

Community in Solidarity meeting raises questions

By Jessica Kutz, Staff Reporter | Posted: Tuesday, January 17, 2017 4:21 pm

Representatives of local organizations, community members and others who may be affected by President-elect Donald Trump's possible anti-immigration policies met Sunday night to discuss the situation and to talk about the future.

Ximena Rebolledo, one of the organizers of the event, said she was pleased with how the night went. The meeting was held at Wilkinson Public Library.

"I feel super, super, super happy about how it all turned out; I was extremely impressed by the attendance, that was my biggest worry," Rebolledo said. "Considering that Trump is days away from taking office, we definitely have a large number of our Latino population going into hiding."

"I was super impressed to see how many Latinos did show up in order to see this powerful message," she added.

Those in attendance included San Miguel County Commissioner Kris Holstrom; Mandy Miller, executive director of the San Miguel Resource Center; Lynn Borup, executive director of Tri-County Health; Michael Gass, superintendent of the Telluride School District; Jerry Greene, owner of Baked in Telluride; John Gardner, chief executive officer of Telluride Medical Center; and representatives from several other local nonprofits and community groups.

The meeting, organized to show support for the immigrant community, also was informational.

San Miguel County Court Judge Susanne Ross, who also is an immigration lawyer, offered advice to those who are fearing the future.

"Everyone is hearing that one of the big things (Trump) wants to do is deport immigrants immediately. What he doesn't seem to realize is that we have a Constitution in this country," Ross said about Trump's possible plans. "Everyone who is undocumented has a right to a hearing before a judge."

She added: "There are 500,000 people waiting for a hearing and you can't get a hearing date for at least four years. During that time you can be out on bond and stay within the United States."

She also offered advice on how to handle interactions with Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

"If immigration should come to your house: Do not go outside and do not open the door, they cannot enter your home without a warrant," she said.



Community in Solidarity

Ximena Rebolledo, right, facilitated the Community in Solidarity meeting on Sunday evening at the Wilkinson Public Library. Many questions were raised at the meeting about future immigration policy and law enforcement. (Photo by Jessica Kutz/Telluride Daily Planet)

She advised never to speak or sign anything from a U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer without first consulting an immigration lawyer.

One attendee, Bianca Alonzo, said that while the visible community support is appreciated, what she really wanted to know is what the town or law enforcement stance will be.

“One of our biggest questions that all of the Latina community has is, what will the town do, the police or the court?” Alonzo said.

“I am worried,” she said. “I have a daughter, and my husband is working all the time and I’m worried that somebody will come and something is going to happen and I want to know what the town is going to do.”

However, at the request of Rebolledo, law enforcement officials were not present to answer questions.

She said the next step is having a small meeting with law enforcement to gain their input.

In an interview with the *Daily Planet*, San Miguel County Sheriff Bill Masters said the county position is to uphold all state laws and to respect the Constitution.

According to Masters, ICE officers often request that people who are arrested for a crime and are suspected of illegally residing in the country be detained at the county jail until ICE can pick them up.

“Our basic premise is that we follow the Constitution and the Constitution says we can’t detain people on just the request of ICE,” he said. “They have to have a warrant. If they don’t have a warrant signed by a judge we aren’t detaining them.”

Masters added that in his opinion, most deportations or arrests made by ICE in the county are usually linked to serious crimes.

Masters gave some advice.

“Everybody should take a deep breath and wait and see what is coming,” he said. “You definitely don’t want to commit a crime. That is one thing you can do.”

A full recording of Sunday’s meeting is available online at www.tchnetwork.org