



## Robbinsdale to penalize providers that engage in conversion therapy

Fines will begin at \$400

By **ALAINA ROOKER**  
alaina.rooker@apegcm.com

Robbinsdale businesses or organizations that practice or host gay conversion therapy events will likely face financial penalties in 2021. The Robbinsdale City Council's first matter of new business this year was the first reading of a conversion therapy ban, which passed unanimously at the Jan. 5 meeting.

Residents, in support of protections for LGBT individuals, have pressured the City Council and Human Rights Commission to pass an ordinance banning the practice. The organizers of Birdtown Pride, an ad-

vocacy group that organizes protests at Robbinsdale conversion therapy events, hoped to have an ordinance finalized with the city by January.

### What is conversion therapy?

Conversion therapy, sometimes called reparative therapy, attempts to change the sexual orientation of its subject. Many institutions, including the American Psychiatric Association, have discredited the practice. In 2018, the APA reiterated that the therapy "represent[s] a significant risk of harm

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## Outdoor adventures at Valley Place Park



(SUN PHOTO BY RAYMOND T. RIVARD)

Valley Place Park in Crystal is a popular destination for children and adults alike at this time of year. The sledding hill and skating rinks are all providing an outdoors outlet for many. These children, three of them from Minneapolis and another from Crystal, were all smiles.

## Mayor Harris reveals he has cancer in City Council meeting

### Golden Valley official received initial diagnosis in October, completed chemo

By **ALAINA ROOKER**  
alaina.rooker@apegcm.com

Golden Valley Mayor Shep Harris informed virtual viewers of the Jan. 5 City Council meetings that he has been fighting cancer. He confirmed his diagnosis shortly after the Pledge of Allegiance.

"For those of you who saw, I'm not being disrespectful by wearing a hat, my parents

taught me to take your hat off when you're indoors," he said. "But as you may have seen a moment ago for those who were watching, I am recovering from cancer chemotherapy treatment and one of the side effects is to be bald and beautiful."

Harris was diagnosed with early-stage testicular cancer in October and underwent surgery and chemotherapy in the last months of 2020.

While this was his first time acknowledging the matter in a public meeting, Harris said he has not been private about his diagnosis. He has posted about it on social media and has a dedicated CaringBridge site for those that want to stay updated.

"I'm having fun with it as best as one can," said Harris. "It's not stopping me from doing my day job or doing work for the city."

He decided to address the issue publicly to remain transparent to residents.

"At one point or another people were going to find out, so

I figured I'd just go ahead and announce it," he said.

A few months ago, Harris and the council reviewed contingency plans in the event the mayor would have to miss a meeting due to surgery or chemotherapy recovery.

Harris said having the diagnosis during COVID-19 had its pros and cons. The danger to a suppressed immune system necessitated extreme caution, but there were no in-person events to miss.



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Shep Harris