

# Honoring differences with flags makes for a thorny issue, city council talk

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Of the Keizertimes

The, at times, confusing protections of the First Amendment entangled discussion of the city flying a LGBTQ+ Pride flag during a Keizer City Council meeting Monday, June, 7.

While it is unlikely to happen this year, the city may still pursue a rotating display inside the Keizer Civic Center or other options in the future.

June is National LGBTQ+ Pride Month and Councilor Roland Herrera requested information on the process by which the city could fly a Pride Flag outside city hall on existing flag poles.

It led to a momentarily heated discussion regarding what is permitted and what would be permitted if the city begins hanging flags representing people and/or causes.

City Manager Pro Temp Tim Wood said hanging such flags came down to a policy decision for the council and the city staff was willing to draft a policy that could include outdoor flags, a display inside the Keizer Civic Center or other options.

Councilor Ross Day noted that if the city flew a flag outdoors, it would make the immediate vicinity around the space a "public forum." In practical terms, it means that if the city chose one cause to support,

such as Pride Month, it would be legally required to allow all others access to the same space.

Day used the Confederate Flag as one example of an image that would need to be allowed if the Pride Flag were to be approved.

That provoked an exchange between Herrera and Day that grew heated as both became entrenched. Herrera suggested limiting the groups permitted to those that represent something that is inherent to who they are as people, Black, Asian, LGBTQ+, etc.

Day said it couldn't be limited in that way.

It's not the first time the city has had to tackle such questions. During discussions that took place more than a decade ago, city officials were wrestling with whether to allow city residents to broadcast their own shows on Keizer 23, the city's local broadcast station.

The issue that scuttled the conversation was essentially the same. If Keizer let anyone broadcast on the channel other than city-sponsored events, they had to let everyone broadcast and could not censor specific shows or points of view. At the



time, the joking-not-joking fear was that someone would approach the city with a show featuring naked bowling and the city would have no choice but to air it.

"My concern is that once we open the door, it doesn't get closed," Day said regarding the flags.

Mayor Cathy Clark stepped in to try and cool the situation between Herrera and Day and suggested the council's outreach committee consider the issue and

bring options back to the entire council.

"I appreciate the heart and the message, but we have to run it through legal and make sure that we won't turn public spaces into spaces that are detrimental to the community," Clark said.

Clark suggested aligning the causes the city selects with those recognized throughout Oregon.

Councilor Elizabeth Smith added, "I still think the display case is a great idea."

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