

TOWN CRIER V

We didn't need another kumbaya moment

Henry D. Johnston/Moscow-Pullman Daily News

The Moscow City Council on Monday approved adding the words "sexual orientation" and "gender identity" to the city's human rights ordinance. This was done without debate or presentation from the city staff or taking public testimony from either side.

I want to clarify that I do not "take credit" for the actions of the council and would point out it was Mayor Nancy Chaney who suggested I was the one who orchestrated the ordeal.

So what could I have possibly written that caused the greatest procedural coup de gras in Moscow City Council history? Read for yourself the final paragraph of my email dated April 1, which had content very similar to what you'll read in the rest of this column:

"All of that being said, I would strongly encourage to you pass this ordinance and do so quickly. This could be done tonight by just three of you - one to make a motion to approve it, one second it and a third to call for the question. It would make a statement that Moscow believes this is the right thing to do, and it is so important that no discussion is required."

As nice of a boost to my ego as it is, Mayor Chaney, I do not hold enough political clout to single-handedly force a 6-0 vote of the council with no discussion. I simply shared my thoughts about how adoption of the matter should proceed.

So now that I've used the first half of my column explaining my new magical City Council puppeteering powers, something I shouldn't have to do because it was bad form on the mayor's part to call me out specifically by name in the first place, let me share with you my arguments regarding the ordinance.

As a free market conservative I believe in the right of a landlord or employer to decide whom they wish to hire and rent to and if that does not include members of the LGBTQ community then so be it. While I do think that is an ethically and morally reprehensible practice, one has to ask why would you, as a renter (or an employee for that matter), want to force the issue and boost the bank accounts and economic stature of someone who obviously does not like you?

Even though Moscow might not have rampant discrimination, a statement needs to be made that discrimination is discrimination and it will not be tolerated in our town. If nothing else, perhaps this ordinance might get other cities to follow suit so the Idaho Legislature might make a change in state law. One can hope this happens so the residents of a more conservative town, like St. Maries, can receive the same protections through a similar ordinance that might not be afforded to them by their City Council.

But making a statement is about all the ordinance does because even with the complaint, mediation and penalty process established, it is "toothless" in its practical application. Why? Because at the root of the issue is who really wants to continue to financially support a bigot?

Certainly not me.

The sad reality is that discriminatory attitudes will not be changed through the addition of more laws and regulations, but will be with each new generation growing up and taking over leadership of our country. Our up and coming youth are promising individuals who understand tolerance and acceptance, and in 20 years this simply won't be an issue.

But until that time, I'm thankful the City Council was forward-thinking enough to make a statement that this ordinance was important and passed it without a parade of people at the podium participating in pure political posturing through a series of "gay rights are cool now and other towns are doing it so we should pat each other on the back and sing 'Kumbaya' " speeches.

I wonder why the mayor does not see it the same way.

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