

Grants mayor hosts ‘peaceful protest’ Fourth of July parade

Written by By Dominic Aragon Sun Correspondent
Friday, 17 July 2020 03:16



GRANTS — Despite public health orders from Gov. Michelle Lujan-Grisham for New Mexicans to stay home and avoid mass gatherings, Grants Mayor Martin “Modey” Hicks organized a “peaceful protest” Fourth of July parade in the Cibola County city.

After the Grants City Council did not sanction a holiday parade, the mayor took matters into his own hands, organizing the event.

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Although not officially sanctioned by the Grants City Council, the parade was called the 115th annual parade for the town.

"There was no way I was going to let the parade die on its 115th year," Hicks told the *Gallup Sun*. "I tried to get the council to support it, and they wouldn't support the First Amendment of the Constitution, which is sickening to me, but that was their choice."

"So when they chose not to support a parade, I decided that we were going to do one with or without the council because it's our God-given constitutional right to do so."

The two-term mayor partnered with a couple local business owners to make the parade happen.

The event started just after 9 am along West High Street. The parade — led by Hicks on an ATV — proceeded along First Street, turned around on Second Street, and ended near Grants City Hall where the mayor met with residents and spoke to TV reporters.

Officers from the Grants Police Department and deputies from the Cibola County Sheriff's Office were present at the event to maintain order.

"They were providing security to make sure we had a clear route, to make sure nobody came and tried to disrupt what we were doing, and cause any trouble. They were there for the security and safety of the public. They were not a part of it, make that perfectly clear," Hicks said.

The mayor estimated at least 300 people showed up to the parade, with nine floats and countless vehicles and motorcycles following the procession. Republican U.S. House of Representatives candidate Yvette Herrell was on one of the floats with other political figures and candidates including Cibola County Commissioner Robert Windhorst.

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Charles Lange attended the parade, watching from the sidewalk of his family's business, Lange Insurance Agency, along First Street.

Lange said he felt safe attending the event.

"I was hoping that more people would turn up to watch the parade and was thrilled to see so many enthusiastic people celebrating the Fourth of July by decorating and driving their vehicles in the parade," Lange said.

Lange added that despite the smaller turnout this year, he could feel the enthusiasm of the people at the parade.

"The enthusiasm was as evident this year as in previous years. This was a fine example of true peaceful assembly and expression," he said.

"In this celebration of the Fourth of July, one political party was completely absent from this event. That same political party, through Governor Lujan Grisham, the person holding the highest elected office in the State of New Mexico, condemns peaceful, patriotic gatherings in one breath while praising groups engaged in the deliberate destruction of property and desecration of our history," Lange said.

"... The protest parade provided me an outlet to be around others to celebrate the Fourth of July."

Mayor Hicks — who has clashed publicly with the governor this year over the reopening of businesses during the pandemic — is not expecting any response from the governor's office, and said he doesn't care if she retaliates.

"Our governor is nothing more than a communist, she is a Marxist, no doubt about it. Look what she's doing to our constitutional rights," Hicks said.

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“My constitutional right said I had the right to gather [Saturday] morning, but the governor said I couldn’t. So who do I follow? Do I follow the written law of the land, the Constitution, or do I follow the word-of-mouth law that comes out of this tyrant’s mouth? I’m going to follow the oath that I took before God and this entire community and uphold the constitutions of New Mexico and of the country,” he added.

We reached out to the governor’s office for comment on this story.

“There is no comment. That mayor is a disgrace,” Tripp Stelnicki, the director of communications for the governor, told the *Gallup Sun* in an e-mail.

“This is bigger than Grants, it’s bigger than the state of New Mexico,” Hicks said. “This is about our constitutional republic.”

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