



Liam Hooper, an ordained minister with the United Church of Christ and a board member of North Star LGBT Community Center, speaks.



Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke speaks during the City Council meeting.

City Council considers action on HB 2

Local LGBT community asks the council to oppose what they say is a discriminatory law

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

A resolution voicing concerns about HB2, which prohibits local ordinances protecting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, made for a packed, passionate City Council meeting on Monday, March 28.

It was standing room only as many came to speak out about HB2. City Council Member Dan Besse proposed adding a resolution to the council's legislative agenda calling for a legislative review of HB2 and asking Forsyth lawmakers to undo its "damaging legislative changes." Among its many provisions, HB2 restricts local governments from going further than state law in discrimination protections and minimum wage, and says individuals can only use public restrooms that match the gender on their birth certificate, though private businesses and institutions can still create their own discrimination and restroom policies.

During the public comment session, Liam Hooper, a local minister who also leads a transgender support group, said he can't follow the gender on his birth certificate.

"Because of this law, because my birth certificate doesn't match my gender, because I was born in Indiana, I am now required to go in the women's room," he said. "I want you to digest that visual

image for just a minute: facial hair and all and a receding hairline. There's no way I can walk in there and anyone's going to think I belong there, which means I'll be arrested, and it is my firm belief, after spending an entire day in Raleigh listening to the nonsense that our elected officials are speaking, that is exactly their intention."

Char Van Schenk, a Wake Forest student, said if HB2 was repealed, it would be a return to normal, since transgender individuals already use restrooms they're comfortable with, and urged the council to take action against the law.

"You would send a message to the trans people of Winston-Salem, whether they're here for weeks, for college or for the rest of their life, that we are welcome just like everyone else," said Van Schenk.

Dani Bennitez, who is gender queer and doesn't identify as male or female, cried, recalling childhood struggles with gender identity.

"I don't understand why I can't be a man or a woman, that's how my brain works, that's how my body works," said Bennitez. "I don't know how to explain it to you because you're not in my body."

Jack Fisher of Pfafftown was one of two people to speak against the resolution and said he didn't feel like HB2 was discriminatory.

"Let's use our heads on this thing and not let it get so blown out of proportion that we're comparing it to things that we don't want to," he said.

Rev. Laura Spangler of Lloyd Presbyterian Church also spoke in opposition of the resolution, saying she hopes the City Council considers a "higher power" in their decision.

"I do hope and pray that you work for

the good and for the protection of women and children," she said.

HB2 was a reaction, largely among Republican lawmakers, against a non-discrimination ordinance passed in Charlotte that would've provided LGBT protections, including giving transgender individuals the right to use the restroom of the gender they identify as. Opponents of the Charlotte ordinance have raised concerns that it may put women or children in danger of sexual assault. Proponents of the ordinance have rejected that as a scare tactic and stereotype and point to the more than 200 cities around the country, including three in South Carolina, that have similar ordinances.



Van Schenk

A local rally against HB2 at City Hall drew more than 150 attendees on Friday. The ACLU and Equality NC have filed a suit against the law and Attorney General Roy Cooper, who is running for governor, has refused to defend HB2. Many companies have voiced opposition to it and the State of New York and the cities of Seattle, West Palm Beach and San Francisco have already banned non-essential travel of their employees to North Carolina.

"We're already seeing a widespread and troubling national adverse effect from businesses as diverse as the NBA, WellsFargo, and today we learned prospective attendees of the High Point International Furniture Market," said Besse after he read his resolution.

Most members of the City Council took the opportunity to voice opposition to

the General Assembly's actions, including Derwin Montgomery who said every protective class should be concerned about HB2.

"I think that if we have legislators in Raleigh who want to meddle in municipal governments, they ought to resign from Raleigh and come and run for city council and board of alderman and county commissioner and not attempt to run city government from Raleigh," said Montgomery.

Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke railed against the General Assembly, saying she wasn't afraid of retaliation from the legislature, a concern several council members mentioned.

"They act as if they thought we work for them, they should work for us," she said.

Recently N.C. Rep. Donny Lambeth, R-Forsyth, said he felt the resolution would make it harder for the county's lawmakers to do things like preserving sales tax revenues for cities.

City Council Member Robert Clark said he had questions on each point in the resolution and that he'd seen it for the first time 45 minutes ago. Besse said he'd emailed it to every City Council member on Friday. Ultimately, several other council members had questions about the resolution, including James Taylor who recommended it go to the General Government Committee, a move that was approved by the City Council with Montgomery and Molly Leight voting in opposition because they wanted to approve the resolution immediately.

Mayor Allen Joines invited the many attendees to come to the committee meeting on April 12 at 4:30 p.m. and come back when it comes before the full council again on April 18 at 7 p.m.

Arts Council announces 10 mini-grants

SPECIAL TO
THE CHRONICLE

The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County has announced its first round of 2016 grants made through its Community Enrichment Mini-Grant initiative. These awards provide community groups and individuals with grants up to \$500 to infuse the arts into all segments of the community, promote creativity, provide greater access to the arts and bring people together.

Wells Fargo, which already funds The Arts Council's \$100,000 Arts-in-Education award program, is increasing its giving this year to sponsor the Community Enrichment Mini-Grants.

"The mini-grants are a new avenue to reach deeper into the community with the arts and broaden their impact," said Peggy Reingold, Wells Fargo Community Affairs Officer, Triad West Region.

"Sometimes needs and opportunities arise on short notice and the annual grant process just doesn't accommodate them," said Dara Silver, Director Member Services and Grants Programs for The Arts Council. "Through the mini-grant awards, our board has created a device to support artistic ideas and activity in ways other than through traditional institutions and avenues. Ideas and initiatives may come from a group of individuals, churches, community organizations or even businesses. Getting arts to the grassroots requires creative and entrepreneurial thinking and having a partner like Wells Fargo is so very appropriate."

Leslie Hayes, Executive Vice President at Wells Fargo & Company and Business Banking

Division Manager for the Carolinas, is co-chairing The Arts Council's 2016 Annual Campaign. "Wells Fargo is proud to support nonprofits working to strengthen communities in the Triad and Western Regions of North Carolina" she said.

In this round of Community Enrichment Mini-Grants, The Arts Council received 15 applications and selected 10 to receive awards of \$500 each. The next due date for mini-grant applications is April 25 by 5:00 p.m. for projects taking place June 1 - September 30, 2016.

Projects selected are:

*ABC of NC, a non-profit providing services for children with autism and their families, will collaborate with K Wood, a local artist and former art teacher, to work with the children enrolled in ABC of NC's academic program to create original art using a variety of media and techniques and prepare for a gallery show in April 2016.

*Clemmons Elementary School After-school Art Program, a grassroots after-school arts program spearheaded by Kristina Stevenson, will have Mary Crockett, local artist, work with 60 students to create a variety of artworks which will be on display in downtown Clemmons in May 2016.

*Dale Link and Friends will make-quilts this spring and summer for 500 Pre-K students at 12 Title 1 Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools. These quilts will be used for nap-time providing security and comfort for students, as well as teaching them responsibility for taking care of their belongings.

Students choose their blankets and have them personalized.

*Forsyth Education Partnership in collaboration with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools will present the eighth annual Poet Laureate Competition for high school students and host a reception for all participating students. A chapbook will be printed with all poetry submissions and paired with student artwork.

Helen Simoneau Dance will present "On Site/ In Site: A downtown Winston-Salem Dance Festival," a three-day dance festival May 5-7 and free to the community. The festival will include pop-up performances, dance classes, and rooftop performances. Community partners include DADA's Gallery Hop, Krankies Coffee, Bailey Park, Mary's Gourmet Diner, and Paz Studio on Trade Street.

*Lotus & Phoenix Dance will present "Global Dance Journey for Seniors," a one-hour program of cultural dances and hands-on movement for seniors in retirement communities. The program will highlight dances from Chinese, Middle Eastern and Latin cultures with modified movement exercises to allow participants to stand or remain safely seated in wheelchairs.

*NC Brass Band will perform a concert at Ardmore Baptist Church on May 22, open to the public. The concert will feature works of the traditional brass band genre, transcriptions of music for orchestra, wind band, and choir as well as other styles such as jazz and pop.

*Piedmont Chamber

Singers will present a concert entitled "Liberty" at Ardmore Baptist Church on April 23. It will feature the Twin City Chorists, the Winston-Salem Girls' Chorus, and Parkland High School Chorus.

*Piedmont Craftsmen will partner with Habitat for Humanity to create public art in collaboration with the community around the 14th Street and University Parkway area.

Artist Patrick Robertson will work with home owners to design and create this site-specific artwork. This grant will cover the planning stages.

*Winston-Salem/Forsyth County High School Theatre Students will present the second Annual Twin City High School Excellence in Theatre Arts (THETA) Awards on May 20. Modeled after the Tony

Awards, the THETA Awards will allow students to come together in celebration and recognition of this year's high school theatre performances.

For more information about Community Enrichment Mini-Grants contact Dara Silver, Senior Administrative Assistant, Special Projects, and Grant Program Manager at 336-747-1426 or dsilver@intot-hearts.org.

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