

Drag show

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hypothetical example:

"In 1861, every Confederate state had a law authorizing and enforcing slavery. In 1865, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery, but many southern states did not repeal their slave codes (some southern states still have slave codes on their books and are just now getting around to removing them).

"Suppose some southerner was holding slaves in 2022 and was to argue that until the slave law is proved unconstitutional, it's the state's job to enforce the state's law. Clearly that would get laughed out of court."

Attorney Mack said that this hypothetical case is legal-ly similar to the enforcement of New London's ordinance on the Little Theatre, "because this isn't a closed case."

As it stands, "gay marriage is constitutionally protected, trans rights are constitutionally protected, and the city may does not prohibit drag shows if they are not obscene or do not involve child pornography."

In a letter submitted to the city, Kandiyohi County Attorney Shane Baker stated — under the caveat that the show has not yet taken place — that the drag show performance does not fall under any of the provisions covered by New London's Adult Use Ordinance (which regulates a number of adult entertainment activities including adult book and media stores, adult cabarets, adult mini-motion picture theatres and other activities.)

"With regards to adult mini-motion picture theatre[s], this is a live performance and not a presentation of film or videotape," he said. "Likewise the dominant theme of the performance is not on 'specified sexual activities' or 'specified anatomical areas' as these terms are defined in the ordinance." For these reasons, the Little Theatre is not operating as an adult mini-motion picture, he said.

Attorney Baker added that the Little Theatre also does not fall under the category of adult cabaret as defined by the current ordinance.

"The Little Theatre itself is not an establishment that excludes minors. In fact, the teen performance before the adult show includes those under 21. The 'drag show' certainly will include dancing or live entertainment. But to come under the definition of an adult cabaret, that dancing or entertainment must be 'distinguished or characterized by an emphasis on the performance, depiction, or description of 'specified sexual activities' or 'specified anatomical areas.'"

These terms, he said, have specific definitions in the ordinance, of which none apply to the adult and teen shows as proposed.

As such, "the New London

ordinance does not regulate this show. As the ordinance does not apply to the drag show, it is unnecessary to address any constitutionality of the ordinance."

Attorney Mack said the show does not involve grooming, as some have suggested.

"The Minnesota Supreme Court has been very clear about what grooming is. Grooming is the process of using acts or communications for the purpose of enticing a minor or group of minors to later engage in sex acts with an adult (through language, enticements or bribes.)

"So the generalized sponsorship of opinions about sexuality, unlike true grooming, is constitutionally protected... The First Amendment draws distinction between words and deeds, and here, the drag show does not target a specific individual or group. Its actors do not intend to have sex with an under-age minor. The show does not intend to graphically depict sexual acts."

Comments from the council and community

With the exception of Erik Hatlestad, who abstained from commenting due to his membership on the Little Theatre's Board of Directors, the New London City Council collectively agreed that the theatre is permitted to move forward with its show.

"I've been pretty clear that free speech, free expression is going to be my ultimate go-to," said Kelly Asche. "This doesn't have any nudity, it doesn't have anything nefarious to it, it doesn't have any impact in terms of property values or public things that a strip club would. So in my mind, this is not a city issue."

Steve Slominski said he agreed with Asche, adding that while the city's ordinance is in need of a clarifying update, "I'm a free speech guy, a life, liberty and pursuit of happiness guy, and we can all do that for ourselves and still have space to accept others."

John Dahl commended the public for being civil among what has become a contentious issue, and hopes discussions surrounding the show, regardless of opinion, will help foster better understanding between those with different viewpoints. "But I also agree with Kelly, and I agree with our legal [consultants] that as far as a city goes, this ordinance can't be used to [prohibit the show.]"

Mayor Bergman said the show could be an opportunity for community discussion and express their views through peaceful dialogue. As the show has yet to take place, he added, "some of us have some ideas about it, but those ideas might be wrong. So this might be an opportunity to see what it's about. Take a chance. You

might be surprised."

Following the council's statements, Mayor Bergman allowed for public comments, both for and against Saturday's performance.

Shawn Berg, speaking as a "New London resident, husband, father and taxpayer," said he is against the event, in particular, the youth show.

"These shows are adult entertainment and need to be banned for children and teens. I'm asking the councilmembers to do whatever is necessary to keep these types of events out of our town."

Berg said drag events are "highly sexual in nature and geared toward children," alluding to a recent show in Dallas, Texas that he said included children and vulgar signs.

"Grown men dancing for young children and youth should be ashamed of themselves. Most conservatives are not comfortable confronting this agenda. I'm here to tell you you need to get comfortable with it. We need to bring shame back where it belongs... It's a good tool when it is used to shame things that are wrong. Things that are indeed shameful. And grown men dressing as a character of a woman dancing for young kids whose minds are extremely impressionable is shameful."

Fred Everson, a lifelong resident, said that while he realizes times have changed since he was an adolescent in the 1950s and '60s, he believes the show would be detrimental to childhood innocence. "I love every one of you," he said. "It says in the Bible that you are wonderfully made, but for our little children, let's be careful." Everson followed by reading the biblical verse: "if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around our necks." Let's remember that. We're going to be accountable for that."

Pastor Kevin Melin, of New London Evangelical Covenant Church, voiced numerous criticisms for the performance — namely the youth portion — including changes in recent weeks of age ranges allowed for the youth show, the environment and design of the stage, (which he described as similar to a strip club), word-of-mouth promotion of the show itself and what he believes, in general, to be a gateway to the sexualization of children and young adults.

"Don't sexualize our youth. That's the issue," he said.

Bethany Lacktorin, Little Theatre Auditorium Director, said criticisms she has received about the show are largely based on religious be-

Drag show

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THREE BUNS and a Hurricane®

BY ALISON NELSON



This week we sent our kids off on another first day of school - backpacks full of supplies, heads full of nerves and hearts with anticipation. I've been excited about the new routine and craziness to die down a bit - we might have just finished the fastest summer ever recorded, or what felt like it anyway. Our family ran from place to place, always not quite done and a few minutes behind. Always running.

Right on cue, the school bus came on the first day several minutes before our new even earlier bus time, which sent the kids scrambling and me pleading for a quick picture of the five boys. I am hoping the new school year is not a continuation of the summer.

Our first summer as main street businesspeople has come to an end. Sweets, our ice cream shop, certainly contributed to the hectic pace but in a very fun and rewarding way. We had a wonderful staff of teens, whom we hope will all return next summer. Customers were not shy with suggestions, in a mostly helpful way, and were patient with us as we learned these new service roles.

In our one hundred or so open days, we burned through almost 800 gallons of ice cream, over 2000 malts and shakes, thousands of cones, bowls, spoons, striped straws, hundreds of cans of craft soda, endless gallons of milk and cans of whipped cream. Sprinkles everywhere. Smiles everywhere.

And so much sidewalk

chalk. That was one of my favorite parts, actually - going up town and seeing what people had written or drawn in the sidewalk chalk. Lots of flowers, cactus, colorful stripes, pizza slices, butterflies, heart-felt messages, reminders to society ("be kind"), so-and-so was here, and replicas of our logo. Some complicated mathematical equations. One day, early on, a child wrote "I love mom and this place." On the last night, we had a "Goodbye Sweets" and "Til next year, Sweets".

Til next year, friends. We are so looking forward to it!

The Nelson family, both Minnesota and DC/Virginia contingencies, started competing last year in a friendly online fantasy football league. It's been a very fun way to connect with all of our boys, and keeps us in touch with relatives hundreds of miles away. We held our draft this weekend via Zoom, with three different households on the call.

Jesse's brother Chris is the league commissioner and set all of this up. During the call, with the draft starting promptly at 5:00 p.m., his two boys flanked him, hollering requests and making suggestions for all of their teams. They were ready.

Per above, our family was coming in hot and unprepared. One of our kids could not remember his email address and could not log into his account, and thus frantic/crushed. Another was working at Sweets and participating via Zoom on his phone when there were no

customers. Two other kids were in the living room on their computers, Jesse at the counter, and me at the table, both trying to do our drafts and help the one with issues. All the kids running back and forth asking questions. Everyone in our house was talking over the next person.

And then Jesse's sister Elsa and her man, Pete, in a totally different scenario: no children. They dressed in football jerseys of their favorite players, had some delightful beverages, and quietly studied the lists they had prepared before the draft. If this is not a commentary on the pros and cons of having kids, I don't know what is.

There were 12 of us all together, selecting in a random order drawn by the ESPN Fantasy website. Before the draft, our kids were making deals with each other about who wants what player and promising not to take someone the other wanted. But all the kids wanted all the best players, and where does that leave us parents?

So when my number five pick came up, I took Dalvin Cook. They wanted him, of course. They'd all made agreements that included him, and thought I should respect that. At what point, though, do we get to stop letting them win because they're kids, and have the equal opportunities? Maybe I want that star running back. Or the last piece of cake. Or to choose the movie. I think that point is now. You're going down, kids.

ASK A TROOPER

By Jesse Grabow

Thank you.

Answer: Minnesota state law says, "Every motor vehicle when operated upon a highway must be equipped with a horn in good working order and capable of emitting sound audible under normal conditions from a distance of not less than 200 feet. However, the horn or other warning device must not emit an unreasonably loud or harsh sound or a whistle. The driver of a motor vehicle shall, when reasonably necessary to insure safe operation, give audible warning with the horn, but shall not otherwise use the horn when upon a highway."

As stated, a motor vehicle's horn is to be used when to "insure safe operation." I believe it is worded as this to

help prevent and reduce the unnecessary honking to help avoid annoyance and harassment. By using the horn for potential safety issues it can help keep people alert and safe. As you mentioned being behind someone at a stoplight and they don't notice the light turning green. Does sounding the horn

help with safety? Another thing to be aware of from my experience, I've seen a number of "road rage" incidents start from the honking of horn.

Car alarms are legal. A person may want to check with their local laws and ordinances to see if there are any additional requirements and responsibilities.

PET OF THE WEEK:
Clover & Honeybun

We are social and sweet guinea pigs. We enjoy playing with toys and running around. We are both around 1 year old, Clover is black and white while Honeybun is calico. Cuddling with our person and watching some TV is so much fun! Veggies are the best and we get them every day to eat. We have lived together and get along great. Huts are fun to hang out in according to Honeybun, but Clover would rather see what's going on in the world!

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