

Landavazo suggests putting a cork in Ceremonial wine tasting event

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
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Mary Jean Christiansen most likely wasn't expecting to defend a wine tasting event when she came before the City Council June 9 to discuss the 94th Annual Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Ceremonial request of \$50,000 in lodgers tax money for use of advertising the four day event.

However, Councilor Allan Landavazo saw it as an opportunity to address the opening night wine tasting event. Landavazo, who manages Castle Furniture in Gallup, said "100 percent of the people I talk to don't want it."

He also said that the individuals he spoke to are primarily Native Americans and informed him that alcohol wasn't a part of their traditional culture.

"Ceremonial is a celebration of Native culture and traditions," he said. "Wine has nothing to do with the celebration of their culture."

Christiansen, a Ceremonial board member and local business owner, said that to date, no one on the Ceremonial board – Native and non-Native alike – has come forward in opposition of the event.

The event, features an array of wine, gourmet foods and desserts. Christiansen explained that it's one of the ways the board thanks volunteers for their hard work.

"If this would have come up at all we would have discussed this," she said. "If a few people are

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unhappy with it they should come and talk to us.”

Neither the council nor Christiansen got into details on the cost of the event, but Christiansen said they break even. She added that moving forward the board can address whether to hold the wine tasting event in 2016.

Councilor Linda Garcia said that she voted against the event, as a board member representing the city.

And it was clear after Councilor Fran Palochak spoke, the majority of the council, opposes the event.

“I have concerns about this,” Palochak said. “It makes me uncomfortable. This is a cultural event ... alcohol is not part of their culture.”

Christiansen explained that the wine tasting is separate from the cultural events and thanked the council for their feedback.

There were no votes on the non-agenda issue. The wine tasting event is scheduled for Aug. 5.