

LET'S PACK CITY COUNCIL

ALEX CLARK
LIFE EDITOR

Tuesday's city council meeting did not include a fair employment resolution proposed by Ryan Carter and Yesenia Hernandez. The resolution would add sexual orientation, gender identity and veteran status to the anti-discrimination policy in the Jonesboro Employee Handbook.

The resolution not making it onto the agenda did not stop the individuals passionate about making this happen, though. Saturday, demonstrators gathered downtown with signs reading "C'mon Harold," "Veteran rights!" and "I can't go back in the closet if I'm homeless." The demonstrators also carried various LGBTQ+ pride flags, as well as the A-State Gender and Sexuality Alliance's banner.

Hernandez and Carter are still moving forward and pushing this resolution to be considered by the city council. At Tuesday's city council meeting, Hernandez and other supporters passed out stickers with a symbol of LGBTQ+ support on them. Elijah Walker, pastor at Solomon's Porch spoke during public comment about the resolution. "In years past, working in a private industry, I was denied a promotion because of my gender identity and sexual orientation. And I believe that, that happens more often than we think, and if it happens on a private basis in private industry, then it also happens in public, on public committees, in public service."

Walker's speech was moving, with another point he made being the people that serve our city of Jonesboro deserve better. He called for the able-bodied supporters of the resolution to stand, and the majority of those sitting in the audience stood.

Following Walker's speech, Mayor Perrin clarified that he did not decline to put the resolution on the agenda, but that it was not proposed correctly.

City Attorney Carol Duncan explained that she felt that the handbook already covered protection of these statuses with its statement that hiring, firing, etc. will happen based solely on qualifications. Duncan also justified the possibility of not accepting this resolution by suggesting the handbook's text be changed to say classes protected under Title VII cannot be discriminated against, instead of including an itemized list of protected classes.

If the handbook changed to "classes protected under Title VII" instead of the itemized list of protected classes, however, that would mean waiting for changes to be made on a federal level.

Ryan Carter spoke up to let the city council know that veteran status is currently protected under Title VI, but not in the Jonesboro employee handbook -- meaning that currently, Jonesboro's handbook is not up to date with federal law.



IMAGE COURTESY OF FACEBOOK (@CITYOFJONESBOROAR)

Pastor Elijah Walker called for the able-bodied supporters of the fair employment resolution to stand and show the city council their support. If passed, the resolution would add sexual orientation, gender identity and veteran status to the anti-discrimination policy in Jonesboro's employee handbook.



IMAGE COURTESY OF ALFONSO RAMIREZ

Supporters of the fair employment resolution rallied outside the Craighead County Courthouse downtown on Saturday. They held hand-made signs, pride flags and also the A-State Gender and Sexuality Alliance banner. Holding the intersex pride flag (yellow, with a purple circle in the center) is Yesenia Hernandez, president of NEA Pride.

Together We Create

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The A-State University Singers Choir will be performing next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in Riceland Hall of the Fowler Center. The concert, the theme of which is "Together We Create," will feature men's, women's and community choirs, led by Cherie Collins and Dr. Ryan Sullivan.

The men's choir will sing about "the creation of hope and joy through song, about being human, about the beauty of love and creating a sense of community," while the women's choir will "sing on the creation of music and how it binds us together and how struggles of life can cause different cultures to come together and create unity," said Collins. "They will close with a stirring rendition of a plea to walk with integrity and beauty."

The concert is the second choral event to take place this semester, following the Concert and Chamber Choir performance on Feb. 11. Admission is free.



PHOTO BY SUMIN CHAE | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Audience members enjoyed performances during "Seen and Heard: An Evening of Art and Song," an event held in the Fine Arts Recital Hall. For more photos of the event, see 4B.

#JusticeForJohnnyDepp

The following details abuse, please read at your own risk.

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The situation between Johnny Depp and Amber Heard may not be as simple as it seems. In May 2016, heard filed for divorce from Depp and shortly after a judge granted her a temporary restraining order against him.

In court documents, Heard said that Depp abused her and detailed an instance that had taken place two days before she filed for divorce -- however, the Los Angeles Police Department that responded to the 911 call told the media there had been no evidence of a crime. Heard provided photos of the abuse, as well as having witnesses to some events.

In August 2016, the two reached a \$7 million divorce settlement, and Heard retracted her abuse allegations before a restraining order hearing.

Depp received backlash from Heard's abuse allegations. He lost his role as Captain Jack Sparrow in "Pirates of The Caribbean," and planned films starring Depp went unreleased.

However, Heard also received backlash. In her 2018 Washington Post op-ed, where she identified herself as an abuse survivor, she shared that she also lost roles, as well as received death threats and was basically stalked by the media every time she left her home.

Following Heard's op-ed, however, Depp filed a \$50 million defamation lawsuit. Depp's lawyers

said Heard's op-ed centered on the false premise "that Ms. Heard was a domestic abuse victim and that Mr. Depp perpetrated domestic violence against her." They also blamed Heard for Depp's loss of the Jack Sparrow role, as it was announced he would no longer have the role four days after the publication.

The situation took a turn to accuse Heard of being the abuser, rather than Depp. Heard decided to dismiss the complaint and detailed the abuse perpetrated by Depp, while Depp opposed this by claiming Heard faked her injuries. He alleged Heard showed up to court in May 2016 with fake bruises that witnesses and surveillance footage would show had not been there the week before.

Depp submitted evidence of himself with a black eye and alleged an attack that resulted in severing the top of his finger. The same finger incident, Heard claimed was self-inflicted and that Depp mixed his blood with oil paint to write messages around their home.

In a leaked audio clip, Heard admits to hitting Depp and that she can't promise not to be physical in the future -- but the context of this clip is missing.

The situation is a tangle of facts and maybe not-whole truths, and it's not completely clear who is truly in the wrong. Everyone immediately jumping to #JusticeForJohnnyDepp should consider taking a step back and waiting for more information and context.

Interested in reporting? Join us every Monday at 5 p.m. in room 224 in the Communications Building.