

Dear City Council members.

Thank you for your service for the City of Waverly. We appreciate your hard work and the many hours you spend governing and making decisions related to Waverly's growth, development, and services.

We write recognizing that the City Council is the administrative and financial and legislative authority over city business. We respect your efforts to govern the citizens of Waverly with excellence, wisdom, and justice as you work for the good of all the citizens. We also recognize the challenge of serving and making decisions for a diverse population. So again, thank you for leadership efforts and for letting our voices be heard.

As a group of pastors and spiritual leaders who serve many citizens in the city of Waverly, we wanted to communicate regarding planned city activities. We are aware that the Human Equity and Diversity commission is sponsoring a Pride event, a Glow Float down part of the Cedar River that ends at Kohlman park and other events associated with PRIDE month. We wish to express our concerns and opposition to the City of Waverly, the City Council, and/or the HED commission to host, sponsor, and/or fund these events, for the following reasons:

1. We understand that the Pride Glow Float is to celebrate and foster community and visibility for the LGBTQ+ community, as part of the HED's commission *to design and initiate actions that promote diversity and secure equity for all people within the City of Waverly and to shape a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable community.* As a group of pastors and some of the spiritual leaders in Waverly, we represent over a thousand Waverly area congregants that hold to God-given truths regarding marriage and sexuality as expressed in the Bible and represented in traditional Christian beliefs.ⁱ Therefore, we do not believe it is wise, nor in the best interests of all of Waverly's citizens, for you our City Leaders to use their legitimate God-given and citizen-approved authority to promote and endorse morals and values that contradict these truths, truths that shape the lives of many of Waverly's citizens. We do not ask the city council to regulate personal and private legal behavior, nor to discriminate against any of its citizens. Rather, we only ask that you consider the beliefs and practices of all Waverly citizens when you decide to sponsor public activities and events that endorse and promote specific views on sexual identity and morality.
2. The plan for the Pride Glow Float down part of the Cedar River is for participants to be over 18 years old or accompanied by an adult. Research and experience demonstrates that Pride River events can become indecent and sometimes pornographic (Odom, 2024; Smith, 2023; Bartosch, 2021). This raises concerns and questions:
 - a. How will the city ensure that no minors will see or watch these public adult river activities?
 - b. Will the city allow other citizens to host and engage in adult public indecent activities?

Additionally, according to research Pride events have become controversial even within the LGBTQ+ community because of its commercialization and because Pride events attract activists from outside the community and promote behavior that often doesn't represent the local citizens or the local LGBTQ+ community (Bartosch, 2021; Maxwell, 2023; Odom, 2024; Richards, 2022; Smith, 2023). More research, including a meta-analysis of multiple studies, demonstrates that promotion of DEI activities and policies is divisive, often reinforces stereotypes and increases prejudice, and has a negative rather than a positive effect ((Devine & Ash, 2022; Haskell, 2024; Paluck & Porat, 2021).

These realities clearly suggest that these kind of public activities don't fit in a community that promotes itself accurately as one of the best communities in Iowa to live and raise a family. Therefore, we ask the city council to carefully reconsider whether it is in the best interests of the city's mission, the city's children and families, and the well-being of Waverly's citizens to promote these kind of public activities or to use tax-payer money to fund these public events.

Thanks again for your leadership. We respect your authority. Thank you for giving serious consideration to our concerns and opposition to the City Council approving and promoting the Pride glow river parade.

Respectfully,

Pastor Doug Frazell, Grace Baptist
Pastor Josh Rouser, Grace Baptist
Dr. Jim Lee, Grace Baptist
Steve Kramer, Gospel Hall
Pastor Dan Ehlo, First Baptist
Pastor Glanzer, First Baptist
Pastor Jon Hennings, Heritage Global Methodist
Chris Dix, Heritage Global Methodist
Pastor Greg Gosnell, Horton Baptist
Pastor James Livingston, Horton Baptist
Pastor Matt Miller, Life Church
Erin Bird, Riverwood Church
Jake Epley, Riverwood Church
Pastor Jon Ellingsworth, St. John's Lutheran
Pastor Miguel Gonzalez-Feliciano, St. Paul, Immanuel, & Community Lutheran (Readlyn)

Bibliography

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ⁱ The Bible addresses these subjects in multiple passages: Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Mark 10:6-9; Romans 1:26-28; I Timothy 1:8-11; Jude 1:7