

Two groups, one Ceremonial mean growing pains

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 22 April 2022 06:42

Will too many cooks spoil the mutton stew? Some City Council members are concerned that efforts of the state-sponsored Intertribal Ceremonial Office may overshadow the traditional events put on by the Gallup Inter Tribal Indian Ceremonial Association.

Tension is centered on two things: the unity of the Ceremonial, and marketing for its events. The ICO brings the heft of a \$400,000 special appropriation in state tourism funds for the event and marketing. Part of that money, plus \$75,000 the city put up from Lodger's Tax funds, is to be used to promote both groups' events evenly, but not everyone is sure that will happen.

"We want to be sure that each and every event will be showcased in some way, regardless if it is the association's event or the state event," City Councilor Fran Palochak told her peers at a special meeting April 5. "I've worked these events and we all need to have marketing. They are different events but they are all crucial and fun."

Councilor Michael Schaaf said judging from the promotional contract, the ICO seems to be muscling out GITICA.

"To me it appears you just walked in and said, 'We're running the show' and didn't even listen to the local board. I've worked with the ceremonial for 40 years. I've worked out there every day. You need to work with the local association," he told ICO Executive Director Melissa Sanchez.

"This is supposed to be a collaboration between the two entities, but to me it appears there are two ceremonials going on, not working together. Most people would come for a week. Now it's going to be spread out over two weeks, one parade the first week and a second parade the second week," he chided. "You need to work with them and make it one event. Right now it looks like there's two events and they are competing with each other."

Mayor Louie Bonaguidi tried to strike a balance between tradition and planning for the future.

"I feel this could be the biggest and best event we've ever had," he said. "[Sanchez] has the

Two groups, one Ceremonial mean growing pains

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 22 April 2022 06:42

experience getting the tribes that we have never been able to get. In the past 20 years we have basically brought in the same groups every year. It got to the point where if you've seen one Ceremonial, why stay for the second one? They're all the same.

"This may be a big boost to the Ceremonial....We've hit 100 years and I'm really proud of that. What's in it for the future?....If we can get this down to perfection where everyone is working together, I see a future for the Ceremonial."

GITICA President Kyle Tom wants the event to bring audiences from far and wide, but fears the traditional Ceremonial could lose its unique local flavor.

"I get that we need people from Albuquerque and Tucson and Denver. I get that we need people from France and Germany and Australia," he said. "But we also need our locals who have made the ceremonial what it is for 100 years."

By Holly J. Wagner
Sun Correspondent