



Statement On Police Presence At Pride

Monterey Peninsula Pride has been approached by two local police departments wishing to march in our upcoming Pride parade on Saturday June 30, 2018. Given the historical involvement of police in suppressing LGBTQ+ people, an argument can certainly be made that such a request be viewed as a sign of tremendous progress in the social standing of the LGBTQ+ community and that the police should be welcomed with open arms.

A more common argument is that historically, Pride marches commemorate the Stonewall Riots that broke out in June 1969 in response to persistent police harassment and intimidation. To include police, some will say, is a betrayal of the origins of the movement.

It is a contentious issue that Pride organizers across the country are contending with and Monterey Peninsula Pride is no different in that respect. We recognize that there is no decision that we can make that will not alienate some members of our community.

We have decided to allow local police departments to march in our parade provided they are not uniformed. They may march behind a banner.

Although individual members of Monterey Peninsula Pride hold a variety of views about the police and Pride, as an organization here are some of the values that guide this year's decision.

Like the African American civil rights movement, it is necessary for the arsenal of liberation tactics of the LGBTQ+ rights movement to include militant opposition and sustained engagement as circumstances demand. As a non-profit organization merely a few months old, we are choosing to begin our institutional relationship with local police departments with cautious engagement. As one of our Pride committee members pointed out, a good model for this is our relationship with clergy.

Each year, the most organized opposition to our Pride event comes in the form of local clergy. Yet at the same time, other local clergy will not only walk in the parade but open up the program at Oldemeyer Center with an interfaith spiritual welcoming. Indeed, in collaboration with some of these clerics, we are compiling a local LGBTQ+ "Safe Houses of Worship" listing. This does not magically erase the impact of religious-based oppression on too many members of our community but it does enlist clergy in changing hearts and minds within their own congregations and faiths.

The broader institution of law enforcement, like religious institutions, have played — and continue to play — an undeniable role in the oppression of LGBTQ+ people. But like individual churches, synagogues and other local religious communities, individual police departments must be judged on their own histories and present cultural attitudes. That two local police departments are moved to march in the parade is cause for at least cautious optimism.

Nevertheless, we must balance our long term engagement strategy with law enforcement against the knowledge that — whether here or elsewhere — some members of our community have had their own unpleasant run-ins with law enforcement and will choose to stay away simply because there will be uniformed on-duty police officers present as a condition of the City of Seaside sponsoring the parade. In our judgment, to include uniformed officers in the parade as well would be a bridge too far, too soon. Trust will need to be earned over time.

As Monterey Peninsula Pride develops itself as a non-profit organization dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community, we will closely monitor the relationship between local law enforcement and the treatment of members of our LGBTQ+ community. We look forward to working to improve the relationship between law enforcement and the LGBTQ+ community.