

2016-32

Subject: FW: Public comment agenda 8/23

From: Phelps, Dollynda
Sent: Tuesday, August 23, 2016 10:03 AM
To: Blankenship, Johni <JBlankenship@kpb.us>
Subject: Public comment agenda 8/23

Please forward to assembly, the comment system did not save my comments.
Thank you!

A recent news article sums things up pretty well...

"A lot of people have jumped to the conclusion that if it is "satanic," evil worshippers must be kidnapping babies and roasting them in late-night rituals on the Cook Inlet beach. Not so. According to their website, the mission of the Satanic Temple is "to encourage benevolence and empathy among all people, reject tyrannical authority, advocate practical common sense and justice, and be directed by the human conscience to undertake noble pursuits guided by the individual will." They particularly take offense to the actions of the Westboro Baptist Church.

The satanic part is derived from the Adam and Eve story as depicted in Genesis 2. As every Sunday-schooler knows, God created Adam and Eve in his image and gave them free range over the Garden of Eden to eat what they harvested. But they were not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan tempted Eve and she induced Adam to eat from the tree's fruit and henceforth humans have had knowledge of good and evil.

What Satanists recognize is the role of knowledge and free will in the human condition. To them, and to most non-Satanists, knowledge and the responsibility to make decisions is not a bad thing.

For years, perhaps since its origin, a de facto state religion has occurred in Kenai Peninsula Borough meetings through invocations by largely fundamentalist Christian pastors espousing a particularly narrow theology. Many forms of fundamentalism believe in a deterministic God usually reflected in the term "God's will." All things are divinely predetermined, in this view, and it is up to humans to pray to discover what they should do to realize God's will.

That's quite different from the humanist perspective of the Satanic Temple and most non-fundamentalist churches as well as all of academia where there is no predetermination and humans, through social institutions, bear full responsibility for their actions.

Invoking divine will is an age-old tactic to suppress dissent. For example, the first law code, that of Hammurabi, began with a listing of the gods of Babylon that sanctioned the code. Therefore, to oppose Hammurabi was to oppose the gods. Our Enlightenment founders recognized the danger of this practice and encoded separation of church and state in the First Amendment.

By invoking God's will in borough matters of local taxation, school budgets and zoning issues, the Assembly has unwittingly associated itself with Christian determinism. How can you argue with a vote of the Assembly if they are doing God's will?"

Our community is very diverse and unaccepting of each others beliefs. Therefore a moment of silence is most appropriate to allows those who wish to pray a moment to do so, without offending others in the community.

On a personal note, I witnessed a group praying in front of planned parenthood, apparently ridding it of the evils of womens reproductive health care, as they do not perform abortions. I do not understand this. I saw children standing in the rain clutching tiny wooden crosses, their faces heavy with confusion. They looked at protestors with fear, as if these women fighting for reproductive health care were the enemy. Do they understand what women's reproductive health care is? Is this activity promoting love and understanding of our neighbors? This is what causes division in our community! My 15 year old son watched the video of the events and said it looked like they were getting ready to burn witches, and it did. This seems so wrong to teach the children in our community to fear and judge others. And while intentional or not, this prayer group did exactly that.

This confuses me, but I do believe each of us has a right to our own beliefs. It is unfortunate that others in this community do not practice this, although it is preached.

This is the very reason why a separation of church and state is necessary. Please allow a moment of silence.

Thank you,
Dollynda Phelps

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

On Tue, Aug 23, 2016 at 7:25 AM, dollynda fleck
<jeffndol@yahoo.com> wrote:

Thank you ladies for all your hard work, and for putting up with me!

Have a fantastic day, we get sunshine soon!
Dollynda

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

On Mon, Aug 22, 2016 at 4:09 PM, Blankenship, Johni
<JBlankenship@kpb.us> wrote:

Dollynda and Leif, per your requests, please see the attached letter certifying initiative petition 2016-01.

Johni Blankenship, MMC

Borough Clerk

Kenai Peninsula Borough

Re: Borough Assembly Meeting 2016-08-23 6:00 p.m.

Agenda Item *d 2016-32

Amending KPB 22.40.080 and KPB 22.40.090 to Transition the Invocation to a Moment of Silence (Johnson) (Hearing on 09/20/16)

Position: **Oppose**

Dear Elected Assembly,

I am so thankful we still live in a nation where we are free to gather, to vote on issues of importance, to share our opinions, and where we are free to pray in public, or not to pray. Freedom isn't free.

Currently, an *invocation may be conducted by any resident that registers with the Clerk's office.* Regardless of your religious affiliation, you have the opportunity to pray or even call for a silent invocation at the public Meeting of Assembly. As an attendant I have the personal freedom to agree or disagree with you in prayer, but there is no obligation to participate.

On the surface, a moment of silence seems like an easy solution to avoid contention; a solution many could agree upon and one where offense may potentially be avoided. Yet historically, bending to silence leads to oppression. We are reduced to silence when there is a high price to pay for freedom. Are we not mature enough in our own varied beliefs to attend a public invocation without taking offense?

The spiraling decline in this country that calls for a standard of tolerance at any cost is disheartening, a standard that expects everyone to fall in line. "I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it." *Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Stuart, 1791.* We are a generation that has lost sight of the expense of liberty.

I respectfully challenge this Assembly to stand firm; to be men and women of principle and integrity. If you profess to love freedom, do not be swayed or intimidated by the cultural current. Silence stems from fear and doesn't come without cost. What appears an easy answer is not always the best choice.

Sincerely,

Taryn Holmes