hardy Jr.

Charles Arviso – I would like to ask LDA Moore to have Council Delegate Notah to start attending our Veteran's meetings. Also I would like to request for assistance from the PEP workers.

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

1. Update on status of Senior Center –

Maria, CSC – According to the supervisor of the Senior Center Orlynda Dennison, we were hoping to have the Center back open in June, but a problem arose. Orlynda had a budget which was suppose to use expended by the end of June 2025 and that deadline was not met. So, the funds were reverted back and now she will have to re-apply for funds. We did clear the inspection conducted by IHS and received our

certification, but we were told we also need a sanitation permit which is issued by the Navajo Nation. We had some of the students do some cleaning at the center and workforce employees did some re-painting and cleaned around the center. The center is fully staff except for a supervisor. One was selected but decided not to take the position so the position is currently open.

2. Report on Safety Complex –

Maria, CSC –

3. Cemetery Policy –

Maria, CSC – I completed the draft policy and shared with the officials. They reviewed the policy and made some corrections to the policy. Once the policy has been approved by the community it will go to the Department of Justice for their approval. After DOJ's approval we can implement this new cemetery policy. I will be meeting with a Rollie's representative who will assist with the documentation of burials of the new expansion of the cemetery.

I also have 12 students with the SYEP, three are working at the elementary school and one working at the store and the rest here working at the Chapter. As far as the college students, I have one working at the City of Gallup and the other one at the Complex in Gallup. Their last day will be this Friday. All the students did a very good job and we were happy to have them.

Since we received our 2nd half of our budget, we have all the PEP employees back and working. We will be grading roads and have implemented a new process for the grading of roads which will be on a quarterly basis. We will start on south of Tohatchi at the Bitsilly Road and will be going north to mile post 34.5. We want the operator to start building the roads back up so the water will not settle on to the road. We will be providing training on how to build the roads up. I am working on a map of where everyone lives in the community and I am also working on a time frame as to how much time it will take to repair a road and how many the operator can do in one day.

Also, the grader needs 6 new tires and I received a quote of \$9,500. I'm requesting to either do a budget transfer or use the "unhealthy food tax." The Chapter owns 2 backhoes and one backhoe has not been used in years. It needs some minor repairs like oil change, new tires, and battery which is going to cost the Chapter over \$2,000. I'm also requesting to use the "unhealthy food tax" fund to pay for the repairs.

I am also requesting for a budget transfer from within the Housing Discretionary (Fund 09) from major to minor to offset the negative balance.

Another resolution request for our 3rd quarter revenue from the trash station, rental of the facility, rental from the heavy equipment, xerox/faxing, and showers for the months of April/May/June 2025 in the total amount of \$4,629.73. This fund will be going back into Fund 01.

I also want to mention, we are working with Navajo Nation Diabetes Program to schedule some activities here at the Chapter for our community. Tomorrow, there will be a hike at 12pm, July 19th will be our 1st fun run and walk (5K). July 22nd there will be a Zumba class at 11:30am and I'm working on scheduling a food handler and CPR training here at Chapter. This is still in the works but will be announced on the radio once I get it scheduled.

President Bitsilly – We ordered 100 t-shirts for the 5K and if you are one of the first 100, you will be receiving a free t-shirt.

Franklin Sandoval – I would like to hear the CHR's report here at the Chapter meetings. Secondly, I didn't understand the new process for the grading of roads quarterly. Will we still have to complete the Chapter request forms? Third, I understand the BIA will no longer be grading roads within the Tohatchi Chapter for the next 1 to 2 years. I hear the Grazing Officer may have information on how an MOU can be established with the BIA on the procedures of road grading. The Chapter can use their motor grader to grade the roads and get reimbursed from the BIA. Clarence Tsosie states all the information was given to the Grazing Officer and he should be aware of this process.

President Bitsilly – There is on going discussion with the BIA regarding the maintenance and services of our roads. Back in 2023, there was a resolution in place requesting the Navajo Nation Department of Transportation to grade 15 miles of the roads which were identified by the Chapter. These 15 miles of grading of roads is part of that agreement. It has been difficult to get NNDOT to the table to work with the Chapter regarding the designated 15 miles of road grading. So, the discussion is still on-going.

Vice President Rodgers – I just want to say thank you to the Chapter staff and officials for helping out

with donations during the Oak Ridge fire near the summit.

***Vice President Rodgers read the cemetery policy to the attendances at the Planning Meeting.**

Discussion on the policy was open up: Questions that were asked.

1. **Charles Arviso** – Does the Chapter take care of the identification of the family plots and where they are located in the community? And does the Chapter select someone who will oversee the family plot?

Answer: No, family would have to have the land withdrawn first and fenced in and this will require you to work with Land Administration.

The family would have to identify who will be the sexton of the family plot. They will be responsible for all decisions regarding the family plot.

2. **Franklin Sandoval** – Is the Chapter looking for a new location for a cemetery? Since you indicated the space is very limited, I would think families are looking at family plots.

Answer: The cemetery was open to all of the District 14 before but we have been stressing to the other chapters like Coyote Canyon and Twin Lakes to find some land for a cemetery. It is in their best interest to have their own cemeteries to accommodate their community members.

3. **Wilfred Yazzie** – I'm happy to hear that our Chapter is working on this policy and answer some of our questions. We have a family plot in Buffalo Springs that is fenced in with 23 family members buried there. I'm working on getting the land withdrawn and what I want to know is what is the process to get this done? Also, the cremation portion of the policy, it states 6 feet deep, I think 3 feet deep is acceptable.

Answer: The forms for a land withdrawal is on line with the Navajo Nation Land Department and the cremation should state 3 feet on the policy. Correction will be made.

4. **President Bitsilly** – We've toured the cemetery to see what was available currently and it's full. We need to move over to the new expansion which is only 1.5 but we can't do that until we pass our new cemetery policy. The Navajo Nation is discouraging new family plots because of the water and electrical lines. If a family wanted a homesite and there was a grave nearby. They may not be able to get water because NTUA will not go through a burial site. This policy has been approved through legislation and has been provided to all 110 chapters to use as their policy.

5. **Cecelia Yazzie** – Is this policy a rough draft or is it set in stone? Can the policy be amended? Also, can the fee for non-chapter members be increase to \$75.00? I have a concern about the parking at the cemetery, people are starting to park on the eastside on the waterline that goes through there.

Answer: This policy is considered a rough draft and yes policy can be amended annually. As far as the \$75 charge to non-members, according to Navajo Nation we cannot exceed the \$75 amount.

Maria, CSC – the Grazing Officer and I are working on identifying family plots, so far, we have identified 11 and putting it on google map. We actually did this off of google earth and next, we will be going out to these sites to identify the plots to mark and name them and to see if the family needs to do a land withdrawal. This information will be submitted to W/R which they require from all family with family plots on Navajo.

Priscilla Duncan – There is a family plot which was started by the late Leo Mitchell has expanded to a cemetery near the Mitchell residence. I don't think the land was ever withdrawn because there is no fence around the graves, but we get a lot of the debris from this cemetery. I'm calling it a cemetery because there are more than 20 people buried there I believe. We as relatives who live in the area did not agree to this expansion of the cemetery. Like you mentioned, it is a sensitive issue and discussion on the topic can be difficult, but some family members and myself do not want anyone else to be buried there.

Pernell Halona – As far as the land withdrawal, I'm not sure where to look for the documents pertaining to land withdrawals. I've found the section on family plots and the role of the sexton would be which is the person who will clean the cemetery and maintains the cemetery by making sure it is fenced in. If you want to have a family plot you should be responsible for it. The other reason people are doing family plot is because of land issues. They think burying someone near home entitles them to the land.

***CLUPC Report**

Pernell Halona –

***Red Willow Farm Report –**

Geneva Begay – We are looking to replace a vacant position with the Red Willow Farm Board. We have two garden beds out front of the Chapter which was put together by Dine Youth. It is a program with funding provided by Hazel James and we decided to go to District 14 and address the summer youth

programs. We were able to get on the Chapters agenda by completing the required paperwork. We hope to show the youth the importance of gardening. With all the forest fires that are occurring across the country, you have to think about all the trees which provide oxygen to us are burnt. We should be thinking planting more trees in our area.

Some history on the RWF, in 1920 was the 1st time farm plots were established at Red Willow. In 1934, the Chooshgai reservoir was created and in 1940 an irrigation project was approved for Chooshgai Lake. I feel like we are forgetting about agriculture and I believe it's an important part of our Tohatchi history. We should be encouraging our children and students to learn about farming.

The fish & wildlife staff were back to assist with small projects. They identified an area along Halona Canyon near the Muskett's residence where the land was starting to erode. To help prevent more erosion, they covered the area with rocks to stop more erosion from happening. I recommend the Chapter do a resolution to address the possibility of floods in our area. Not just floods but any type of emergency.

Sam Natonabah – Currently, we don't have the water supply to have farmers farm at Red Willow. We do have a water tank down there but it's just enough for 1acre of farming and the tank takes time to fill backup with water. So, now we are encouraging dry land farming. We are also looking at having the diversion dam gate repaired. The Department of Water Resource has the funding but like everything else it takes time.

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

Grazing Officer Moore Absent

RESOLUTIONS:

1. Resolution to support Virginia Harvey request for housing assistance with the VA.
2. Resolution to amend the warehouse cost of construction to the current market rate for construction.
3. Resolution to approve FY 2025 Chapter's activities General fund account revenue budget (Fund 01) in the amount of \$4,629.73 for 3rd quarter, April, May, June 2025.
4. Resolution approving a budget transfer within Fund 40, the Navajo Nation Unhealthy Food Tax fund, in the amount of \$5,000 to replenish repairs & maintenance construction equipment repair fund account.
5. Resolution to approve a budget transfer within Fund 13, the Navajo Nation Scholarship General Fund, in the amount of \$1,800 to cover the negative balance in Financial Assistance Fund.
6. Resolution to recommend approving 9 registered college students to receive fall 2025 financial assistance from the Chapter Fund 13.
7. Resolution to recommend and approve the Housing Discretionary Assistance Fund (09) for the following community members: Franklin Sandoval respectively.
8. Resolution to approve a budget transfer within Fund (09), the Navajo Nation Housing Discretionary Fund, in the amount of \$800.00 to replenish minor repair fund account.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS: July 16, we will be hosting the Indian Affair Committee from Santa Fe from 8am-5pm here at the Chapter. President Bitsilly requesting to move the regular Chapter meeting to July 21st instead of Wednesday, July 23rd with meeting starting at 9am. Please refer to you July calendar for all the activities occurring here at the Chapter. Tohatchi Veteran's meeting July 11th at 10am, CLUPC meeting on July 15th at 9am, NN Diabetes Fun Walk and Run on July 19th at 7am, RWFB meeting on July 22nd at 1pm.

VIII. NEXT CHAPTER MEETING DATE: July 21, 2025 @ 9:00am

IX. ADJOURNMENT: 1:02pm

Submitted by;



Jean Crawford, Secretary/Treasurer, Tohatchi Chapter – July 15, 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