

Bank Street **gay village** still sparring with group; Business community throws gay pride plans in lurch -- again

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The cancellation of a Bank Street party next month has left plans for bringing a bit of gay pride back to its former home in the lurch.

On July 21, the Bank Street Business Improvement Association, led by executive director Gerry LePage, announced the postponement of its reopening celebration until next year.

But the controversy began earlier in the month, when the business association decided to move the Aug. 22 street party -- which coincided with Pride Week -- to Aug. 15.

That upset The Village chair Glenn Crawford's plans, in conjunction with the Capital Pride Committee, to attach formal pride celebrations to the Bank Street party. (The Village is a volunteer group working to increase visibility and support of GLBT-friendly businesses and the community itself. The area stretches six blocks between Nepean Street and James Street.)

Pride committee chair Doug Saunders-Riggins said pride events moved to City Hall because the 1990s' Bank Street parties cost too much.

By hooking onto the business association's celebration, those costs would have been somewhat offset.

LePage said the event was moved because the original date conflicted with the Ex and was scheduled for late August, both of which traditionally cut down profits at an annual street sale.

LePage said the ultimate decision to cancel the party was made because The Village's plans weren't concrete enough.

"Our board members made a decision based on the fact that they couldn't go forward with some of the stakeholders not having contracted and secured their venues," he said.

But Crawford said it was difficult to nail down contracts for a party with a fluctuating date.

LePage also said the business association had never been made aware that The Village intended to include an official pride element.

"Nobody had told us that," he said. "Not (Councillor Diane Holmes), not The Village representative, nobody."

"How we rained on their parade is beyond us."

But Crawford said he did tell the Bank association's planning committee, at the first meeting in March and others, about the idea.

"I guess I'm baffled as to why he would think that," Crawford said, adding that he had mentioned specific pride plans at various meetings.

He said it was a possibility the business association might not have properly differentiated the pride committee from The Village.

"They may have thought we were all one big thing. I sometimes get that impression," he said. "Perhaps they don't understand that the gay community is made up of a lot of different organizations."

Saunders-Riggins said he couldn't attend most meetings due to scheduling conflicts, and that two meetings he planned to attend were cancelled.

Crawford also said he had included Saunders-Riggins in multiple back-and-forth e-mails with LePage.

But Crawford is hesitant to lay blame. "It didn't happen this year, and of course we're disappointed with that," Crawford said. "I'm not really ... wanting to point fingers. I just don't really feel that that's going to get us anywhere.

"We welcome the opportunity to continue to do things to bring traffic and excitement back to the area. That's ... our philosophy."