

## LOCAL NEWS

# Protesters rally in Lowell to support Mueller investigation

By **CHRIS LISINSKI** | State House News ServiceUPDATED: July 11, 2019 at 12:00 AM EDT

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LOWELL — As similar protests spread across the country, more than 100 people rallied Thursday night outside City Hall in support of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, demanding his investigation into potential Russian election interference be protected.

Activists across the country sprung into action in response to Wednesday's news that U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions had resigned at the request of President Donald Trump. He was replaced by Matthew Whitaker, who was also given control of the Russia probe from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein — and given Whitaker's past criticism of the investigation, its future may be in jeopardy.

The organization MoveOn called for "rapid response" events to push back against Trump's decision. Local advocacy group Solidarity Lowell, which was formed shortly after Trump's election, answered the call, bringing more than 100 demonstrators to the island in front of City Hall.

“We want to echo what MoveOn is doing and let the Trump administration know that we’re not going to stand for obstruction of justice,” said Marissa Dupont, a Lowell resident and a member of Solidarity Lowell’s coordinating committee. “Trump deliberately timed this for after (Tuesday’s) election when he knew we were all going to be exhausted and he thought he was going to get away with something. He’s not getting away with anything, and we want him to know that.”

Although the sizes of crowds varied, similar protests took place Thursday evening in New York, Washington and other major cities.

At the Lowell event, protesters held handmade signs bearing messages such as “No one is above the law” and “Mueller must not be stopped.” One man carried a picture depicting Trump in the style of a witch with text that read “Halloween Ain’t Over.” Liam Hart, a Dracut native, brought his guitar and led the demonstration in a performance of the folk song “This Land is Your Land.”

Lowell resident Lara Hoke said she came to the demonstration because “it seemed like an all-hands-on-deck-moment.”

“It seems like Trump feels that he can do whatever he wants with impunity, that he can quash down dissent,” she said.

Cars often honked at the protest as they passed. At one point, a driver shouted “Dump Trump” while passing by. Another yelled a similar message, albeit with a different four-letter word before the president’s name.

After about an hour of demonstrating, the crowd gathered to hear remarks from three speakers: Christ Church United Pastor Peter Lovett, Eliot Presbyterian Church Rev. Heather Prince Doss and former 3rd Congressional District candidate Alexandra Chandler. All three urged demonstrators to remain diligent and to use public action as a way of influencing change.

“As we so often see with this administration, this is not normal,” Chandler, who recalled seeing reports of Russian meddling during her time as a U.S. Navy intelligence analyst, said. “A normal president taking such an action would take pains to make that action not look terrible. What you can simply do is say ‘I am nominating this person and this person is, from the get-go, recused from this investigation.’”

Their comments went beyond Wednesday's news, too. Lovett said he believes the Trump administration has allowed racism and bigotry to flourish, and he led the group in a chant promising to stand together.

"We will continue to be a city of people who welcome our neighbors back to Lowell, providing opportunities to them to thrive, whether they are returning from military service or school or prison," Lovett said. "We will continue to be a city of neighbors who show up for each other."

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