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HOME/NEWS

# Public keeps debate on LGBT protections going at Jacksonville council meeting Tuesday night

By Christopher Hong Tue, Jan 12, 2016 @ 9:32 pm | updated Wed, Jan 13, 2016 @ 9:17 am



Times-Union file photo  
Jacksonville's City Hall

Jacksonville residents crowded Tuesday's City Council meeting to voice their stance on the longstanding question of whether to expand discrimination protections to the LGBT community, which will soon be decided by the council.

During the same meeting, the council also unanimously passed a resolution supporting

Mayor Lenny Curry's proposal to pay off the city's massive pension debt with a half-cent sales tax. That plan is in the hands of state lawmakers, who must first sign off on the plan.

While the council didn't need to debate whether to back Curry's proposal, it spent hours listening to public comments on the upcoming decision to expand the city's anti-discrimination ordinance.

Tuesday's meeting saw the formal introduction of two bills on the issue. Councilman Tommy Hazouri introduced a bill to expand the discrimination protections, while Councilman Bill Gulliford introduced a bill to let voters decide.

Next month, the council will begin debating those two bills. It's the first time the issue will be taken up since the council defeated similar legislation in 2012.

Tuesday's discussion mostly remained civil, with council members hearing many of the same arguments voiced years ago and in a series of community meetings that Curry hosted late last year.

However, the meeting took a turn when a speaker said his own experience molesting children in restrooms is a reason the protections shouldn't be expanded. The speaker, who police said identified himself as Roy Bay, said he was never caught or punished for his past actions. A Jacksonville Sheriff's Office spokesman who was at the meeting said police will look into his statements. The Times-Union was not immediately able to verify that the name the man provided was his real name.

Supporters of expanding the law said the LGBT community deserves the same rights and protections afforded to other minority groups and urged the council to vote on it.



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"There is a lot of misinformation being spread tonight that people firmly believe," said the Rev. Laurie Denman. "You have the obligation to research the issue ... so you can make an informed and unemotional decision when this bill comes up for a vote."

Opponents, many citing their religious beliefs that homosexuality is morally wrong, said expanded protections amounted to a special privilege that would interfere with small business and could allow men into women's restrooms. Many urged council members to let voters decide the issue.

"The Lord has made it very clear in his word how he feels about this. He would not support this ordinance," said Ben Goldsmith. "Let the people of Jacksonville decide."

The full council will debate Hazouri's and Gulliford's bills during special meetings scheduled for Feb. 4, Feb. 18 and March 3.

Meanwhile, Curry's pension proposal awaits state lawmakers' judgment. Two state lawmakers have filed legislation that would let voters decide whether to extend the special half-cent sales tax to pay off the pension debt. Under the proposal, the tax would go into effect as soon as the half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2000 to pay for the Better Jacksonville Plan ends after 2030.

Curry is in Tallahassee this week to pitch his plan to legislators.

**Editor's note:** An earlier version of this story incorrectly identified Roy Bay.

Christopher Hong (904) 359-4272

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**EIJefe**

Thursday, January 14, 2016 @ 9:28 am

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Now that was a good question Stecker.

Thankfully, I did not join the Marines (and I will bypass the common trash talk

points

on that subject). However, in the 80s, I was awarded a contract with General Dynamics for a DoD system. It required a security clearance and the vetting form had at least half a page on the subject. Marijuana came in second.



But now, neither the Marines nor DoD ask that question. That's really the point.

I oppose amending the HRO for any reason. I want it rescinded in total and funding for the HRC eliminated. They accomplish nothing and it's a waste of taxpayer dollars.

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#### Stecker

Thursday, January 14, 2016 @ 8:25 am

" no one has ever asked me about my sexual preference when I was applying for a job"



Jsackerson, didn't they ask you that when you joined the Marine Corps?

Granted, the military is a different animal than civilian jobs.

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#### finder

Wednesday, January 13, 2016 @ 1:02 pm

stardust - in that case we totally agree that those that live the Christian lifestyle shouldn't be interfering with our government.



RRer\_JSH - that is a very good question. But you won't get one of these fine Christians to answer it. In all my years of applying for a job or renting a house what my religion was but they sure as heck want to make sure that they are protected. They even want to go so far as to be able to refuse service (even when it is their job, see Kim Davis) to LGBT under the guise of 'religious freedom'.

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#### RRer\_JSH

Wednesday, January 13, 2016 @ 12:13 pm

Why do the religious get special protections?

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#### Jsackerson

Wednesday, January 13, 2016 @ 10:12 am

I must be dense or something but during my entire adult life no one has ever asked me about my sexual preference when I was applying for a job or renting an apartment.



That has just never ever entered into my life experience. I've posted on here before that your sexual orientation and your religious beliefs are your own business. Those issues don't need to be shoved in every ones face. It's just not necessary or polite.

If you keep your private business private. How can anyone possibly discriminate against you?

I don't on the other hand care what people do in the privacy of their own homes. I equally don't care if or how they choose to worship. That's none of my business.

I do think it should be against the law for people to practice their sexual activities openly in public. We already have public decency laws on the books that cover that. The police shouldn't spend an inordinate amount of time and resources entrapping people in clubs and businesses that provide adult entertainment. That seems counter productive to the real criminal activity that is plaguing the community.

When it comes to any deviant sexual activity with minors. That is strictly not a

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constitutional right and should be punished accordingly. That guy popping off at the Council meeting should be thoroughly investigated. He should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law if proof can be found.

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