

County supervisors hear presentation on new drug prevention initiative

By Shawn White

In last week’s special at the recent Navajo County Board of Supervisors meeting, the supervisors heard a presentation on the Reaching Rural Initiative, which is aimed at addressing substance use challenges in rural communities. This initiative is part of a broader effort to support justice-involved individuals with substance use and co-occurring disorders, which could be a big milestone in mitigating some of the harmful effects of drug addiction.

During the meeting, Navajo County Criminal Justice Coordinator Dawn Wilson provided detailed insights into the initiative. “The Reaching Rural Initiative is a one-year initiative that brought together rural practitioners from different backgrounds and communities throughout the country to support us in advancing solutions to addressing the persistent challenges of substance use in our communities,” Wilson explained.

Wilson further highlighted the collaborative efforts within the county, “Navajo County was one of the counties selected to participate. We put together a team consisting of Supervisor (Daryl) Seymour, myself, Lieutenant (Scott) Peterson from the Sheriff’s Office, Alyssa Lemon from the health department, and Lonnie Young from CBI

(Community Bridges, Inc.)”

According to Wilson, this team met monthly, both virtually and in person, and traveled across the United States to learn from other rural counties’ programs.

The initiative’s background data were crucial for its development. “Navajo County tracks overdose fatalities within our county, and not only do they track those, they track those with prior incarceration history,” Wilson noted. “In 2019, 36% of the people that fatally overdosed had a prior incarceration history. In 2020, it went up to 60%, and almost doubled in 2021 from 19 up to 76%”. This alarming data prompted the team to consider earlier interventions to prevent overdoses and look for alternative solutions to curb this behavior. Wilson also spoke about the difficulties that drug users in the county have to getting clean including that transportation can be hard to find as well as the limited number of providers for this kind of care in the county.

At the end of the presentation, Supervisor Seymore commented on the initiative’s importance, saying, “It is truly something that’s needed in our community because the influx of drugs and the disorders that we have, if we treat them and try to change, we’ll definitely make our society better.” Board Chairman Jason Whiting echoed this sentiment,

emphasizing the initiative’s potential to drive results and impact change for good.

At the recent Navajo County Board of Supervisors meeting on May 28, a significant focus was placed on the fiscal year 2023 audit findings. Despite some issues, the audit concluded positively. Don Bohart from the Arizona State Office of the Auditor General said, “We reported an unmodified or clean opinion, which means the county’s financial statements are reliable.” Additionally, no fraud was detected during the audit, high accolades that the county has boasted for several years now.

Audit findings identified deficiencies in the county’s purchasing fuel card process. The county paid nearly \$38,000 for employees’ fuel purchases but did not ensure that the fuel was used in county vehicles. “We estimated that there were approximately 750 fuel purchases made by over 175 employees. We and the county could not determine whether these fuel purchases were for official county business purposes because the supporting documentation was not readily available,” the auditor explained. It was noted that there is no reason to believe that there is significant fraud happening, however there isn’t the proper documentation to be 100% certain of that aspect of the budget. Recommendations were made to improve



Photo by Jim Buckley

Spring is in full swing and La Posada Hotel in Winslow is certainly a place to go to see it in action. Photographer Jim Buckley used his impressive skills to catch this finch getting a drink of water from a spigot at the hotel.

internal controls and ensure compliance with county policies.

The audit also revealed issues in risk management for IT systems. The county had not fully implemented IT risk assessment policies and procedures. Nicholas Rubeda also from the auditor general’s office said, “This occurred because the county’s administration and IT management have not fully implemented the IT access and system configurations and change management policies and procedures they have developed.” Rubeda mentioned that the county plans to correct these deficiencies by June 30, 2025.

The supervisors also celebrated two high school teams. The Snowflake High School track team was celebrated for winning the Division 4 Track and Field State Championship. “This is the fourth year in a row our boys have won state, and the second year for our girls,” said Coach Alicia LaDuke. “Our girls’ team won with 146 points, more than doubling the second-place team behind us.” The team’s exceptional performance included winning all three relay events and setting multiple school records. “Our boys team came together as a team and got that win. That was excellent,” the coach added.

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Holbrook’s 42nd Annual Old West Fest set for Friday and Saturday

Get ready for Holbrook’s 42nd Annual Old West Fest, set to take place from 2 to 9 p.m. this Friday and from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. this Saturday, June 7-8 at the Navajo County Fairgrounds, located at 404 E. Hopi Drive. Plan for a fun filled day that includes a cornhole tournament, Battle of the Bands, junior rodeo, Bucket of Blood 5K and half marathon, art show and vendors, contests, kids games, and more.

An art show will be held in the Open Class Building. The show will include art exhibits, demonstrations and vendors from throughout the Southwest region. Artwork will be available for purchase and there will be a silent auction. The featured artist has been changed and will be local artist Liz Nichols. For more information, contact Kip Woolford at 928-242-7553.

The Chili & Chile Challenge will be held on Saturday, where contestants can enter bean and/or meat chili, or red or green chile. Entry is free, just email director@holbrookkazchamber.org with the subject line “I accept Chili/Chile Challenge.” Rules will be emailed.

From 3 to 8 p.m. on Friday, a Battle of the Bands will be held with entries still being accepted. Email director@holbrookkazchamber.org to sign up. First prize is \$1,000, second is \$300 and third is \$200.

At 10 a.m. on Saturday, the Junior Rodeo & Open Barrel Race will be held at the fairgrounds. Participants do not need to be a member to win a buckle. Buckles go to all around champions and open barrel racers. For details and to participate text 928-243-4216.

The cornhole tournament will begin at 3 p.m. on Saturday, at the Navajo County Fairgrounds. The cost is \$30 per team (bring your own partner), with a 50% payout, plus prizes for first and second place. There will also be a \$5 knockout for 100% payout. Register at scorholio.com or in-person no later than 2:30 p.m. at the event. For more information, contact Donna at 928-892-8562.

More details will be included as they are provided. For more information contact the Holbrook Chamber of commerce at director@holbrookkazchamber.org.

Hopi, Navajo and San Juan Southern Paiute tribes agree to a historic water rights settlement

KYKOTSMOVI – The Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, and San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe have reached a historic milestone for water security in northeastern Arizona. In a momentous act of tribal solidarity, all three tribes have approved a settlement agreement with state parties and other non-Indian water users to resolve the tribes’ respective claims to surface water and groundwater in northeastern Arizona.

On May 9, the parties to the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Settlement Agreement concluded intensive, months-long negotiations, decades in the making. But the settlement must be formally approved by each of the parties’ leadership and ratified by an act of federal legislation before the tribes can

enforce their water rights.

Recognizing the time pressures imposed by the federal legislative calendar, the Hopi Tribal Council strove to meet the occasion. By May 20, the Hopi Tribal Council had participated in extensive briefing sessions with its negotiation team, reviewed the settlement documents, prepared an action item, and introduced Resolution H-035-2024 to approve the Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Settlement Agreement. The resolution passed unanimously. The other two tribes followed quickly behind, passing their respective resolutions approving the settlement on May 23.

The Northeastern Arizona Indian Water Settlement Agreement is the largest Indian water

settlement to date. It settles the water rights of three tribes, creates mechanisms for managing and protecting water resources shared by the reservations, highlights the cultural significance of water and principles of stewardship, and includes a request for the federal funding necessary to build infrastructure to deliver water to remote tribal communities.

The tribes and non-Indian water users have been actively litigating water rights claims in the Arizona state court system for over thirty years. Recently, from 2018-2022, the Hopi Tribe participated in two trials to assert its past, present, and future water rights in the Little Colorado River Basin.

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Photo by Shawn White

Resident Ann Schmidt (left) speaks with Winslow’s Planning and Zoning Officer Jason Sanks (right) during the public viewing of the land maps included in the newest edition of the city’s general plan.

Citizen input still welcome as Winslow completes general plan

By Shawn White

The City of Winslow is on the verge of adopting a new general plan, a comprehensive document designed to guide the city’s development over the next decade. This is the first general plan the city has attempted to pass in over 20 years. This plan includes a land-use map that provides an overarching vision for the types of development envisioned for various areas within the city. It is important to note, however, that this is not a zoning map; it does not dictate specific zoning for individual properties but rather outlines the general types of development the city aims to encourage and

in what neighborhoods.

The city has held several meetings leading up to the creation of this general plan and is now seeking final input from the community. An open house was recently held to engage with residents and gather their feedback. Additionally, the city is looking to establish a planning and zoning commission because of the number of citizens who want it reinstated; applications for which are on the city’s website.

Several significant updates have been made to the general plan, many of which may not yet be shown to the public but were based on public input.

The city will continue to permit the closure of

downtown streets for events. There will also be efforts to implement traffic calming measures and improve RV access in the downtown area.

Additional retail land uses have been designated for both the east and west sides of town, with increased acreage allocated for commercial development in these areas. There was concern about adding commercial land use north of the prison, which is located south of the city, to buffer the area before transitioning to residential zones. In response, language was added to the plan to contemplate different land uses around these areas.

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