



## editor's note

by Matt Comer  
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### Foxx's lack of visionary LGBT-inclusive leadership set top-down example

This year's city elections are shaping up to be quite an interesting race for the city's LGBT constituents. Charlotte's first and only openly gay or lesbian elected official, City Councilmember LaWana Mayfield, is up for her first re-election after public stumbles last spring on the anti-LGBT state constitutional amendment. That, combined with her praise for an anti-gay hate group leader last fall, left some of her fellow LGBT Charlotteans disenchanted with her leadership.

But, it's quite possible Mayfield's re-election bid will come during a local election season in which matters of LGBT equality are a virtual non-issue. On April 5, two-term Mayor Anthony Foxx announced he would not seek a third term. The field for mayor is quickly filling in. The first to announce was Republican and LGBT-friendly former City Councilmember Edwin Peacock. In a city that traditionally shuns any public and official discussion of LGBT people and equality, could it really be possible that both major candidates for mayor, regardless of party, might hold LGBT-friendly views?

Boy, how times have changed! But, what's not changed are the views and positions of our elected leaders. Simply put, they have fallen behind their constituents.

Foxx stands as the quintessential example. No doubt, he's been supportive of a wide range of LGBT-inclusive changes. He supported former City Manager Curt Walton's decision to change personnel policies to protect LGBT city workers. He supported Walton's addition of domestic partner benefits to the city's budget last June. Foxx also made several important outreach efforts to LGBT citizens. He was the first sitting mayor to address LGBT community members at a public forum. He wrote regular letters of welcome to LGBT events. He spoke publicly at the 2011 Charlotte Pride festival.

Foxx seems almost saintly when compared with his predecessor and current Gov. Pat McCrory, who routinely answered LGBT residents' concerns and questions with blank stares and a cold shoulder. But, Foxx hasn't been perfect. Though he's laid the groundwork for inclusive change, Foxx never could quite bring himself to be a true leader on behalf of his LGBT constituents.

Foxx told *qnotes* in an interview immediately after his 2009 election that he wanted to "see the City Council move on the non-discrimination issue very early in the next term." That never happened. No vote was ever held.

No public discussion or consideration was ever calendared.

When asked early after its introduction where he stood on the state's 2012 anti-LGBT constitutional amendment, Foxx refused to take a personal position for or against the measure, though he later did so in the comfort and presence of 1,300 friendly supporters at the 2012 Human Rights Campaign North Carolina Gala.

As late as April, Foxx and his office backed away from issues of LGBT equality again when his spokesperson simply said, "No comment," when asked where the mayor stood on marriage equality.

Foxx's lack of progressive and visionary leadership on LGBT issues infected the rest of City Council. Even after private polling showed a majority of Charlotte citizens — both Republicans and Democrats — supported a range of LGBT-inclusive measures, no Council member, including longtime ally Patsy Kinsey, was willing to raise their hand in support.

No one advocated for a City Council resolution opposing the constitutional amendment. Even the openly gay Mayfield stood up to defend the quiet status quo, telling LGBT citizens it wasn't an issue that affected the city. She also said City Council "has never taken a stance on anything that comes out of Raleigh," a patently false statement in light of the city's regular adoption of a legislative agenda outlining in-depth the city's public policy positions on a variety of topics ranging from public safety and criminal justice to infrastructure, taxing and budgeting needs. (It's worth noting Mayfield once told *qnotes*

she would support LGBT-inclusive provisions, including a statement on the amendment, in the city's regular legislative agenda.)

But, now, the die has been cast. With support for LGBT equality rapidly on the upswing, candidates for public office can no longer remain silent nor equivocate on the issues. They can no longer publicly deny our existence and human dignity by keeping discussion of our rights hidden silently out of sight and excluded from the People's Business.

As voters, we must enforce these expectations. Groups like Mecklenburg LGBT Political Action Committee (MeckPAC) must also uphold strict standards for the citizens who seek to represent us. If a candidate — gay, straight, Republican or Democrat — refuses to support further LGBT-inclusive changes in city ordinances, they get no endorsement. If a candidate refuses to recognize our inherent, fundamental and basic human right to marriage, they get no endorsement. If a candidate waffles on important issues like LGBT-inclusive health care, criminal justice issues, immigration issues or other topics important to the lives of LGBT citizens and residents, they get no endorsement.

In an election season where two major candidates for mayor could very well be friendly to our community, no one will have an excuse to say they are, at the least, better than the other. All must be held to the same standard and none have rational reasons to remain quiet when faced with the needs of their LGBT constituents. Now is the time to choose leaders who can build on Foxx's and other Council members' progress and correct their missteps. :



## on being a gay parent

by Brett Webb-Mitchell  
*qnotes* contributor

### I once was lost, but now I'm found

[Ed. Note: The following was delivered at an Equality North Carolina sponsored marriage equality vigil in Raleigh, N.C., on March 26.]

In my time as a Presbyterian pastor, I've been to my share of tent revivals and homecoming gatherings. This evening's rally for marriage equality is the homecoming I hoped to find one day. And at those homecomings, one of the

popular hymns we would sing is, "Amazing Grace." It was the first lines of the first verse that captured parts of my life narrative well: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found..." There it is: "I once was lost." Raised by my parents to be the best little boy in the world in the American middle-class dream,

groomed by evangelical leaders of Young Life, InterVarsity and my local Presbyterian Church to be a minister, I did what was expected of me: I once was a married man, who was fortunate to marry his best friend from high school when we were both in college. Aware that I was gay early on in life, I also learned quickly that being gay was a "sin." I was soon lost in my carefully constructed gay closet, with rough wooden planks of hate, screws and nails of fear and clothes of self-loathing suffocating me in my shadow life.

Burying myself in the work of academe and ministry, adding on top of it the joys of being a full-time dad, I pushed aside who I really was created to be, not believing that I was created to be a man born to be in a significant relationship

with a man. However, because of my devotion to reading the Psalms, there was a verse from Psalm 139 that was like a song worm, burrowing into my consciousness: "I, God, knit you in your mother's womb... wonderful are my works, wonderfully are you made." These words broke down the façade of the gay closet as I slowly accepted the man I was created to be. Those words were transformed into a beacon of light that helped lead me on my pilgrimage of coming out of a 21-year marriage and embracing all of who I am.

"But now I'm found." I found my footing and now am working with others to have the choice to marry, a choice I once had when I

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