

Abortion protest debate to continue

BY BRIAN CARLSON
Staff writer

City lawmakers met late into the night Tuesday to consider whether anti-abortion protests directed at a Lincoln church constitute legal free speech or harassment that should be curbed by a city ordinance.

The Lincoln City Council heard testimony on a proposed ordinance that would require protesters from Rescue the Heartland, an anti-abortion group, to move its protests across the street from Westminster Presbyterian Church from 30 minutes before services until 30 minutes after their conclusion.

Rescue the Heartland has targeted the church for the past 20 months because a member of the church's governing body, Dr. Winston Crabb, performs abortions. Protesters have wielded large signs depicting bloody, mutilated bodies of aborted fetuses.

Carl Horton, an associate pastor at Westminster, 210 Sheridan Blvd., said the protesters had overstepped their right to free speech by harassing churchgoing children.

"The children of our church are being intentionally targeted by and subjected to the reprehensible tactics of Rescue the Heartland," he said. "They have been spiritually and emotionally harmed."

A queue of Westminster parishioners made its way to the podium Tuesday to describe their run-ins with protesters, accusing the picketers of verbally abusing churchgoers, including

children, and shoving 6-foot pictures of aborted fetuses into their faces.

Church members who testified, some of whom said they were lifelong members, said they were concerned about the psychological harm done to their children by the protesters. They said they worried their children would be discouraged from attending church.

Some, such as Jane Sievers, who attended the hearing, said she and her family had made the "agonizing" decision to leave Westminster because dealing with protesters had become too burdensome.

Westminster member Maureen Allman, who also was at the city hearing, said she had arrived at church late one day when she was confronted by a protester who lambasted her for attending church with an abortionist. She said the protester then told her, in the presence of her child, "You're lucky Dr. Crabb didn't abort your child."

"The church is being held hostage by terrorists whose demands Westminster cannot meet," Horton said.

But Larry Donlan, director of Rescue the Heartland, called the testimony of those in favor of the buffer zone a "dog and pony show" and said he did not believe the alleged incidents had taken place. He said church members should have filed more reports with the police if they felt their rights had been violated.

Church members had filed one complaint with the Lincoln police. No charges were filed in that complaint.

He downplayed church members' accusations that the group's tactics were harmful to children, saying his group

would continue to draw attention to its opposition to the practice of abortion.

"It is very ironic that the whole argument here is couched in terms of protecting children," he said.

He said the group would cease its protests if Crabb discontinued his abortion practice and repented.

Alan Peterson, a Lincoln lawyer representing Westminster Presbyterian Church, urged protesters to "picket on somebody your own size." He said the ordinance would meet the tests for constitutional restriction of speech.

The ordinance is content neutral, he said, meaning it addresses the consequences of speech rather than the message itself. It serves a significant governmental interest and is narrowly tailored, he said.

Although inspired by the Westminster incidents, the ordinance would apply to any church, synagogue, temple or mosque in Lincoln.

But Bill Austin, a Lincoln city attorney, and Rick Duncan, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln law professor, said at the hearing that the ordinance would be unconstitutional.

Austin said the ordinance could be found to be directed against a particular viewpoint and could fail to allow protesters with adequate channels to promote their message. Duncan said the ordinance amounted to "criminalizing one side of a religious dispute."

The City Council will hold another hearing on the ordinance at next week's meeting, when it is expected to vote on the measure.

Accessibility an issue for Wendy's owners

BY KIM SWEET
Staff writer

As Wendy's restaurants across the nation try to cook the best burger, they also will try to make those burgers more accessible.

But Wendy's establishments in Lincoln will be a little slower in making restaurants more convenient for people with disabilities. In an out-of-court settlement in late August, the Wendy's corporation agreed to either widen or remove the serpentine, or zigzag railings that lead up to the counters, in their 1,700 corporate-owned or leased locations across the nation. The goal is to make the ordering lines more accessible to people who use wheelchairs.

As Wendy's establishments nationwide scramble over the next 18 months to make the renovations, Lincoln-area Wendy's restaurants will not be as quick to make the changes, said Drew Harris, franchise owner.

Because the restaurants in Lincoln are locally owned, they are not required to make changes in line with any agreements made by the corporate office.

But that doesn't mean the changes won't take place, Harris said.

Renovations started this summer in a Wendy's restaurant on 930 N. 48th St.

The purpose of the renovations was not to make the lines more wheelchair accessible, but to remove the salad bar, Harris said.

Although a new serpentine layout is in the works, the contractors' plans most likely do not contain the new measurements. This happened because the renovations began before the agreement, said Rebecca Lusk, spokeswoman for Wendy's International. Those measurements were approved by the U.S. Justice Department after the out-of-court agreement.

The downtown location on 1336 Q St., which is up for renovation next year, will contain a wider aisle because all Wendy's blueprints contain new measurements after the Department of Justice approved them, Lusk said.

The plans for renovations at local restaurants are drawn up by the corporate office, Harris said.

Though renovations are only being made at two of the four locations, Harris stressed that the Lincoln Wendy's establishments strive to be handicapped-accessible. She has received no complaints from customers.

Currently, the stores' serpentine chains, which allow wheelchairs to navigate through the line.

Hosts and hostesses are available to help if the customer desires, Harris said.

She said customers have been appreciative of the special treatment.

"I believe they are all grateful," Harris said. "To my knowledge we haven't received complaints from anyone."

Jonathon Gonasis, assistant manager of the Wendy's on 3210 Cornhusker Highway, said the restaurant's policy keeps customers happy.

"We've generally got a way to treat them really well," he said.

Harris said the serpentine are necessary for customer control.

"Wendy's concept was always first in line, first served," he said.

Lusk said that most corporate-owned or leased restaurants will opt for the wider serpentine rather than removing them completely.

Currently, all Lincoln Wendy's stores comply fully with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines, Harris said.

If the changes in the out-of-court agreement alter ADA guidelines, the Lincoln Wendy's stores will comply, Harris said.

"We'll be there in the future," Harris said. "If the government asks us to change codes, we'll change them."

Friends, family mourn loss of professor

BY CRISTIE NICHOLS
Staff writer

Albert Stone, a professor of interior design, will be affectionately remembered by his students and colleagues at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Stone died June 8 in Lincoln after suffering a heart attack. He was 47.

He had a great impact on many of his interior design students, including senior interior design major Sara Haster.

"He was the most influential professor I've ever had," she said.

"I learned more in his class than any other in my past three years. He was very passionate about interior design and for his students to achieve the knowledge and understanding of the concepts of design."

A ceremony will be held to remember Stone's life Friday at 6 p.m. at Cornerstone, 640 N. 16th St.

"He was an honest man who would go out of his way to help anybody," said

his father, Elmer Stone of Victor, Idaho.

Stone's father received a stream of letters from his son's students and colleagues. He learned his son was well appreciated in Lincoln.

He said one letter from a fellow professor stated, "UNL was a better place because he associated among us."

Stone's father was proud of his son's awards, especially the Who's Who Outstanding Teacher's Award.

Albert Stone was an assistant professor of architecture. He resigned last semester to move back to his hometown in Idaho to help take care of his parents. "The college will be lacking and he is going to be missed," said Krista Hottovy, a former student of History of Design.

Stone was born May 28, 1951, in Driggs, Idaho, to Elmer and Annie Stone.

He graduated from Teton High School in 1969. He then served with a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints mission in Japan from 1971-73, according to an obituary that appeared

in the Teton Valley (Idaho) News in June.

He received his associates degree from Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho, in 1973. He then attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, and received his bachelor of arts in 1976. He earned his master of science from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater in 1982.


Along with his love for teaching, Stone had an extensive antique collection, which included his 1938 Chevrolet sedan that he had restored.

His life's adventures included travels to Europe and white-water rafting. He also was an accomplished musician who touched many lives with his music, the newspaper article stated.

He is survived by his parents, Elmer and Annie Stone of Victor, Idaho; his sisters - Louise Wrathall and her husband Don of Las Vegas; Beth Osborne and her husband Al of Bluffdale, Utah; and numerous nephews and nieces.

Funeral services were June 13 in the Victor Second Ward Chapel in Idaho.

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