

# Moscow to consider added protections for transgendered people

## Human rights commission member asks city to change its employment nondiscrimination policy

By Mark Williams, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Tim Gresback wants the city to provide more legal protection for transgendered people.

The lawyer and Moscow Human Rights Commission member has asked the city to consider adding transgendered people as a specifically protected group in its employment nondiscrimination policy.

Speaking before the city's administrative committee Monday, Gresback said that the city's current nondiscrimination policy provides protections based on age, race, religion and sexual orientation.

He said protection on the basis of sexual orientation does not adequately cover transgendered individuals because most do not identify themselves as being homosexual.

Transgendered people are those whose gender identity does not match their physical gender.

"Transgendered folks are not by definition homosexual," Gresback said. "It is critical, I think, as policymakers to understand that oftentimes the discrimination that transgendered folks suffer comes from (people) who are discriminating on the basis of homosexuality."

The issue is set to go before the City Council on Monday, and members will discuss and possibly vote on the proposal.

Administrative committee members discussed whether the city's current policy is broad enough to cover all forms of discrimination.

City Supervisor Gary Riedner and City Attorney Randy Fife were confident the current policy is adequate, but said adding more specific language would not weaken that protection.

Councilman Tom Lamar agreed.

I think the guidance ... is an important one," he said. "The fact that the recommendation is coming unanimously from the human rights commission means a lot."

Councilman John Weber said he didn't think an addition was necessary.

"Quite frankly I've read this and every time I read it I say it doesn't appear to be missing anything," he said, emphasizing language in the manual that says the city won't discriminate on age, race, religion "or any other basis prohibited by local state or federal law."

"To me that covers everybody," he said.

Gresback disagreed, saying the issue needed to be addressed instead of "hiding behind the notion that an anti-discrimination policy includes it under its umbrella."

Weber interrupted, saying "I don't really appreciate the term hiding behind anything, Mr. Gresback."

The University of Idaho also is working on expanding its nondiscrimination policy to include gender identity.

Two policies were approved by the UI Faculty Council in December and await approval from the faculty at large. The policy will be voted on during a universitywide faculty meeting later this semester.

## QUICKREAD

- **WHAT HAPPENED:** The city of Moscow initiated discussions to add transgendered people to its employment nondiscrimination policy.
- **WHAT IT MEANS:** Transgendered people would receive the same protections already in place for age, race, religion and sexual orientation.
- **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:** The issue will go before the City Council on Monday for discussion and a possible decision.
- **WHY YOU SHOULD CARE:** Proponents said transgendered people are not protected under the city's current nondiscrimination policy because most do not identify themselves as homosexual.

**Mark Williams** can be reached at (208) 882-5561, ext. 301, or by e-mail at [mwilliams@dnews.com](mailto:mwilliams@dnews.com).

