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Community group's drag story time at Community Center

Contact: Shelley O'Brien, APR, Communication Director
Town of Pittsford
Office: (585) 248-6229 Cell: (585) 721-9302
sobrien@townofpittsford.org
www.townofpittsford.org

STATEMENT FROM THE TOWN OF PITTSFORD

Recently the Town of Pittsford asked the organizers of a "Drag Story Time" at the Pittsford Community Center to fund the cost of what the Town deemed to be necessary security for the event.

The Town is committed to ensuring equitable access to our Community Center spaces. We are committed to the safety and security of our Community Center patrons, staff and facility at all times, including during activities held there by outside groups. We wish to protect our taxpayers when a use at the Community Center, through no fault or action by the Town, incurs extraordinary costs.

At a meeting with the Town's Recreation Director initiated by a representative of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office, that representative identified specific potential risks, informed the Recreation Director that the Town should be aware of them and described his department's plans for deployment of deputies in connection with the event. The MCSO representative made no recommendations for any steps the Town should take and was not involved in any of the Town's subsequent planning. Following that meeting, based upon it and following escalating announcements about planned protests and counter-protests, and on increasingly disturbing comments appearing on social media, the Town believed that extra security measures were necessary, including having security personnel on-site at the building.

Because the security measures are well beyond regular needs for our Community Center, the Town asked the organizers to pay for them, rather than impose the costs on Pittsford taxpayers.

On Sunday, April 9, the Town's Recreation Director and Town Attorney received correspondence from a legal advocacy group suggesting litigation against the Town, if the Town continued to insist that the event organizers must pay for the costs of security related to the Drag Story Time.

Having to defend a controversial lawsuit easily could result in an expenditure of taxpayer funds far more burdensome than the costs involved in providing security. It would negate the Town's good faith effort to spare taxpayers the cost imposed by the event.

What we saved taxpayers in one way would be spent in another.

In light of this and in light of the event organizers reiterating, after being asked to pay security costs, that they are satisfied with security arrangements they themselves have made, the Town has notified the event organizers as follows:

1. The Town will honor the wishes of the event organizers to rely solely on their own security arrangements and on law enforcement. The Town will protect safety of staff and others inside the building. In the event of imminent violence or imminent threat of serious harm during or preceding the event, the Town will contact law enforcement, if law enforcement has not already been summoned.
2. Consequently, the Town will not incur additional significant expense for security and thus will require no payment for such security from the event organizers. This applies to both the April 15 and April 23 reservations made by the organizers at the Pittsford Community Center.
3. The Town intends to take the same position for similar events in future.

The Town of Pittsford remains committed to ensuring inclusive access and a welcoming and enjoyable experience for all who use our Community Center programs and services. Our Pittsford Community Center is a welcoming place for those of all interests and backgrounds. We offer a wide range of programs and activities for diverse interests, needs and abilities. We're proud to serve all the members of our community.

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