

A Special meeting of Bloomsburg Town Council was held Monday, December 15, 2014, beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Bloomsburg Fire Hall located at 911 Market Street, Bloomsburg, PA. Present were Mayor Sandy Davis, Council Members W. Carey Howell, Diane Levan, Sylvia Costa, William Kreisher, Eric Bower, and Fred Trump; Solicitor Jack Mihalik; Town Administrator William Lowthert; Assistant Town Administrator Lauren Martz; Code Enforcement Officers Ralph Magill and Kyle Bauman, Chief of Police Roger Van Loan, Administrative Assistants Amy Seamans and Christine Meeker.

CITIZENS TO BE HEARD

Each Town resident listed below (as determined by the meeting procedure guidelines) was given two minutes to present their position regarding if the Town should adopt an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. Listed beside each resident or business owners name is their position regarding the Ordinance. "For" indicates being in favor of the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance and "Against" indicates not wanting the Town to pass an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance. This listing is also the order that speakers presented:

1. "For" Dwayne Heisler, Remit Corporation
2. "Against" Alvin Lucas, Derr, Pursel, Luschas & Naparsteck LLP
3. "For" Craig A. Young, Bloomsburg University LGBTQA Commission
4. "For" Joan M. Mosier
5. "For" Harry A. Strausser III, Remit Corporation
6. "For" Phil Rippke
7. "For" A. Elizabeth Dowd
8. "For" Timothy Oleksiak
9. "For" Vince DeMelfi, Susquehanna Realty, Inc.
10. "Against" Jeremy Stabler, WW Bridal Boutique
11. "Against" James Boucher, WW Bridal Boutique
12. "For" John M. Wardigo, Lisa's Country Cuts
13. "Against" Anthony Beard
14. "For" Richard Larcom
15. "Against" Tim Perry, Victory Baptist Church
16. "For" Pamela S. Sriharsha, The Cloak and Dragon Bookstore
17. "For" William Calhoun
18. "For" Jill Carlson
19. "For" Rand Whipple, Box of Light
20. "For" Susan C. Brook
21. "For" Darren Inman
22. "For" Jason Godeke
23. "For" Shay Butasek
24. "Against" Kathleen Mulligan
25. "For" Daniel J. Roth
26. "For" Dave Kube
27. "For" Robert Matthew Thebarger
28. "Against" Carlos Agramonte
29. "Against" William J. Rudolph
30. "For" Sue Jackson, Task Force on Racial Equity
31. "For" Melvin B. Endy, Jr.
32. "For" Deborah Zollmann Krupp
33. "For" Luther (Lee) E. Barnhardt III
34. "For" Marisa Huerta
35. "Against" James Cughan
36. Cancelled-Susan M. Hill, Harding, Hill and Turowski
37. "Against" Joe Dombrosky, WW Bridal Boutique
38. "For" Rebecca Cospier
39. "For" Stephen D. Engelhardt, Trinity United Church of Christ
40. "For" Gary Vadakin, Seasons on Main
41. "For" Debbie Chamberlain
42. Attended but declined to speak-Matthew Barcus, Bloomsburg University Office of LGBTQA Student Services

Mayor Davis closed the public discussion portion of the meeting and asked Council members to state their opinion on authorizing Solicitor Mihalik to draft an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance for the Town of Bloomsburg.

Councilman Kreisher initially thought that Bloomsburg did not need an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance when the subject was brought to Council's attention several years ago. After the recent event at W.W. Bridal took place, he realized there is a necessity for such an ordinance in Bloomsburg and housing and jobs especially should be protected for everyone regardless of sexual orientation. He would like to see several Anti-Discrimination Ordinance options drafted by the Solicitor for the Town of Bloomsburg to review.

Councilwoman Costa stated that she appreciated the passion on both sides of this issue but feels that this anti-discrimination issue should be addressed at the state and federal level due to the potential tax burden for local residents. Costa mentioned that we should not pass an Ordinance based on "what-ifs" and then read the letters sent to the Town of Bloomsburg by the Chamber of Commerce and Columbia Montour Visitor's Bureau which suggested that the Town should not pass an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance.

Councilwoman Levan stated that she wants to see an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance passed in the Town of Bloomsburg and added that "how would the other side of this debate feel if they were denied goods, services, or housing." Bloomsburg has blazed a trail before on heavily debated issues and this issue is another item that the Town should work to pass instead of passing the buck to the state and federal government.

Councilman Bower wants to see protection for religious freedom and sexual orientation and agrees that Town needs to pass an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance and not pass the buck to Harrisburg. He stated that everyone should be treated equally and that the Town of Bloomsburg should not be scared to pass an Ordinance solidifying that position.

Councilman Trump is opposed to passing an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance because he feels that the government cannot dictate the morality of people and a local ordinance would not resolve anything. He stated that he is in favor of supporting and sending a Resolution regarding equality of all people to Harrisburg where he feels the issue should be addressed, but believes that an ordinance would become a financial burden to local taxpayers.

Councilman Howell is in favor of the Resolution that he worked to draft, but is opposed to creating an Ordinance. He stated that although 34 municipalities have an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance in PA, 2562 municipalities do not have one. Councilman Howell believes that legislation needs to come from the state level. He also mentioned that we need to unify our community and support this issue all the way to the state level.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their courage to share their views from both sides of the issue. She stated that she read every letter, post card, and petition she received and that she weighed her decision heavily on what she felt would be the best for the Town of Bloomsburg overall. She mentioned that the interest and discussion of this topic needs to continue, but that if an Ordinance would be passed, there would be perceived winners and losers and the discussion would simply end. Mayor Davis then said that she feels that this issue needs to be addressed at the state and federal level so that there is continuity across the entire state. She also recommended that the conversation from both sides needs to continue and both sides need to work together to find a solution. She then reminded the audience of the official position of the Columbia Montour Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Bloomsburg, Inc., and the Columbia Montour Visitor's Bureau which all agreed that an Anti-Discrimination Ordinance was not the solution for the Town of Bloomsburg. Mayor Davis in closing stated that Bloomsburg is a wonderful place to live and that we need to continue to keep it the open place that it always has been.

APPROVAL OF AUTHORIZING THE TOWN SOLICITOR TO DRAFT ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCE

On a motion by B. Kreisher, seconded by E. Bower and voted on three (3) (D. Levan, B. Kreisher, E. Bower voting "Yes") to four (4) (S. Davis, C. Howell, S. Costa, and F. Trump) voting "No", Council did not authorize the Town Solicitor to prepare an ordinance relating to anti-discrimination in the Town of Bloomsburg.

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 12.15.14.01 – EQUALITY FOR ALL CITIZENS OF THE TOWN OF BLOOMSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

On a motion by C. Howell, seconded by F. Trump and voted on four (4) (S. Davis, C. Howell, S. Costa, and F. Trump) voting “Yes”), to three (3) (D. Levan, B. Kreisher, E. Bower voting “No”), Council adopted Resolution 12.15.14.01 regarding equality for all citizens of the Town of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania.

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

William Lowthert
Town Administrator