

June 23, 2019

Attention: City Clerk, City Council and Mayor Eisenberger

I'll begin by introducing myself. My name is Darren Stewart-Jones.

I am two-time nominee for a City of Hamilton Arts Award for my work with The HamilTEN Festival, a festival of ten minute plays that I founded eight years ago. HamilTEN has become one of the Hamilton theatre community's most popular annual events. It runs every year in April.

I am also a Real Estate professional and a member of the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington. I have been buying and selling homes for clients in Hamilton for a couple of years now, including police officers and members of the LGBTQ community.

My volunteer activities include delivering Meals on Wheels through the Victorian Order of Nurses here in Hamilton. I believe I am an active, civically engaged citizen of the City of Hamilton. I also happen to be gay.

I am so disheartened by the anti-queer sentiment that seems to be festering in the City of Hamilton over the past several weeks. I have made my disappointment with the Chief of Police and the Mayor clear on social media.

A few items I would like addressed by the Mayor and Council are as follows:

1. Although the Hamilton Police Service feels they were placed in a somewhat difficult situation to do their best to protect Pride participants while not actively participating themselves in the event, they need to figure out what went wrong at the event and how things could have gone better. The dismissive quote of "We weren't invited" by Police Chief Eric Girt is not enough. Your citizens deserve better than that. We also deserve a Mayor and Police Department that truly respect ALL of Hamilton's citizens no matter their religion, gender, race or sexual orientation. Are you, truthfully, fully supportive of Hamilton's LGBTQ community? I need to know. I need to feel safe again in the city that I call home. I believe an investigation into police conduct at Pride is warranted. Hurt feelings cannot interfere with the HPS performing their duties.
2. I am shocked that the City of Hamilton has allowed groups that have ties to white supremacy to congregate in front of our City Hall every weekend for months now. These hate groups have become the face of Hamilton online and in the media. Is this the message we want to send to the world? I believe there must be a way for the city to disallow protests that involve hate speech from happening on city property. There should be a zero tolerance policy for hate speech in Hamilton.
3. Why was the LGBTQ candidate denied a seat on the Police Advisory Board? Is there perhaps an extra seat on the board for said candidate considering the events of this past week?
4. Is the individual identified as a White Supremacist still on City payroll? If so, why?

5. What is the point of having an LGBTQ advisory board if the Mayor refuses to take their advice? The Pride flag should not have been raised. Does the Mayor now admit that there are severely strained relations between City Hall/HPS and Hamilton's LGBTQ community? Perhaps heeding the advice of the advisory board would assist.

Your attention to the above matters would be greatly appreciated. Please advise me on what dates council expects to review my inquiries.

Sincerely,

Darren Stewart-Jones