

# MEMORANDUM

Date: July 10, 2018

To: Human Relations Commission (HRC)

From: Minka van der Zwaag  
Human Services Manager

Subject: Update on response to Anti LGBTQ posters

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Staff is providing this update so that the commission is provided with an account of the anti-LGBTQ posters found posted in the community last month.

On Sunday, June 17, posters in opposition to the Palo Alto libraries Pride month display were found and taken down by a member of the public at Mitchell Park; close to the Magical Bridge Playground, by the bathrooms near the tennis courts and at a crosswalk in front of the Mitchell Park Library. A photograph of the poster was later sent out by a member of the public via Twitter and Next Door. Members of the City's Executive Leadership staff were informed of the posters as were members of the City Council.

On Monday, June 18, Mayor Liz Kniss issued a statement which was posted on the City's website (<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=4293>). This explained the incidents and affirmed the community's commitment to "maintaining our city as a diverse, supportive, inclusive and protective community through our actions and words." At the Council meeting that evening, a Pride flag was added on the dais and during oral communications, HRC Chair Stinger (accompanied by Commissioner Lee), communicated the HRC's commitment to LGBTQ inclusion in the community, the upcoming work the commission's subcommittee on LGBTQ issues, and an offer of assistance to help enhance inclusion in the community.

The weekend of June 27, two additional anti-gay posters were found taped to City Hall. They were different from those found at Mitchell Park and were in response to Mayor Kniss' statement in support of the library's collections and activities. Staff was informed that Mayor Kniss and the Library Director have received numerous e-mails of support and thanks for the work that our local libraries do.

Both sets of posters were reviewed by the City Attorney and are protected as free speech by the First Amendment. Staff was informed that they may remove posters if they are posted on city property and that members of the public, if they so choose, may remove them when posted in other locations in the community. The Police Department has been notified regarding both sets of posters; because there is nothing illegal in their content or posting at this time, no further action will be taken.

School district librarians and city library staff have recently met to see if they can find ways to collaborate to help educate parents about LGBTQ issues and to support each other in working with children in libraries at both locations. It was a fruitful meeting and I have been informed that they will invite other stakeholders, including HRC Chair Stinger, to a meeting to discuss educational responses later in the summer, since schools are on currently on summer break.

The city is committed to building a safe, protective, inclusive and supportive community for all its residents and looks forward to continuing to partner with the HRC on this important matter.