

In defense of the shelter's actions, McFarland reportedly argued that because it received federal money under the Violence Against Women Act, it could only provide housing for women.

"The Violence Against Women Act was amended in 2005," BOLI responded. "The act [now] states, 'Nothing in this title shall be construed to prohibit male victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking from receiving benefits and services under this title.'"

Seattle lawyer Spenser Bergstedt, author of 1997's *TransLegalities*, who reviewed the decision, says: "The de-

termination of BOLI is that a [Portland] shelter cannot limit its services to only those who identify as female. Doing so violates Multnomah County and city of Portland ordinances."

Being forced to accept men may be the outcome that Bradley-Angle administrators fear most.

After declining multiple interview requests, McFarland wrote in a June 2 e-mail to *Just Out*: "We are committed to diversity and to providing appropriate services for all individuals who are victims of domestic violence. At this time, we are unable to comment on the specific facts of this matter, especially given that the allegations against Bradley-Angle House may impact a larger scope than just our organization—and could affect the county's provision of domestic violence services. However, we again reiterate that there is no merit to Lee/Lisa lacuzzi's allegations that Bradley-Angle House discriminated against him/her in any way."

BOLI submitted the issue to formal conciliation process, where Ellis says he's hopeful that Bradley-Angle's policies can be examined and revamped.

"There [are] shelters who have done different things," acknowledges Weedman. "For example, Outside In—in their shelters, they ask you how you identify and where you'd feel most comfortable."

Sarah McDowell, director of programs and services at Portland's Rafael House, says her agency doesn't even ask about gender on intake forms. Still, she admits, "We have, as of yet, not had to fully address [the transgender] issue."

For a local example of how shelters can be trans-inclusive, one need look no further than Washington County's Monika's House.

"Our policy is to serve any adult or child victim or survivor of domestic violence," says Donna Burgess, executive director of the Domestic Violence Resource Center, which runs Monika's. "Gender identification...is really not an issue."

Its intake forms ask, "How do you want to



Lee (Lisa) lacuzzi, who identifies as bi-gendered, shed light on Bradley-Angle House's failure to accommodate transgender people.

be identified?" Burgess says. "The sole purpose around self-identification is so that we address them properly, as they see themselves and as they want to be perceived."


The shelter's open admission policy was already in place when Burgess joined the center in 2006. She says she embraced it: "I thought that was the right thing to do, and staff thought it was the right thing to do."

Recognizing its staff limitations, the center took a proactive approach, bringing in Portland's TransActive Education & Advocacy for training and relying on co-case management for additional support. The center has had clients self-identify as transgender and has had no problem integrating trans individuals into the co-ed shelter.

"We can't do everything, but we do think that we have a strong enough and healthy enough understanding to be able to provide a...shelter environment that will allow for an appropriate stay and will respect the individuals that come in [from] our community."

A cautiously optimistic Weedman offers: "Hopefully people can look at this [BOLI determination] as not a bad thing. [It's] an opportunity to look at the system and put policies into place and create places that are safe for transgender individuals."

With resources like the NGLTF report and nearby examples like Monika's House, supporters say there's the potential for Bradley-Angle to rectify its women-centric heritage with a trans-positive future and reclaim its mantle as a cutting-edge, queer-friendly shelter.

This is Ellis' hope as well. "I see this as a real opportunity to have an interesting, complicated and nuanced conversation. Let's work together to make sure it doesn't [happen again]. Let's make Portland the place we all want it to be." 

Trans author JACOB ANDERSON-MINSHALL writes the weekly column "TransNation."

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