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Commissioner: Pedophilia linked to homosexuality 1

Comments made during official business visit

*"I don't treat anybody any differently because they are gay, I just don't want to know about it. I don't want to see it, hear it or have it put in front of my face."
Jason Gillman*

TRAVERSE CITY — Grand Traverse County Commissioner Jason Gillman likened homosexuals to pedophiles during a recent official business visit to the county's health department, then called same-sex relationships "a perversion."

Gillman toured the county's health department on Jan. 26 and told some employees that homosexuality is linked to pedophilia, a term for an adult's intense sexual interest in prepubescent children.

Gillman, a Tea Party organizer and prolific blogger, also used the socialmedia tool Twitter to make a vulgar comment about the elimination of the U.S. military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. And he's written several blog entries in which he opposes Traverse City's anti-discrimination ordinance.

"Homosexuality is a perversion ... but I don't care what people do in their own bedroom," Gillman told the Record-Eagle last week. "I don't treat anybody any differently because they are gay, I just don't want to know about it. I don't want to see it, hear it or have it put in front of my face."

Gillman said he recalls going off on a "tangent" while speaking with health department Director Fred Keeslar as he discussed the department's tracking of communicable diseases, including HIV.

Gillman also acknowledged commenting on Traverse City's recently approved antidiscrimination ordinance, and that something was said about homosexuality and pedophilia and his belief that they are linked.

Keeslar declined to repeat Gillman's comments, but said he told Gillman it's well documented that homosexuality and pedophilia aren't linked.

"Pedophiles are attracted to children, not gender," Keeslar said.

Keeslar wouldn't say if he found Gillman's comments offensive, but said he realizes Gillman may have offended some health department employees, based on their own personal beliefs or family relationships.

At least three other health department staff members were present when Gillman made his comments.

"I didn't know if somebody would find it hurtful ... but it apparently upset somebody," Keeslar said.

Keeslar reported Gillman's comments to county Administrator Dennis Aloia, who relayed them to county board Chairman Larry Inman. County officials said they received no complaints from health department employees.

The county does not address sexual orientation in any of its employment or harassment policies, said Jen Seman, county human resources director.

Inman declined to address Gillman's comments, but said commissioners generally should "respect diversity because we are (a) diverse community."

Gillman said if his comments offended a county employee, he would apologize to that person but not to the larger community.

"I'm not hateful, but I have a right to my opinion," Gillman said. "I think someone's sensibilities are too sensitive. The political correctness has run amok."

M'Lynn Hartwell, a former Traverse City human rights commissioner who has worked with the state police on hate crime issues, said Gillman is entitled to his opinion, even if it's wrong and potentially hurtful to some.

"I just wish he would pursue the facts and not regurgitate what certain organizations are spoonfeeding him," Hartwell said. "When people carry on like that, it can have a very chilling effect, not just among gays but among all minorities."

Gillman said his opinion on homosexuality has nothing to do with county government or policy decisions he makes as commissioner.

Traverse City's antidiscrimination ordinance, among other things, bans employers from discriminating against or firing employees because of their sexual orientation. It also prohibits landlords and housing facilities from turning away renters based on their sexuality alone.



Gillman's father, Traverse City Commissioner Mike Gillman, voted in favor of the ordinance.

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