



MINUTES

New Hanover County/City of Wilmington
 Community Relations Advisory Committee
 Special Meeting / Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting
 July 5, 2022 @ 5:30pm

CRAC Members present:

City of Wilmington Appointees	New Hanover County Appointees
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Courtney Horton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liz Carbone
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jen Johnson	<input type="checkbox"/> Cherri Cook (Absent)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kathy King	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kimberly Geiger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Charlrean Mapson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erin Howell
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lori Wainwright	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fawn Rhodes
<input type="checkbox"/> VACANT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Kaari Snook

City of Wilmington and New Hanover County Support Staff present:

City of Wilmington Support	New Hanover County Support
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Conway, CEIO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Linda Thompson, NHC CDO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lynn Hartley, WPD Officer	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melissa Huffman, Asst. City Attorney	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amy Schlag, E&I Specialist	

Jen Johnson, Chair, called the meeting to order and called the roll to establish a quorum. Lori Wainwright made a motion to approve the minutes from the May meeting and the agenda, Kathy King seconded the motion, and the motion carried.

Jen Johnson, Chair, called for committee members to form an elections nomination committee. Kathy King, Lori Wainwright, and Kaari Snook volunteered to develop nominations for election of new officers at the July 26 meeting.

- Jen Johnson, Chair, reviewed that the purpose of the Special Meeting was to address LGBTQ community members' concerns related to recent events surrounding the Pride

Storytime event that occurred on 6-21-22. The New Hanover County Library staff offered Pride Storytime for LGBTQ+ families. Pride Storytime and other family-focused LGBTQ events offer inclusive and age-appropriate programming for LGBTQ families and children. Jen reviewed the C-RAC mission and stated that it is not the role of C-RAC to judge any party's story as true or false. We are here to attempt to better understand the community's concerns related to the events of pride story time, as these concerns can shape any recommendations that we may make in the interest of promoting understanding and inclusiveness and preventing discrimination.

- Jen introduced Caroline Morin, Director of the LGBTQ Center of the Cape Fear Coast. Caroline presented concerns from the LGBTQ community in response to the recent events related to Pride Storytime that was held at the Pine Valley Library on 6-21-22. The concerns presented were as follows:
- Why was there not more preparation when County and law enforcement were aware there could be a protest?
- LGBTQ community was told there was no need for LGBTQ community response
- There were 15-20 protestors yelling accusations that LGBTQ individuals were peddling pornography
- Proud Boys were allowed to enter the library
- Proud Boys' behavior seems in violation of library conduct policy
- Kids 7 and under were traumatized
- LGBTQ community was told that a Sheriff would be at the front door of the library, and no one would be allowed in the library except people registered for the event
- Law enforcement is not always a reassuring presence, and the LGBTQ community historically has a challenging relationship with law enforcement
- Counseling should be offered to the Pride Storytime attendees and librarians, like when other acts of violence occur in the community
- We need comprehensive and enforced anti-discrimination ordinances at the City and County level - We need more robust protections with local ordinances – from city and county – to cover employment, healthcare, and public accommodations – to include sex > sexual orientation, gender identity
- We need training and education on LGBTQ inclusion at all levels of institutions – law enforcement, schools, city government, county government, and other institutions
- We need stronger statements of inclusion and nondiscrimination from city and county government – more public Pride proclamations, internal education, and training
- We need improved relations with LGBTQ community and law enforcement – increased engagement out of uniform, trust building, increased reporting of incidents related to LGBTQ community members
- Jen Johnson, Chair, introduced the City and County Staff Liaison/Support Team and then opened the floor to discussion with Caroline Morin and C-RAC members and City and

County staff liaisons. Points raised in the discussion included:

- How can C-RAC/the City and County send a stronger message to the community about supporting LGBTQ issues?
- How can we educate the community on their rights regarding harassment and discrimination?
- C-RAC should be pushing out information everywhere via programming, advertising, etc. about how to report discrimination and what resources are available to the community
- Have any families been given referrals to supportive services? (Answer: No, but County will follow up)
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among all youth. LGB youth's risk for suicide is 5x greater than heterosexual youth. EACH INCIDENT of physical or verbal harassment increases the risk of self-harm or suicide by 2.5x (The Trevor Project and Human Rights Campaign)
- Is it possible to offer the New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force's Community Resiliency Model (CRM) training to members of the LGBTQ community who feel negatively impacted by the Pride Storytime events? (Jen will investigate this)
- There was a debrief with all county staff involved in the event
- County is working on plans to have safer events moving forward
- County is considering an ordinance like the city's to require protest permits
- County has offered EEOC training on LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace. They are working with LGBTQ Center to do a Safe Zone training
- City has discussed working with partners to offer training to staff on specific issues (i.e., homelessness, suicide, etc.)
- The City wants to send a clear message that they are there not just for the proclamations but for the "nitty gritty" parts of supporting the LGBTQ community
- The City wants to focus on triumph and joy related to the LGBTQ community too, not just the issues, and recognize that all year round outside of Pride Month
- City and County staff plan to visit the LGBTQ Center regularly to connect with those they serve
- The data at the City verifies that people are not submitting reports of discrimination despite the ordinance
- Offensive language is not harassment. Communication of a clear and direct threat is a Class I misdemeanor.
- GS 14-277.3A. NC Stalking law
- Complaints about library policy not being adhered to can be directed to the librarian

Jen Johnson, Chair, opened the floor to public comment. Comments from the public included:

- We need more focus on the special needs of the transgender community – homelessness, employment discrimination, harassment, murders, and suicide. The transgender community is under attack with few tools to protect themselves.
- It appeared that the Sheriff's Deputies were more concerned with protecting the Proud Boys than the children and families attending Pride Storytime

- The families and children did not feel that law enforcement officers were there to protect them
- Some participants saw Proud Boys looking in the window of the room where the event was being held. Proud Boys show up with the intention to intimidate. They intimidated people at this event, and they intimidate people at the School Board meetings.
- NHCSO seemed more interested in protecting Proud Boys than protecting the children
- The library has a code of conduct policy, and it seems it was not followed
- Children at the event were traumatized
- Pride Story Time needs to be a regular occurrence not just once a year during Pride Month
- Frustration that these behaviors happen regularly at School Board meetings
- The religious community needs to speak up in defense of LGBTQ neighbors. This is about our humanity. People need to morally deconstruct their religious beliefs and ideas that they have been taught by Christianity. If people have not worked through their own implicit bias related to what their religion has taught them, they cannot adequately protect the LGBTQ community
- Were the families aware they could file reports? Did NHCSO take any reports at the scene as they do at other incidents? (Response: No, but County will follow up)
- Please publicize the process for complaints against WPD and NHCSO

Joe Conway, Chief Equity & Inclusion Officer (COW) provided an update on the City's annual application process for the Municipal Equality Index. He stated that he anticipates that this score will increase during 2022.

Jen Johnson, Chair, reviewed recommendations that had been made in the discussion and then tabled the discussion of recommendations until the 7-26-22 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 pm.

Minutes were prepared by Liz Carbone and Jen Johnson.

PURPOSE: *The committee was established by the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners and Wilmington City Council for the purpose of addressing community issues involving prejudice or discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, creed or religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability or medical condition; informing the Appointing Authorities and other organizations of their findings; and making recommendations, in an advisory capacity, to the Appointing Authorities and other organizations, as necessary.*