

Councilors denounce use of Confederate flag in parade

Councilor: 'Fourth of July celebration was tarnished by this hate symbol'

BY NICOLE BALES
The Bulletin

Three Redmond city councilors denounced the use of a Confederate flag during the city's recent Fourth of July parade.

"The Fourth of July celebration in Redmond was tarnished by this hate symbol being exhibited, and there is no logical way to explain away why this was allowed," Clifford Evelyn told his fellow councilors during their meeting Wednesday. "This is a disgrace and embarrassing to not only the city of Redmond, but a reflection of our council as well, and this is unacceptable."

The parade, hosted by the Redmond Chamber of Commerce, included a float depicting the U.S. Civil War. U.S. and Confederate flags were flown and people dressed as union and confederate soldiers.

The Confederate flag was flown by Scott Stuart of the People's Rights organization, a national conservative group founded by activist Ammon Bundy in 2020.

Bundy is known for leading an armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016 to protest the federal control of public lands.

Stuart, a Redmond resident, has said he flew the flag because it was part of a history float and that he was related to Jeb Stuart, a cavalry general in the army of Northern Virginia under Gen. Robert E. Lee.

"Just because we don't agree with something, it doesn't mean it should be banned or burned like books and things like that," Stuart told The Bulletin Thursday. "It's history. It happened. It wasn't always good history, and we've learned from our mistakes."

Evelyn said the historical context of the Confederate flag makes it impossible to embrace without explicitly or implicitly promoting racism.

During a Redmond City Council meeting Wednesday night, Councilor Clifford Evelyn, read comments he sent the council following the parade.

"The 4th of July celebration in Redmond was tarnished by this hate



Scott Stuart, center, holds a Confederate flag while dressed in a Confederate general's costume on a People's Rights organization float at Redmond's 2021 Fourth of July parade.

Larry Cole/Submitted

symbol being exhibited and there is no logical way to explain away why this was allowed," he said. "This is a disgrace and embarrassing to not only the City of Redmond, but a reflection of our Council as well and this is unacceptable."

"I have been asked why this is allowed to occur," Evelyn said. "I responded by saying that I think people invoke the Confederate flag because they want to endorse on some level, secretly or subconsciously, the very rationale for the Confederacy."

"When people say heritage not hate, they are omitting the obvious, which is that that very heritage is hate," Evelyn said. "When someone says it's about history, that particular history is inseparable from hate, because it is about hate. It's about racism, and it's about slavery."

Evelyn called for the City Council to take a tougher stance.

"This is not a black or white issue. This is a human rights issue, and it is our job to ensure that our citizens are able to live and work in a safe environment," he said.

Councilor Jon Bullock said the historical context of the flag is critically important in understanding how it is linked to slavery and the perpetuation of slavery. He encouraged the chamber to change its parade requirements for float entries.

"I do find that flag abhorrent, and I do not appreciate seeing it in our city," Bullock said. "I don't think it represents us. I know it doesn't represent me, and it doesn't represent Redmond."

Councilor Ed Fitch said he met with the chamber's board earlier in the week and there was a spirited discussion about the parade and the flag. He said he supports the chamber changing its parade requirements

and the city helping in any way it can.

"For these parades, which are family oriented and community oriented, I do agree that there should be an ability to ensure that those types of symbols are not allowed," Fitch said. "I love history. I am a Civil War historian buff, but it's history, and it's to be remembered, not honored." Eric Sande, the executive director of the Redmond Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber is working with legal counsel to learn what it can restrict as a parade host.

"And then we'll create guidelines that follow those rules and try to do what we can to ensure that we have safe and enjoyable parades in the future," he said.

The city received more than a dozen public comments for the meeting on Wednesday condemning the appearance of the Confederate flag.

Mayor George Endicott stayed silent on the topic during the meeting.

When questioned by The Bulletin afterward, the mayor said he does not disagree with what the other councilors said. However, he said he does not know where to draw the line. He asked whether a Black Lives Matter flag should be prohibited if a Confederate flag is going to be prohibited.

"I shake my head," Endicott said. "Some people have very, very strong feelings one way or the other to the point that they're almost radical about it. And that's OK if that's the one they want to do."

"I believe in public health, public safety, infrastructure and economic development. And I do my best to steer away from social issues, because what you're seeing now is a result of when you engage in that."

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Wastewater

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From there, the water is polished in the wetlands before it is discharged into the ground water, Kischner said.

He said the plan will reduce costs and increase public greenspace as the complex will be accessible to the public for hiking trails and other recreational activities. The city envisions connected trails into a city-wide trails system. Kirchner said that once the project is complete it will be like having an oasis in the desert.

"It's rare to have these opportunities," Kirchner said. "It's rare to have land. Some municipalities just don't have that opportunity. They've got to do more with less."

"And to capture this moment when it's still available and to kind of conserve that land — that's a little bit of land conservation for wildlife habitat and public use, but also meets the community's needs for wastewater treatment."

Rapid population growth

The project came out of an update to the city's Wastewater Facility Plan last year which sought to address and accommodate the city's rapid population growth.

Redmond's population topped more than 35,400 people in 2020, and that number is expected to reach 54,000 by 2045.

Kirchner, who was hired by the city last year, said the Redmond is looking ahead by seeking to lease and ultimately purchase the more than 900 acres.

"We're obviously planning for today, but we're really trying to acquire that land ... to add some disposal wetlands there, but then also for the next hundred years to have future land for this community to expand these wetlands," Kirchner

"It's rare to have these opportunities. It's rare to have land. Some municipalities just don't have that opportunity. They've got to do more with less."

— Ryan Kirchner, wastewater division manager

said.

He said future expansions will be minor in comparison, and that costs will be significantly less than a mechanical upgrade.

City councilors in July approved a loan agreement with the state for \$6.4 million for design costs.

The final design is expected to be completed by December 2022, and the city's goal is to complete the construction by 2025. The total cost of the project is projected to be \$42 million.

"Redmond's move to a more environmentally friendly and more efficient method of processing waste water is a major move for our infrastructure projects," Mayor George Endicott said in an email. "We are quite proud to pursue next generation technology in our efforts to be a more resourceful

community."

Public outreach, open houses

Anderson Perry and Associates, Inc., a Redmond-based civil engineering company the city hired to design the project, completed a similar project for the city of Prineville in 2017.

Prineville's 120-acre Crooked River Wetlands utilizes constructed wetlands to gradually reintroduce clean, treated wastewater into the Crooked River. The site is also a recreation destination offering a public trail system.

The city of Redmond expects to launch a website for the project within the next month. Public engagement meetings with neighbors and an open house are expected to be scheduled over the next few months.

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