

editor's note

by matt comer
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McCarley's sad legacy a reminder of inequality



There is one thing for which City Attorney Mac McCarley will be remembered by many LGBT and straight ally Charlotteans when he departs his job at the end of the year. (See story, "Charlotte city attorney to retire," on page 9.) Though I have no idea how he personally feels about LGBT people — and, therefore, cannot call him a bigot — one thing is clear: McCarley's actions and legal opinions have significantly harmed our community and prevented any substantial and concrete forward movement on LGBT inclusion in city policies and ordinances. In short, McCarley is an enabler of continued bigotry, discrimination and prejudice.

McCarley's stubborn hardheadedness in the face of LGBT progress — or lack thereof — in the Queen City is a blemish on what might otherwise be a stunning legacy after his 34 years of public service in North Carolina.

It's like beating a dead horse, you know. It can be very tiring writing about the same old, same old lack of progress here in Charlotte. More than two decades after our state capital and it's neighboring city took steps toward LGBT inclusion, Charlotte remains dead last.

Obviously, gay and transgender citizens, voters and taxpayers don't rank high on Queen City politicians' list of concerns. We never have. I'm starting to think we never will.

All this frustration can be blamed primarily on just a handful of people: city council members, McCarley and Mayors Pat McCrory and Anthony Foxx.

We've already ousted McCrory. McCarley is leaving at the end of the year. Perhaps it is time for a change in Democratic leadership on the council this year, as well.

Come November, the city will again elect a new council and mayor. And, nearly two years after LGBT Charlotteans were promised change by Foxx and other current city officials, we continue to wait. Will we see progress between now and November? I hope so. If we don't, at least I know which candidates won't be receiving my vote.

There's nothing we can do about McCarley. The damage he's caused is done. His legacy, however, can serve as a reminder of our continued inequality in this city. We can use it to inspire movement and change, if only we care enough to make that commitment.

As city election campaigns ramp up in

the following weeks and months, don't be afraid to ask tough questions of incumbents and challengers. Reserve your endorsements and contributions for folks who make bold and public commitments for equality. Strip your support away from those who, lacking political courage and conviction, failed to take action when they had the opportunity. This, my friends, is democracy at it's finest. We can make a difference.

Fortunately, McCarley will no longer be waiting in the wings ready to smack down any opening at progress. With the right council and mayor, Charlotte won't have to be dead last any longer.

'Sex in the park?' critics need primer on logic

In our print edition on April 2, *qnotes* published an investigative commentary exploring Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) records on charges and arrests for soliciting a crime against nature. (See "Sex in the park?" at goqnotes.com/10621.)

The inquiry was prompted by local news station WBTV's outlandish and sensationalistic tabloidism, in which they took to a local Charlotte park to stir prejudice and fear while armed only with anonymous postings from a hook-up website. Unlike WBTV's sorry excuse for ethical journalism, *qnotes* actually took the time to review dozens of records and interview police officials before publishing our story.

Our results were astonishing: Of 325 charges for soliciting a crime against nature, only 15 arrests were made as the result of men who have sex with men (MSM) in a public place like a park or the airport overlook. What's more, the bulk of charges and arrests were linked to narcotics and heterosexual prostitution activity. And, of the 15 arrests of MSM, none occurred in James Boyce Park, which WBTV claimed had a serious problem.

Despite all our efforts at engaging in real journalism, we still had our critics. Steve Parker, who publishes *Carolina Christian News* and who identifies as "ex-gay," took to *qnotes'* comment threads. He cited our interview with CMPD Vice & Narcotics Unit Leader Sgt. B.D. Hollar and concluded that low arrest numbers indicated a lack of enforcement rather than a lack of a real problem.

"In other words, the reasons there haven't

been a great deal of arrests is because the police have not been enforcing these laws in the parks, choosing instead to focus on prostitution," Parker wrote. "Anyone with any knowledge of the subject is well aware that there are a great many men seeking sex with one another at rest areas, public rest rooms, and, yes, public parks. To deny this is ludicrous."

Parker added, "...to act as though it doesn't exist is demonstrates the same lack of journalistic integrity of which the author accuses WBTV."

Parker conveniently chose to ignore several other portions of Hollar's interview, specifically Hollar's statement that his unit is primarily complaint-driven. In fact, Hollar specifically mentioned Kilborne Park as a place where police had recently responded to several complaints. Arrest records corroborate Hollar's statements.

Despite Parker's claims and taking into account Hollar's full statements would it not stand to reason that complaint-driven law enforcement might receive complaints about an "alleged" large amount of open sexual activity

in James Boyce Park? Would it not stand to reason that area police would act upon such complaints? And, would it not also mean that such complaints might turn up at least one arrest in the park in question during more than a year's time?

Yet, there were no significant complaints. No recorded arrests. Even after WBTV's and *qnotes'* coverage there's been just one call for service for prostitution-related loitering in the James Boyce Park area. Even that one complaint yielded no arrest.

Do the math and you come to a solid conclusion. There is no substantial problem with MSM sexual activity in Mecklenburg County's public parks.

Unlike Parker, I won't go so far as to accuse him of a lack of integrity. I'll simply assume he wasn't intending to twist facts into a dishonest conclusion; though, it is clear that someone either didn't take basic-level philosophy lessons in high school or failed them miserably.

In the face of such strong evidence and logic, Parker would be wise to remember: "The truth shall set you free." ::

talkback

Letters to the editor and comments from goqnotes.com.
Web comments are not edited for grammar or punctuation.

Anti-gay tyranny

In response to the Matt Comer's April 2 column, "Marching backward to the beat of a despotic drum" (goqnotes.com/10604), readers say:

And on another domestic front, the dominionists in Iowa removed three state supreme court justices to punish them for upholding principles of equal protection. Don't these cretins realize that once you hamstringing equal protection principles in application to one group, you hurt protections for yourselves? We are all minorities in someone else's scheme.

— Marco Luxe, web, April 2

You sound like a lunatic. This article represents one of the many reasons why the vast majority of Americans oppose gay marriage (and yes, they do, despite the bogus polling a few firms have decided to release). A radical conservative, the opposite from you, could just as easily create a nightmare fantasy scenario describing what may happen if gay marriage or homosexuality in general were to become more accepted in our society. Of course,

that would be silly, just like all the nonsense that you wrote. ... I am gay, and I oppose gay marriage, as do many normal gay people. I will work hard to have my point of view heard here in NC, so that we can finally pass a marriage amendment here. I grew up in Massachusetts and really don't feel like seeing my new home state slide downhill as well.

— Steve, web, April 2

@Steve — There are most certainly radical theocratic forces in North Carolina actively seeking to marginalize the LGBT citizens of North Carolina and the current limited rights of LGBT North Carolinians.

For evidence, visit christianactionleague.org or ncfpc.org or returnamerica.org.

These groups (Christian Action League, NC Family Policy Council, Return America) lobby the legislature, file lawsuits, and produce "educational" materials to further their bigoted ends.

These are simple facts evident and trumpeted on their own websites. It is not hyperbole to note their actions and self-proclaimed aspirations.

— Appellation, web, April 3

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Meeting Date: Tuesday, April 19, 2011
Program: J.D. Lewis and "Twelve in Twelve"
A philanthropic trip around the world with his two sons
Lesbian & Gay Community Center
820 Hamilton St.
Time: Cash Bar Social/Heavy Hor d'oeuvres @ 5:30 pm
Program starts @ 6:45 pm
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