

September 4, 2020

Mayor Timothy M. Keller
Office of the Mayor
1 Civic Plaza, 11th Floor
Albuquerque, NM 87102

RE: The City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaskan Native Affairs Calls
for the Immediate Action and Un-Blocking of Fresh Water to the Community of Tó'hajiilee
(Navajo Nation)

Dear Mayor Keller,

It has been brought to our attention the tribal community of Tó'hajiilee, located 24 miles west of Albuquerque, has a significant opportunity to receive quality water piped to their community of about 2,500 men, women, children and elderly who reside there. However, we have been informed Western Albuquerque Land Holding (WALH) is stalling the completion process to provide a 2-mile easement for the water pipeline, a critical event which has been blocked for over 2 years.

The community of Tó'hajiilee has struggled for years with dilapidated water wells that either do not produce enough water or are of such poor-quality the people cannot drink it. With the present-day threat of COVID-19 and the potential harm and impacts on Native American communities, the quality of water critically needed for community members is even more needed.

It has been made clear to us, a commitment through a cooperative agreement between Navajo Nation and Albuquerque Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABCWUA) is already in place and WALH does not own the water, nor will they have to pay for this process to be completed. WALH is stalling and we are gravely concerned because there is a time constraint for this project to move forward and we believe the Navajo Nation has dedicated funds available that would need to be utilized prior to the end of this year.

No community in this modern age should be denied basic needs. We strongly urge you take action and support efforts so this water pipeline will be constructed and completed. We have a viable solution in front of us and we need to do our moral duty to help the Tó'hajiilee community. We are bringing this issue to your attention as we recognize the importance of strengthening our government to government relationships between the city, county and the surrounding tribal communities which includes the Navajo Nation's Tó'hajiilee community.

In sum, we cannot allow businesses and governments to ignore or deny the access to safe drinking water, especially if that water access means a better-quality of life. We need to hold business and governments accountable, in fulfilling the commitments they have made with tribal communities. We ask for your support on this critical issue.

The City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaskan Native Affairs (CABQ-CAIANA) serves as an advising group for advocating the rights and issues of American Indian and Alaska Native Affairs within the City of Albuquerque and surrounding areas, and we will continue to encourage all citizens to contact their city and state leadership to voice their concerns.

For more information about the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaskan Native Affairs please contact Dawn Begay, Native American Affairs Coordinator at (505) 768-4547, dbegay@cabq.gov, or Terry A Sloan, Intergovernmental Tribal Liaison at (505) 768-3041, terrysloan@cabq.gov.

Sincerely,

Members of the City of Albuquerque Commission on American Indian and Alaskan Native Affairs