

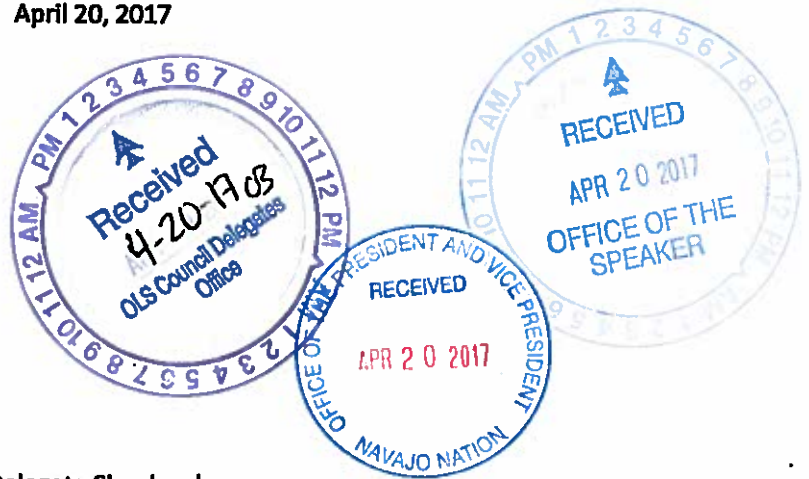
# NHA Hooghan—Center of Family Growth, Strength and Beauty NAVAJO HOUSING AUTHORITY

April 20, 2017

Russell Begaye, President  
Office of the President/Vice President  
The Navajo Nation

Lorenzo Bates, Speaker  
Office of the Speaker  
The Navajo Nation Council

Alton Joe Shepherd, Council Delegate  
The Navajo Nation Council



Dear President Begaye, Speaker Bates, and Delegate Shepherd:

Although we have not officially received your letter, the Navajo Housing Authority (NHA) Board of Commissioners have come across an electronic version of your letter through other channels. With all due respect, we feel it is incumbent upon us to send an immediate response to your accusation and allegations against the Board of Commissioners, the NHA staff and the entire organization.

First, let us remind you that you are the one's who appointed us to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the NHA Board of Commissioners. During the interviews and conversations, you vetted and questioned us, before confirmation, and then gave us specific instructions to not only oversee this organization but to enact certain changes. We took these responsibilities seriously. But once we settled in and assumed our positions, we realized we were deeply misled and misinformed about NHA. We learned the truth about the issues facing the NAHASDA program and NHA operations. More specifically, the managing staff of the organization are competent, capable and most qualified of any professionals to carry and guide us through these challenges. Therefore, to request the, "...resignation and/or removal of the managing officers of the Navajo Housing Authority," is completely out of line, outrageous and simply wrong.

For years, we kept telling you that NHA is an anomaly, it is a rural giant—no other housing agency in the United States compares to its operations or unique isolated conditions. NHA is an organization like no other. Why is this so hard for the Nation's leadership to understand?

Everyone wants to do something about NHA but as we have learned, after being in the thick of the issues and spending considerable time with staff, that change at NHA takes time and comes with much work. Moreover this work cannot be done with the interference of politics.

And much has been done. In the past four years, the 365 individuals who make up the NHA staff have worked tirelessly to meet aggressive goals to spend down the balance of our federal funds by nearly half, averaging \$142 million per year in expenditures. NHA has built more than 500 new housing units and modernized nearly 900 existing units since 2012. Just last year (2016), NHA constructed 119 new units and modernized 50 units. The Board of Commissioners commends the NHA employees for their

work; we stand in full support of them as we all work together to advance the housing goals for the Navajo people.

We are well aware that the housing need on the Navajo Nation is overwhelming. Members of this board are mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, educators, former Navajo Nation employees, healthcare professionals, accountants, community organizers, elders, homeowners, rental tenants, former Bennett Freeze residents and individuals who represent a varied cross-section of the Navajo population. We care deeply about the Navajo people and we care about housing. We are offended that Navajo leadership would blatantly criticize our trust without taking the time to discuss with us your concerns. In Navajo beliefs and customs we believe in the traditional concepts of "talking things out" and coming to an understanding. As Navajo leaders, you should employ these concepts and uphold the traditional leadership and fundamental law that Naataaniis have practiced since time immemorial.

Additionally, we are extremely disappointed in the way this letter was circulated to the press, on social media outlets and outside parties before we ever received notice or a copy of the letter. Please note, that we have yet to receive the letter. It is unthinkable that the Navajo leadership would go to the media justifying their defamatory, libelous and unfounded statements before we ever received a copy of the letter. This blind-sighted accusation is unbecoming of a leader and unsettling to our Navajo tenants/homebuyers and the Navajo people. As leaders, we should be working towards hozhoo and finding positive solutions, and not sharing negative and hostile speech or furthering hashkeeki naat'aah. This conflict only benefits outsiders who want to see us fail.

The NHA Board of Commissioners asks you, our colleagues on the Navajo Nation Council, to come together with us to find solutions. Let us take the politics out of the business of providing housing for our people, and let us get the work done.

Sincerely,

NHA BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS;


  
Ervin Chavez, Chairperson

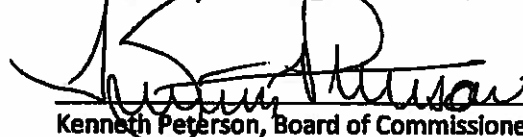
  
Christina Lewis, Secretary/Treasurer

  
Marleita Begay, Board of Commissioner

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Kenneth Chester, Board of Commissioner

  
Asa Begaye, Vice Chairperson

  
Lula Jackson, Board of Commissioner

  
Kenneth Peterson, Board of Commissioner

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Ben Johnson, Board of Commissioner

cc: 23rd NNC Delegates