



Falls City Pride Celebration

August 17, 2019

Event proposal for consideration by the Falls City Parks and Recreation Committee,
City Manager, and City Council

*"That's what I loved about this, it was a truly community event... It really changed my mind about small
Towns. Falls City is great." (past attendee as quoted in the IO)*

Item 2.1 Name and Logo for the Event

The name of the event is, "Falls City Pride." The logo for the event can be viewed at the top of this page.

Item 2.2 The Nature of all Activities:

Now in its fifth year, Falls City Pride is an all-inclusive, community weekend event that has historically attracted hundreds of visitors, from Falls City to Italy, in order to celebrate community, the beauty of Falls City, and equality around the LGBTQ and allies community; and to reject violence and discrimination toward LGBTQ people and allies while celebrating the progress achieved against these threats. The event organizers wish to dedicate Saturday, August 17, 2019 as the official Falls City Community event. The schedule of events is as follows:

A) 11am – 1pm: Sip 'n Sashay walkabout. Participants will gather at the Lower Falls then embark on a mapped stroll to various Falls City residents' homes who have registered as hosts with the organizers. Anyone within walking distance may register as a host. Each host will offer refreshments to participants and are encouraged to provide an activity (chalk drawing, lawn games, live unamplified music, Pride-themed trivia, etc.). Residents and neighbors who have offered to host include, Amy and Art Houghtaling, Lynn and TJ Bailey, Janet and Jeff Propp, and Victoria Avery and Mike Atherton (Atherton Farms).

B) 1pm – 5pm: Mayor Gordon and his family will host an open-to-the-public, all-inclusive celebration on their property (180 Dayton Street) along the Little Luckiaumte River with access to historic Rock Ledge, an open community swimming hole. Activities will include lawn games, a bounce house for the kids, live acoustic music, a welcome and other speeches by the Mayor and co-organizers, A Skype address by U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley and other political and community

leaders who wish to speak, potluck snacks/refreshments, a food truck, face painting, and river swimming. Organizers will also welcome any Falls City-based vendors space free of charge. For folks interested in learning about the history of Pride celebrations, an informational poster and banner exhibit will be displayed at the entrance of the property. Mayor Gordon and his partner, Dana Schowalter, assume all liability via their home owners insurance.

Item 2.3 Date, Time and Location of Event:

This event will occur on August 17, 2019 from 11am – 5pm and will take place at various residential properties in Falls City (full list and map will be provided) for the Sip ‘n Sashay, and the Mayor’s property on 180 Dayton Street for the Pride celebration.

Item 2.4 Narrative on Community support for and community benefit of event:

Community Support:

Two of Falls City’s anchor businesses, The Bread Board (John Volkmann and Keith Zinn) and The Boondocks (Laura Britton and Councilor L. Sickles) launched Falls City Pride five years ago and have been the core organizers ever since. This year, Mayor Gordon and his wife, Dana Schowalter, Norah Owings from Travel Salem, local volunteers, as well as Western Oregon University students enrolled in a special projects course, all helped contribute toward organizing the 2019 event, promoting the event, and recruiting volunteers. Affiliated organizations who will have a presence include SafeZone and the Stonewall Center at Western Oregon University, Turning Earth Farms, etc.

Community support for Falls City Pride is already well established as evidenced by the large number of Falls City residents and tourists who have participated and thoroughly enjoyed past Falls City Pride events and activities. Organizers have reported no negative responses about Falls City Pride in all the years that it has been a Falls City Community event (this is the first Falls City Pride since passage of Resolution 07-2019, which requires Council approval to continue as a Falls City Community Event – past City resources expended are listed under Item 2.5).

In addition, The Falls City Community Visioning Project, in partnership with Rural Development Initiatives, uncovered a general and strong desire for more community events and other ways to bolster social interaction and connections. It is imperative that the City support, within budgetary and resource constraints, organized efforts to meet this need and offer a wide variety of options for folks to choose from in order to participate in social opportunities that are best suited to meet those needs. Members of the Steering Committee that formed as a result of the Visioning Project have voiced support for and willingness to volunteer on behalf of Falls City Pride 2019.

There is also a lot of regional community support for Falls City Pride. On March 15, 2019, Travel Salem published “A guide to LGBTQ travel in Oregon’s Mid-Willamette Valley”¹ that included Falls City Pride On August 5, 2015, the Polk County Itemizer Observer’s Jolene Guzman

¹ www.travelsalem.com/blog/tags/polk-county-pride

published an article entitled, “Polk’s First Pride Day a Success”² In that article, an attendee from Corvallis was quoted as saying in response to the strong turnout of straight people, “That’s what I loved about this, it was a truly community event... It really changed my mind about small Towns. Falls City is great.”

Community and Economic Benefit:

The potential for **economic** benefits to Falls City and the region are vast. Currently, there is no Pride Celebration in Polk County, with Albany’s being the closest. This fact alone presents a unique opportunity for Falls City to consider establishing a niche event that (already) attracts visitors from all over and a real economic boost for our local Main street and home-based businesses. Though the 2019 event retains its grass roots flavor, future Falls City Pride events could include opening even more public space for local and regional vendors and sponsors, fundraising opportunities, and other much needed economic benefits to the City’s General Fund. Organizers would like to include a 5k race in the future to help raise money for nonprofit causes and to bolster the City’s Parks fund to be used toward matching funds. Of course, all future potential changes would be presented to Council for approval.

The **community** benefits are deeply established and the potential to build more community capacity is embraced by organizers and past attendees. The heart of Falls City Pride is that all people should be included in our civic, public, and institutional lives. Our arms are open to all, especially those who feel marginalized within any arena and for any reason. In addition to the general community building benefits of any City sponsored event and the great expressed need for more community/social opportunities by the public, Pride celebrations hold special meaning for groups who have historically been targeted by discrimination and violence.

According to the largest survey of its kind (12,000 youth surveyed between 13-17), only 26 percent say they always feel safe in their school classrooms, 95% of LGBTQ youth report they have trouble getting to sleep at night, 67% report that family members make negative comments about LGBTQ people, resulting in 67% of LGBTQ teenagers suffering from depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.³ Research supports that community events like Pride reduce mental health disparities in youth and adults. These statistics are especially salient in light of a recent threat of violence directed toward a trans Falls City High School student on social media.

Item 2.5 Itemized list of City resources and tasks needed for event:

Past City Resources expended for previous Falls City Pride events: The City has allowed free use of park space behind City Hall and Lower Park, the option for camping access in the upper park, and other contributions. This was approved directly with City Hall in the past and, at the time, Council approval was not required as it is now under Resolution 07-2019.

² https://www.polkio.com/news/local/polk-s-first-pride-day-a-success/article_a2f1a34f-2b32-58a8-89a3-f98945170046.html

³ 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report, Human Rights Campaign

The aforementioned Falls City businesses hold a pizza fundraiser each year on the Sunday after Falls City Pride to raise funds for event costs in proceeding years. Funds are administered and kept with the Falls City Alliance. As such, resources required of the City are quite low but will be very much appreciated and will help ensure a successful event.

A) Allow use of Mill lot for parking of vehicles for visitors coming from out of town.

B) Use of the Community Center August 16-18 to be used as a cooling space and option for visitors to use the shower. This request includes a rental fee waiver. Mayor Gordon or a volunteer will facilitate shower and Community Center access and coordinate with the fire department to ensure access to showers are uninhibited for our fire volunteers.

C) Staff time to process overflow camping permits in the Upper Park. Free permit camping was previously approved by the City Council during the June 2013 Council meeting.

D) A noise permit fee waiver for amplified acoustic live music, speeches, and pre-recorded music from 1-5pm (if required) at Mayor Gordon's home, 180 Dayton Street.

E) A noise permit fee waiver for the Bread Board on Saturday, August 17 from 8-10pm for amplified pre-recorded music and dance celebration.