

# Extra security on hand at Hamilton police board amid a call to “flood” the meeting

The police board voted to explore its own Pride review after protesters briefly shut down a city hall meeting with yelling and profanity.

NEWS

Jul 18, 2019

by Matthew Van Dongen

The Hamilton Spectator



*A member of the public gallery shouts at board members. - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*



*Media and those with delegations to the Hamilton Police Service Board enter a meeting room beside council to resume the meeting. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator*



*A member of the public gallery yells at the board. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator*



A member of the public gallery voices disapproval from their seat. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator



A member of the public gallery shouts at board members. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator



*A member of the public gallery shouts at board members. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator*



*A member of the public gallery sits in a seat reserved for Hamilton Police Services Board members and eats potato chips while claiming to start his own meeting. - Scott Gardner , The Hamilton Spectator*



*Hamilton police officers inside council chambers during the Police Board meeting on Thursday. - SCOTT GARDNER ,  
The Hamilton Spectator*



*A protester is asked to vacate a chair after declaring he was leading his own meeting after protesters forced Mayor Fred Eisenberger to shut down the Police Services Board meeting. - SCOTT GARDNER ,  
The Hamilton Spectator*



*Hamilton police officers stand outside council chambers where the Police Board was meeting on Thursday. - SCOTT GARDNER , The Hamilton Spectator*



*An LGBTQ+ protester confronts Hamilton police officers outside council chambers where the Police Services Board was meeting on Thursday. Protesters disrupted the meeting. - SCOTT GARDNER , The Hamilton Spectator*



*A man has words with two Hamilton Police officers outside council chambers July 18. Twenty minutes into the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting in council chambers at Hamilton City Hall vocal members of the public gallery upset with the strained relationship between the HPS and the LGBTQ+ community forced Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger to clear the room and the meeting was resumed in another room that was closed to the public. Scott Gardner/The Hamilton Spectator - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*



*A man has words with two Hamilton Police officers outside council chambers July 18. Twenty minutes into the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting in council chambers at Hamilton City Hall vocal members of the public gallery upset with the strained relationship between the HPS and the LGBTQ+ community forced Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger to clear the room and the meeting was resumed in another room that was closed to the public. Scott Gardner/The Hamilton Spectator - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*



*After Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger shut down the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting July 19 after it was disrupted by shouting from the public gallery, a member of the public gallery sits in a seat reserved for Hamilton Police Services Board members and eats potato chips while claiming to start his own meeting. He was asked to leave by a Hamilton police officer. Scott Gardner/The Hamilton Spectator - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*



*Hamilton Police Detective Paul Corrigan of the Hate Crim/Extremism Unit, gives a presentation during the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting in council chambers on July 18, 2019. It was during his presentation that members of the gallery, upset at the strained relationship between the HPS and the LGBTQ+ community began shouting and disrupting the meeting. Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger cleared the room and the meeting was resumed in another room that was closed to the public. Scott Gardner/The Hamilton Spectator - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*





*Hamilton Police Detective Paul Corrigan of the Hate Crim/Extremism Unit, gives a presentation during the Hamilton Police Services Board meeting in council chambers on July 18, 2019. It was during his presentation that members of the gallery, upset at the strained relationship between the HPS and the LGBTQ+ community began shouting and disrupting the meeting. Hamilton Mayor Fred Eisenberger cleared the room and the meeting was resumed in another room that was closed to the public. Scott Gardner/The Hamilton Spectator - Scott Gardner, The Hamilton Spectator*

A provincial watchdog will probe a complaint about the contentious Hamilton police response to violence at Pride even as the city's own police board mulls a separate review.

The board had to wait out a raucous group of screaming anarchists and LGBTQ+ activists who temporarily shut down Thursday's meeting before voting to explore an independent review of how police handled the infamous June 15 clash of protesters at Gage Park.

Three different citizen complaints related to the Pride clash have been filed so far with the Office of the Independent Police Review Director — but only one, so far, is destined to be probed by the watchdog.

Two others have been forwarded by the watchdog for investigation by Hamilton Police Chief Eric Girt. He has 60 days to complete a report for each complainant.

The revelation spurred board member Tom Jackson to urge support for a separate review that is "as independent as possible" given concerns expressed by some in the LGBTQ+ community about police leadership.

"So internally we conduct our own review? Perceptually ... it's the optics I'm struggling with," said Jackson, who eventually earned unanimous support to study the prospects for a review and report back to the board.

Differing and often emotional views on how police reacted to a clash of protesters at Pride were front-and-centre all day at city hall.

When Girt started talking at the meeting he was drowned out repeatedly by 10 to 15 people in the gallery yelling "shame" and "lies" and "shut the f--- up."

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, who chairs the police board, warned the outspoken protesters several times before pulling the plug on the public meeting in council chambers. It resumed after 10 minutes — but with a line of police officers blocking access to the remaining protesters.

Security was ramped up for the 1 p.m. meeting as The Tower, a local anarchist collective, had called online on activists and LGBTQ+ supporters to "flood" the meeting. Many of the 40-plus people in the gallery, however, were there to watch rather than yell.

One vocal LGBTQ+ protester and anarchist group member, Woody Boychuk, called the meeting interruption an "exercise in people taking back power over public spaces."

He dismissed criticism from some that the meeting was shut down before a Pride review could even be discussed. "They were not going to say anything of value," Boychuk said. "This was about (hate victims) carving out some space for discussion on top of the corrupt political conversation."

Members of the public were eventually allowed back into the meeting after the protesters left the building. Eisenberger said he thought the board was on "good ground" legally for its decision to briefly bar public access to the meeting.

Pride Hamilton representatives eventually read a statement to board members that called Girt's description of the policing response June 15 "completely outside our experience as the event's organizers."

Girt told board members police "respected the wishes of organizers to not be inside the festival" with uniformed officers. He also emphasized police had intelligence that suggested a bigger, unspecified risk had to be addressed at city hall that day, although that turned out not to be the case.

But Pride officials argued they had pointed out on a map where they feared homophobic protesters planned to congregate and told police they were expecting and worried about violence.

LGBTQ+ activist and past Pride event chair Lyla Miklos waited patiently to have her say at the meeting and urged board members to support a policing review of the June 15 event. But she also encouraged police to "do better."

Miklos pointed to a 2006 Pride parade that she said was interrupted by angry soccer fans. She praised police at the time for creating a "human barrier" between parade marchers and an "angry mob."

She questioned why police could not have acted similarly to prevent violence and injuries at Pride 2019.

"You have to do better," she told police at the meeting. "I know you can do better because I have seen you do better."

The police board could discuss the prospect for an independent review as early as next month.

Coun. Nrinder Nann, who along with Ward 1 colleague Maureen Wilson has called for such a review, said she would reach out to police board members to offer their research on viable review options.

But she also said it would be "critical" to include a citizen advisory group — particularly including members routinely victimized by hate. "I don't think this works without having civilian participation."

[mvandongen@thespec.com](mailto:mvandongen@thespec.com)

905-526-3241 | [@Mattatthespec](https://twitter.com/Mattatthespec)

Recent articles by Matthew Van Dongen

*Matthew Van Dongen is the City Hall reporter for The Hamilton Spectator and thespec.com. He lives in Hamilton and started working at The Spectator in 2011 after journalism stints in Peterborough and Niagara covering everything from arts to health to the environment. He has been recognized with awards for coverage of hidden pollution threats in Hamilton and historic flooding in Peterborough, among other projects.*

Email: [mvandongen@thespec.com](mailto:mvandongen@thespec.com)