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## Pride Parade

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banners affirming that the glbtq community is welcome in their congregations. Two out-of-state marching bands, the Freedom Trails band from Massachusetts and the Big Apple Corps from New York, strutted crisply in the middle and near the end of the parade.

A couple of bars sponsored floats in the parade, one from Plattsburgh, another complete with disco-go-go dancing cage. In bigger, more commercial markets, bar floats have come to dominate Pride parades.

Among the few politicians to march in the rain in search of glbtq votes were two Democrats and a Progressive: Auditor Elizabeth Ready, state treasurer candidate Jeb Spaulding, and lieutenant governor candidate Anthony Pollina. State treasurer candidate Ed Flanagan stood on the sidelines as the parade went by. State Senator Jim Leddy marched.

With 1500 or more people, according to one organizer's estimate, the Burlington parade was an unqualified success, unlike a turnout for Montpelier's "Pride Kickoff Parade" on June 1 characterized as "tiny" by one observer.

Returning paraders thronged the festival grounds for an hour or two after the parade, then melted away as the rain pelted down. Entertainment went on, heedless of weather or audience.

### Million Dollar Insurance Snafu

The one major glitch in the festival arrangements failed to derail the gathering. The city of Burlington informed the Pride Committee just a week before the Festival that it would require every individual "vendor" – whether the "vendor" was a nonprofit organization offering information or a bar selling beer – to show proof of liability insurance in the amount of \$1 million.

According to Pride Committee member Ken Hirschmann, that was new. Previously it was assumed that Pride Vermont's liability policy would cover non-food vendors. According to city officials, the vendor insurance policy is not new, it has always been in the contract, but the strict enforcement level is new and due entirely to liability concerns stimulated by the terrorist attacks of last September.

Contacted a few days before the festival, City Hall troubleshooter Bill Mitchell

insisted, "The insurance requirement didn't change, the insurance companies jacked up their rates. It's been there all along, but suddenly the estimates were 10 times what they were a year ago. Part of it is price gouging and profiteering by the insurance companies. I understand that the city has waived the requirement for this year, except for the food vendors." Mitchell denied that the policy is based on homophobia or a desire to shut down the festival.

According to Burlington Parks and Recreation Director Wayne Gross, "The city has to rethink its policy for events and functions – how much risk the city will accept. Since September 11, insurance is harder to find and more expensive." He claimed that all of the festivals on city property have to comply with the new level of enforcement, including the Jazz Fest and, of course the Chew Chew, which is entirely food vendors.

Vermonters for Civil Unions gave away slices of cake at their booth. Organizer Mitzi Johnson said she made sure that their overall insurance policy mentioned the cake, so that if something untoward happened, the organization would be covered. Mountain Pride Media canceled their plans for a cake in the face of the insurance uncertainty.

"It's ridiculous to expect every organization to have its own insurance," declared Pride Vermont Committee co-chair Ken Hirschmann. "And no vendor can have any food that's not pre-approved. It's ridiculous."

According to Hirschmann, Pride Vermont paid about \$1400 for a million dollars worth of coverage for a year – not just for the Pride Fest. That amount, he said, is about \$400 more than last year.

Hirschmann asked, "Why now? I've never heard of any lawsuit coming out of any festival or activity on city property. We can't have Frisbee, softball, volleyball, anything where anybody could potentially get hurt. What I don't understand," he reiterated, "is why now, why our overall insurance doesn't cover it."

With the city waiving the strict enforcement of the vendor insurance provision this year, no vendors who were confirmed pulled out of the festival. One vendor who wasn't confirmed didn't show up, said Hirschmann.

Overall, Hirschmann said, the festival was a success, despite the weather. Rain just can't dampen our spirits. ▼