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## Groups worry about Morristown immigration plan

### Leaders express concern about proposal after meeting

**BY MINHAJ HASSAN**  
**DAILY RECORD**

MORRISTOWN -- Members of leading ethnic and immigration groups came before the Morris County Human Relations Council Tuesday afternoon to discuss various issues, including Morristown Mayor Donald Cresitello's move to deputize some town police officers, so they could enforce immigration laws.

Nearly two weeks ago, Cresitello filled out an application to the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency for a program that could give local police officers the authority to check on residents' immigration status, as well as bring immigration charges that would be handled in federal immigration court.

Diana Mejia, head of the local Wind of the Spirit immigration resource center, said in a late Tuesday telephone interview she attended the meeting because "there were a lot of concerns" within the immigrant community.

"We don't think our community will be protected," she said. "In general, most people would not like to see this happen."

While she declined to state specifically what the organization plans to do to make its feelings on the issue known, she said the group is "organizing." She said she plans to attend the town council meeting on March 27.

Alberto Olarte, a member of the Morris County Organization of Hispanic Affairs, who also attended the meeting, said in a phone interview, "I don't think it's good for the community for the police to become federal agents."

He added that any immigrant women who are victims of domestic abuse would be hesitant to call the police, fearing they will be deported.

Olarte also said he would like to see a workers center come to fruition, providing immigrant workers with more resources. The center, he said, is still in the concept stages.

Morristown Police Chief Peter Demnitz, a member of the commission, said, "The commission needs a lot more information" before it can make a public statement.

Cresitello, in a prior interview, said the move to deputize police officers is primarily intended to go after contractors who are hiring illegal aliens, and prosecute landlords who allow tenant overcrowding, called stacking.

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