

Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC 2020 Questionnaire for D.C. Council Candidates

ALEXANDER M. PADRO Responses



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HEALTH

1. Will you support budgets that target funds to address LGBTQ health disparities, including in mental health and substance abuse treatment, and mandate data collection and timely reporting on these populations?

Yes. As an LGBTQ member of the Council, I would establish a community roundtable to help gather input from all affected stakeholder groups, including service providers and clients, advocates, and representatives from subgroups (including homeless youth, seniors, and sex workers) into needed service improvements and commensurate budgets to ensure that LGBTQ health services are equitably funded and expanded. I would solicit input from the ANC Rainbow Caucus and work with them to gain the necessary support from both the executive and my Council colleagues for such initiatives. Oversight is a critical function of the council, through which it can be determined whether District government agencies are meeting the mandates imposed on them through the appropriations process. I would ensure that my staff collects and submits appropriate questions to agency directors in advance of hearings. I would participate in agency performance and budget hearings in order to obtain answers to questions posed by public witnesses before and at the hearings, and would ensure that my staff follows up to provide written responses to such questions from the appropriate agency personnel.

JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY

2. Will you support Bill 23-435, the Tony Hunter and Bella Evangelista Panic Defense Prohibition Act of 2019?

Yes. The ‘Gay panic’ defense is an unacceptable legal construct that allows violent offenders to literally get away with murder and other serious hate crimes against LGBTQIA persons. In addition to outlawing this defense, a public awareness campaign to reinforce public awareness that such crimes will be punished to the fullest extent of the law and that the former ‘panic’ defense no longer exists, in order to help reduce the incidence of anti-LGBTQIA crime.

3. Will you support revision of the DC Riot Statute, Section 22-1322 of the District's penal code, to correct its overly broad language that allows abuse of prosecutorial discretion against individuals who exercise their First Amendment rights?

Yes, this statute should be reviewed as part of the overall examination of public safety in the District of Columbia that is currently underway. How peaceful First Amendment protestors are handled by both the Metropolitan Police Department and the criminal justice systems are an integral part of this review, with appropriate reforms to follow.

HUMAN RIGHTS

4. Will you support a Gender Equity and Neutrality in the Official Code Amendment Act to update the D.C. Official Code as necessary to ensure that outdated terms are removed or replaced as well as to utilize language inclusive of the gender diversity of our population?

Yes, without the universal use of inclusive language by the District government, it will be impossible to make progress on ensuring that the government walks the talk on gender equity.

5. Will you support Bill 23-0318, Community Safety and Health Amendment Act of 2019, to decriminalize consensual sex work for people 18 or older and create a task force to monitor the implementation and effects of the act?

No, I do not believe that decriminalization is sufficient. Mere decriminalization could lead to human trafficking and a lack of protections for sex workers. Full legalization is needed. It is a little-known fact that sex work was legal in the District of Columbia during parts of the 19th Century. I am in support of full legalization, regulation and taxation of sex work. I would not support decriminalization of sex work without the imposition of licensing, health standards and taxation. Unregulated sex work and sexual conduct in public places should continue to remain illegal.

6. Will you support increased funding for LGBTQ budget priorities, including fully funding the Office of Human Rights and establishing a new competitive community development grant program in the Office of LGBTQ Affairs?

Yes. The drive by the district government to become more equitable must include LGBTQIA equity. Budget priorities advocated for the ANC Rainbow Caucus and other groups should be an integral part of achieving parity with other mayoral constituency offices. In fact, in order to make up for past underfunding, it may be necessary to provide higher funding for a number of years until infrastructure, systems and programs have been established. Having a grant program will be another demonstration of equity.

7. Will you support a study of employment of transgender individuals in the government of the District of Columbia as a first step to creating a truly inclusive workplace and the implementation of transgender employment initiatives?

Yes. Access to employment is a critical component in achieving equity in our city. Being able to document the number of transgender persons employed by the city and in what capacities is an important step in being able to achieve equity. Additional resources are needed to increase the recruitment and hiring of transgender residents by the DC government and ensure access to job training and entrepreneurship opportunities. I would also encourage the organization of transgender affinity groups within District government agencies to increase awareness of the transgender workforce.

YOUTH

8. Will you support improved services and treatment for homeless LGBTQ youth, including extended transitional housing?

Yes. I am proposing that such services be housed in a new purpose-built complex for the LGBTQ community. The city should build a complex that includes housing for homeless LGBTQIA youth, affordable senior housing, and office and program space for an expanded DC Center for GLBT including intergenerational services for the community, from youth to seniors. The Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs could also be headquartered there. The DC Center for the LGBT Community needs a permanent home and increased funding. It will have to leave its current location when the Franklin Reeves Center municipal office building is redeveloped. Housing vouchers should be provided until affordable housing for homeless LGBTQ youth can be built.

SENIORS

9. Will you support improved services and treatment for LGBTQ seniors, including affirming senior housing and tenant based rental assistance and the Care for LGBT Seniors and Senior with HIV Amendment Act of 2019?

Yes. As noted above, I am proposing that such services be housed in a new purpose-built complex for the LGBTQ community. The city should build a complex that includes affordable senior housing, housing for homeless LGBTQIA youth, and office and program space for an expanded DC Center for GLBT including intergenerational services for the community, from youth to seniors. The Mayor's Office of LGBTQ Affairs could also be headquartered there. The DC Center for the LGBT Community needs a permanent home and increased funding. It will have to leave its current location when the Franklin Reeves Center municipal office building is redeveloped. There is no senior center and few programs or activities for the District's LGBTQIA seniors. Housing vouchers should be provided until low and moderate income senior affordable housing can be built.

HOME RULE

10. Will you oppose Trump administration efforts to nullify the legal identities of transgender individuals, such as by assigning a person's gender based on their "original" birth certificate?

Yes. The registration of births and maintenance of vital records is a local function, not a federal one. There is no compelling federal interest in interfering with the District's right to continue to manage such functions as our local government sees fit.

The Washington Post

In Shaw, Pews vs. Bar Stools

By Jose Antonio Vargas

April 20, 2006

It was like a scene out of "The People's Court" -- on one side the mostly white supporters of a gay-friendly bar, on the other the parishioners of a black church in Washington's historic Shaw neighborhood.

They all packed the hearing room of the city's Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration yesterday to make their case for or against the Be Bar, scheduled to open in June on Ninth Street NW.

"A bar? Across from my church?" asked Barbara Campbell, who lives on Georgia Avenue NW and for three decades has gone to Scripture Cathedral in Shaw, where she works as a cook in the church's day-care center. "Don't they understand that there is a day-care center in the church?"

She and other parishioners opposed to the bar were seated in the small hearing room, their worries in their faces. Their pastor of more than 40 years, Bishop C.L. Long, was there, too, his staff in tow.

The bar's nearly two dozen supporters were mostly standing, light-blue ribbons pinned to their shirts. Michael Watson was busy handing out the ribbons. He's one of the bar's two owners, both of them D.C. residents, both of them gay.

"This fight here is really more than just about a liquor license, more than just about a bar," says Mark Lee, a 30-year District resident who now lives in Logan Circle. "This is about who gets to decide which establishments open where."

There's nothing new about fights over the location of a bar, gay or otherwise. It happens all the time. But the battle over Be Bar is unfolding in the midst of a wave of gentrification, where race, class and now sexual orientation get thrown into an already simmering pot.

Articles have been written in the gay press about the controversy. Lawyers were on hand yesterday to speak for their respective clients. And people from outside and inside Shaw have weighed in on the issue in recent weeks.

Yesterday ABRA dismissed a protest from the D.C. Black Church Initiative, partly because the group, in a letter to the board, didn't object to Be Bar on legal grounds but because it "will undermine the moral character" of Shaw and "only promote an alternative lifestyle that runs counter to the values" of the neighborhood.

Even Advisory Neighborhood Commissions are divided. Though the bar is within the bounds of ANC 2F, where the six commissioners (all white) have given their support, it's close enough to ANC 2C, where the four commissioners (one of whom is Latino, the rest black) voted 3 to 1 last month to protest the bar's liquor license.

The law states that no liquor license shall be issued to establishments "within 400 feet of a primary, elementary or high school," says Jeff Coudriet, an ABRA spokesman, but the proximity of an establishment to a day-care center "is an additional consideration."

On May 3, ABRA will decide if a group of Scripture parishioners and ANC 2C have legal standing to oppose the bar's license.

"It's hard to not think that they're against this whole thing because I'm gay and it's a bar open to gay people," Watson says of those challenging his business.

Long shakes off such talk. He insists that he didn't know that the Be Bar is gay-friendly. "If this is a gay club, that's bad for the kids," he said yesterday.

He has never been hesitant to express his opinion on homosexuality, and yesterday was no different. "Read the whole chapter," he said, referring to Romans, Chapter 1, which condemns homosexual behavior.

Watson and Long, who found themselves in the same room for the first time, have yet to talk to each other since the controversy started early last month. And the battle over Be Bar, like the recent fights over the long tradition of nonresidential church members double-parking on Sundays, is about a lot more than parking spaces or a bar's liquor license.

Stroll along Ninth Street and residents will talk about their transitioning neighborhood, sometimes politely, sometimes bitterly.

Susan Dugar, a black woman in her forties, grew up in Shaw. "That church has been here forever, through the '60s, the '80s, the ups, the downs" of the District, she said recently. "Gay people who are moving into the city, in Dupont, Logan, in U Street, can't just come in and say, 'We're gonna build this and that in front of it.' "

K.C. Sykora, 24, moved to Shaw two years ago with her roommate. Both are white. "To be honest," she said, "I'm more comfortable with gay people than with churchgoing people."

Sitting inside Azi's Cafe, the barely year-old WiFi-connected coffee shop with black and white floor tiles, Alexander Padro talked of Shaw's changing landscape. In the past year, Queen of Sheba, an Ethiopian eatery; Vegetate, a vegetarian hot spot; and International Lifestyles, a boutique/concierge service/corporate party-thrower with pristine white floors and vases of red roses, have opened on Ninth Street.

Padro is one of Shaw's neighborhood commissioners, and he's the one-man operation behind Shaw Main Streets, an umbrella group that fosters commercial growth in the neighborhood. He is also gay, and the one vote for Be Bar on the commission. Homophobia, he says, has played "a part in all of this."

There are some streets in Shaw where half of the residents are gay and gay couples, he says. He points to DC GuestHouse, the gay-owned B&B in a three-story Victorian that used to be a funeral home and rents its rooms for as much as \$300 a night. It's at 10th and O streets, about a block away from Scripture, a longstanding institution on the block.

"I've been a pastor in Shaw for 46 years," Long said while taking a break after the 11 a.m. service on a recent Sunday. A framed photograph of a young Long posing with President Jimmy Carter, who signed it "With best wishes to C.L. Long," was prominently displayed. He lives in Bowie and drives in for Sunday services. He's got a parking spot in front of his church. "We helped clean this area up. Now that we've got the area cleaned up . . ." He pauses.

"Change is good, but it depends on what you're changing to," he says.

He pauses some more.

"But folks need to understand that this church, all churches, play a big part in the community. I have my own opinion on the gay lifestyle, but I don't fight them -- they're welcome to come to our church, because I'm in the business of changing lives. Lives have been changed in this very church, and maybe God can do something for them."

Watson has lived in a three-story house in Shaw for six years. He formerly owned a TCBY, across from Whole Foods on P Street, and partnered with his friend Tom McGuire for Be Bar.

The vibe for the 3,000-square-foot space, he says, is "modern chic meets baroque." The drinks: candy-flavored martinis. The music: Top 40.

The protest, if it continues, would delay the bar's opening for months, if not longer, he says.

"We're rolling the dice right now. We're in limbo. This could go on and on," says Watson, 32. "I understand that change is hard, but I also don't understand it."



Jose Antonio Vargas Jose Antonio Vargas, a former Washington Post reporter, is the founder of [Define American](#). [Follow](#)

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From A to Be Bar

An exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the months-long creation of D.C.'s newest gay bar

By Will O'Bryan
Photography by Todd Franson
August 23, 2006

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Tom McGuire and Mike Watson are in the final stretch. Labor Day Weekend is set to mark the opening of their new lounge, Be Bar, on Ninth Street near the Convention Center. And while the definition of "lounge" may conjure relaxed evenings in plush surroundings — exactly the style Be Bar aims to provide — the journey from Point A to Point "Be" was anything but.

THE MAGAZINE



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McGuire and Watson have faced myriad challenges as they worked toward their scheduled Sept. 1 grand opening, from location to licensing to angry laments. For anyone thinking of opening a similar venue, their story is either useful guidance, or a warning. For the rest of the community, it's a look at how things work in Washington — sometimes smoothly, sometimes contentiously, always politically.



Entrepreneurial Spirit

IN TERMS OF the local gay community's *bon vivants*, it's fair to say McGuire and Watson fit the part. From Watson's coiffed locks and spot-on fashion sense to McGuire's ripped torso and perfect teeth, they are a charmed pair of entrepreneurs. At first glance, they may seem awfully privileged. Each man has, however, worked hard to secure his success.

McGuire's story starts in Bucks County, Pa., a bucolic region known for historical landmarks and bed-and-breakfast inns. McGuire's upbringing was, however, a bit grittier than the area's antique shops and farmers' markets. His parents divorced when he was young, and life with his single mother and three siblings involved frequent moves around the area.



The future home of Be Bar in winter 2006 — Scripture Cathedral Church, an opponent of the bar, is visible on the right.

He also received a decidedly religious upbringing.

"I went to Catholic nursery school, kindergarten, grade school, high school, college and graduate school," he says. "My grandmother was the president of the Legion of Mary."

Watson grew up on a different path further north, in Rhode Island, where he lived until embarking for pre-med schooling at University of Massachusetts Amherst. But rather than become a doctor, Watson ended up working for a management and

technology company. He moved to D.C. and met McGuire, fittingly, at the redhead's annual St. Patrick's Day bash in 1999.

"It was the first party I ever went to in D.C.," says Watson. "Tom is famous for his house parties."

The two quickly became close friends — as Watson puts it, McGuire's personality is "very contagious."

Though the two cemented their friendship early on, the Be Bar story might have ended by 2001, with both men moving separately to New York City. But they each missed Washington. Watson was first to return, in early 2003, when he started as a manager at 17th Street's Cobalt. In late 2004, he opened his first D.C. business: a TCBY-Mrs. Fields franchise, just across the road from Whole Foods on the burgeoning 1400 block of P Street NW.

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The former Salvation Army office needed major overhauls to begin its transformation into a hip and stylish lounge.

Although Watson was building his own business, his "passion" remained with his continuing work at Cobalt. So he jumped at the first opportunity to sell his franchise and take the next step.

"I realized this was a great opportunity for me to move forward to what I really wanted to do, which was to open my own bar."

Watson's vision, however, was grander than anything he could manage on his own. While his stay in New York may have been short, he had acquired a taste for a particular type of venue that he believed was lacking in D.C. — casual enough for neighborhood regulars, hip enough to become destination spot, and versatile enough to offer a dance area alongside a more mellow seating area. His primary desire was to have an unrivaled sense of style — a necessity in New York, yet still a newer notion in D.C., where the lounge atmosphere of venues such as Halo had only recently premiered.

Serendipity came into play as McGuire chose this time to return to the D.C. fold. Watson quickly broached his idea of a partnership.

"We both realized there was a real void in D.C. nightlife," says Watson. "We wanted to create one venue that took the best elements [of the nightlife scene] and put them into one space, thus creating a new genre of lounge."

Watson says that their initial plan was to lease a space. A possible location was at 14th and T streets NW, and the pair initiated a lengthy process of closing a deal on it. Instead of a venue, they got a lesson: It's "next to impossible" to rent a space while trying to obtain a liquor license. In what may have been foreshadowing of later difficulties, the pair were unable to negotiate a lease dependent on their obtaining a license.

"This really speaks loudly to how backward the process is," says Watson.

While those months of wasted effort soured McGuire on the bar business for a time, Watson nevertheless kept looking for a space. But it was McGuire who spotted the next "For Lease" sign one May morning in 2005, during his daily commute down Ninth Street. He suggested Watson investigate. Near the Convention Center, however, a different sign caught Watson's eye: "For Sale."

While Watson was immediately taken with the old Salvation Army offices at 1318 Ninth St. NW, McGuire was less enthusiastic. Their reactions reflect a relationship between them that balances their business efforts: McGuire as grounded and cautious, Watson as eager and passionate.



ANC 2C chair and Be Bar opponent Leroy J. Thorpe testifies at the April 19 ABC Board hearing, as

"I had committed to opening a bar and renting a space — [but] this was just too big of an endeavor," McGuire recalls. "I was hesitant for quite a while, but finally he convinced me. I came around to seeing that the neighborhood had great potential."

With a third, silent partner, the deal closed on Dec. 28, 2005. Watson puts the price at about \$1.45 million. What they got was a two-story building with good heating and air-conditioning systems, plus solid plumbing and electrical systems. Less tangible, but just as important, they were situated a

2020 is the deadliest year on record transgender Americans



Seattle Seahawks radio host indefinitely suspended after posting transphobic tweet



'Love Island' star Noah Purvis removed after gay adult film past surfaces



Supreme Court Justices Thomas and Alito call for overturn of marriage equality



WHAT DO YOU THINK?



Have you personally ever created a 'deepfake' video to share with your social media / online networks?

- Yes, I have / multiple times
- Yes, I have / just once
- Not yet, but I might try it
- No, and I probably won't
- Other / Does not apply

NEXT

SCENE

ANC 2F Commissioner Christopher Dyer few hundred feet from the new Convention Center in an area of the Shaw neighborhood often deemed the successor to Logan Circle's gay gentrification.

They also had plenty of new neighbors.

Meeting the Neighbors

ALTHOUGH BE BAR sits in Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) 2F, Alexander Padro thought the proposed new business was right up his alley. While Padro is member of the adjacent ANC 2C, he also serves as executive director of Shaw Main Streets, a non-profit organization dedicated to revitalizing certain commercial sections of Seventh and Ninth streets.

Coincidentally, he's also gay.

"I probably had an initial conversation with Mike [Watson] in January," says Padro, who later offered some advice on hurdles Be Bar might face in the community. Specifically, he mentioned Shiloh Baptist Church at P and Ninth streets NW. The church had recently protested liquor license applications for two new businesses, Vegetate Restaurant and Lounge at 1414 Ninth St. NW and Queen of Sheba at 1503 Ninth St. NW.

"I told them it's not inconceivable that Shiloh could protest the application," says Padro. "I told them that if that did happen, they should be prepared for a process that could take six months to a year to resolve."

Padro, however, was optimistic about Be Bar's chances because he believed there were no issues with the business being within 400 feet of a school.

"[T]here had been other liquor licenses that had been granted on the 1200 block of Ninth Street last year, where there were no protests."

With Padro's caution in mind, McGuire and Watson continued with the next logical step in the process: presenting themselves to ANC 2F, and other groups representing the community. Within contemporary D.C. politics, "voluntary agreements" with ANCs are crucial to obtaining a liquor license. In this process, ANCs often file protests against license applications as a matter of form. Applicants then negotiate with the protesting ANC to come to terms on closing times, security, parking and other issues. Once an agreement is met, the ANC withdraws its protest, removing a nearly insurmountable obstacle to obtaining a liquor license.

"We first started off very positively with the Blagden Alley/Naylor Court Community [residents' organization] and ANC 2F, all of whom are in our zone," says McGuire. "We reached out to all of them, and they were all very positive." Be Bar even found a very enthusiastic ally in ANC 2F Commissioner Christopher Dyer, a fixture in the D.C. gay community.

On March 1, the six members of ANC 2F voted unanimously to protest Be Bar's liquor license. The ANC's March 6 letter to D.C.'s Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA) made clear that, despite the protest, the commissioners were confident they would be able to work out an agreement with Be Bar. The commissioners added that they were filing their protest primarily to avoid completely losing their right to protest, because the final deadline, March 27, was fast-approaching.

A week after ANC 2F's meeting, the four commissioners of ANC 2C held their own monthly meeting. An unscheduled guest, Bishop C.L. Long of Scripture Cathedral Church at Ninth and O streets NW, asked to address the commissioners.



Retro Scene: Photo highlights from 2003



Retro Scene: Mardi Gras Party



Retro Scene: Green Lantern

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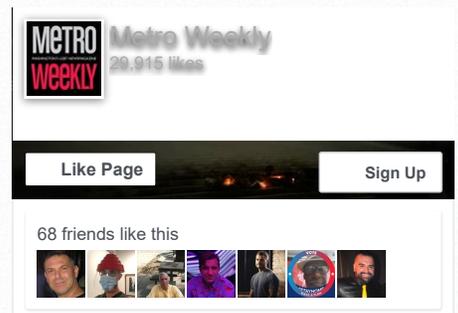


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"Bishop Long complained the personnel associated with Be Bar had approached him inside his church, insulting him and declaring that he could do nothing about the proposed nightclub," read the minutes from the ANC meeting. "Long indicated that his security had to remove the Be Bar personnel from his church." It's a claim that McGuire and Watson say leaves them baffled.

According to the minutes, Long also accused Commissioner Padro of conflict of interest for Shaw Main Streets' support for Be Bar. The commissioners voted 3-1 that night to oppose Be Bar's liquor license. Padro cast the dissenting vote.



Be Bar counsel Andrew Kline argues for the business at the April 19 hearing, alongside McGuire and Watson.

Padro says he questioned Long about the bishop's account of being visited in his church and told that Be Bar would be "for people from Maryland and Virginia [and that] there would be a bouncer to make sure neighborhood residents could not go in."

"I proceeded to ask Bishop Long, 'Who was this person? Do you know that this person was actually a representative of Be Bar?' because it sounded extremely fishy," says Padro. "I was really suspicious of these allegations."

Padro says the word "gay" was not even discussed at that point, adding Long claimed not to be aware that Be Bar was planned for a primarily gay clientele.

"I can't give that a whole lot of credence, because he's never protested any of the liquor stores in the neighborhood," says Padro. "If he was so worried about alcohol being in proximity to his [Scripture Cathedral Church] Day Care Center, then he should've opposed the license for the Giant food store across the street that sells beer and wine. But Giant lets his church members park in their parking lot for free on Sundays."

While Long provided brief statements to *Metro Weekly*, he did not agree to an interview, instead referring questions to his attorney.

ANC 2C's March 8 vote to protest Be Bar's liquor license was followed by two more protests before the March 27 deadline. On March 22, eight of Long's congregants filed a protest against the bar's license, citing Be Bar's proximity to the church's day care center, as well as issues of "peace, order and quiet."

Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the D.C. Black Church Initiative, filed his group's protest March 27. Evan's letter did not mince words: "Granting the permit will undermine the moral character of the Shaw community, stain its tradition and send the wrong message to children and families," it reads in part. "The pending applicant in question will only promote an alternative lifestyle that runs counter to the values of the Shaw community."

Animosity and Allies

WITH THE ADDITIONAL protests filed, Watson and McGuire's friendly negotiations with ANC 2F became nearly inconsequential. These new protestants didn't ask to negotiate conditions for Be Bar's existence. Rather, they asked that it simply not exist — at least not in this neighborhood. McGuire and Watson were left with two choices: Amend their plans fundamentally by choosing a new location and starting from scratch, or fight. They chose to fight.

The first major battle was April 19 in the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration's hearing room on North Capitol Street NE. An overflow crowd of about 70 people filled the room and adjacent hallway, largely a mix of African-American congregants of Scripture Cathedral Church on one side of the room, and mostly white, fashionable gay guys on the other. At first glance, issues of "peace, quiet and order" seemed to be code for issues of race or sexual orientation.

However, an April 18 release from the D.C. Coalition of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Men and Women made it clear that the city's primary organization for the black gay community was behind Be Bar.

"Be Bar will encourage LGBT residents of Shaw to invest in their own neighborhood establishments, instead of being forced to travel to Dupont Circle or elsewhere," read the group's statement. "The D.C. Coalition is concerned about the efforts of a few individuals to oppose Be Bar's liquor license, strictly based on homophobia and heterosexism."

Brian Watson, president of the coalition, elaborated at the time: "I let both owners know that whatever support they need from us, we are truly behind them. Evans and Long don't speak for the whole African-American community. They just speak for their churches' members. The D.C. Coalition is an African-American, black organization, and they don't speak for us. We support the Be Bar.... I don't see it as a black-white issue. I see it more as a sexuality issue. It's not a race thing."

He added that religion shouldn't have been a reason to oppose Be Bar — he regularly attends Covenant Baptist Church in Southwest D.C. He even attended a few services at Scripture Cathedral when he first moved to the city.

"He's a very good speaker and a very good minister, but I don't agree with a lot of his positions," Brian Watson says of Long. "I chose not to join. There were little comments he would make in sermons. They weren't obvious slurs against the LGBT community, but I could see that it was not an inclusive church."



Bishop C.L. Long addresses the cameras after the April 19 ABC Board hearing.

That first battle at ABRA ended with no clear winner. Evans's protest was dismissed on a technicality: His group is not incorporated. Attorney Andrew Kline, representing Be Bar, challenged ANC 2C's protest by noting the commission never gave McGuire and Watson an opportunity to appear before them. Kline also noted that the protesting Scripture Cathedral congregants lived from nine blocks to five miles away from the bar's location.

The board continued the meeting until May 3, with Alcoholic Beverage Control Board Chair Charles Burger saying the board would look into Kline's points.

Throngs of Be Bar supporters and protesters then took to the crowded halls outside the hearing room, jockeying for space on the elevators and speaking with the media. Long, pressed on gay issues by local television and newspaper reporters, advised those concerned about gays to consult the Bible.

Even before the contentious ABRA meeting, a number of prominent politicians declared themselves on Be Bar's side, including the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, which sent letters of support to Councilmember Jack Evans (D-Ward 2), who represents Shaw, and Councilmember Jim Graham (D-Ward 1), chair of the city's Committee on Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

At the same time Be Bar was stirring controversy, tensions between churches and neighborhoods flared in Logan Circle and other neighborhoods regarding the city's proposed enforcement of parking regulations on Sundays, which would end the long-standing habit of churchgoers double and triple parking without fear of tickets.

McGuire hosted an April 29 meet-and-greet with mayoral candidate and Council Chair Linda Cropp (D). Padro, among about 50 guests in McGuire's 14th and Church Street NW condo, asked Cropp



The construction crew works to create the Be Bar components.

"We want peace, not alcohol." McGuire even had trouble finding a chair when he arrived to take his place at a small table before the board. He turned to his opponents in the audience, and jokingly asked, "Can we get another chair? I know y'all don't want to give us one." The stab at humor fell flat, netting some grumbling from the audience, but no chair.

Despite the numbers gathered against Be Bar, the hearing ended in McGuire and Watson's favor, with the seven-member board voting unanimously to seat only ANC 2F as a protestant. Though the board's decision was subject to an appeal period, with ANC 2F already registering support for Be Bar, this was a clear victory for McGuire and Watson.

The "voluntary agreement" between ANC 2F and Be Bar was finalized June 19. The ABC Board issued its final order Aug. 16. All protests were dismissed, save for ANC 2F's, which was withdrawn. The license was granted — sort of.

The Home Stretch

SINCE THE MAY 3 ABC Board vote, McGuire and Watson had been moving full-steam ahead, having every reason to believe the Be Bar license was nearly a foregone conclusion. But opening requires more than a license, and an Aug. 18 grand opening was pushed back to Sept. 1.



The main bar nears completion.

In front of Be Bar's door, the bar's logo in stainless steel has been imbedded into the concrete, thanks to Michigan metal worker Matt Novakowski. His metalwork has been adding to the lounge's signature style, which borrows, says Watson, from Baroque to mid-century modern. An adjacent car lot has received a facelift, thanks to McGuire, with weatherproof fabric covering the lot's barbed-wire fencing, along with flowering plants and mulch. The bar's own sidewalk tree-box has been filled in with smooth gray stones and a "Linda Cropp for Mayor" sign.

An impressive staff of about 30 has been hired, on stand-by for the past month. At an Aug. 3 orientation and sampling of the Be Bar martini menu, these new hires met one another for the first time. Looking like an Abercrombie & Fitch-meets-Benetton hybrid of

specifically about the Be Bar battle, and her "vision" for dealing with these types of conflicts.

"The revitalization of the District of Columbia has a good side and an ugly side," Cropp answered. "There are many people who feel they are being left out, or that their neighborhoods are changing. Many people are often fearful of change, in part because they think they're going to lose something.... [But] the city is big enough for all, for all kinds of establishments."

Though Be Bar seemed to be picking up allies, the May 3 hearing at ABRA made it obvious that the opposition was picking up steam as well. Rather than a relatively even split, the hearing room that day was clearly tilted in favor of Be Bar's opponents, many of whom held placards reading,

young and pretty men and women, both gay and straight, few seemed particularly concerned with the friction between Be Bar and some of its neighbors. They simply seem eager to get to work.

Leslie Vaughn, a first-generation American whose parents emigrated from Nigeria, and who will be working as a greeter, is one of the few who has an opinion about the opposition to Be Bar. In particular, she'd like to see those forces put their resources to more pressing issues.

"Religious organizations are influential," she says. "There are so many more important things. And I don't like anybody standing up on a pedestal. That bothers me."

McGuire and Watson say they're grateful for all the support they've gotten through the process, pointing to Cropp, Graham and Kline in particular. But Be Bar's allies have done their part. Now it's up to McGuire and Watson alone to see Be Bar up to opening night. Standing in the space, both men answer the question about what's left to do in unison: "Cleaning."

That's not all. There's still the matter of the liquor license. Though the ABC Board has made its favorable decision, there are still hoops of paperwork to jump through.

"We have to get all our final inspections — our final structural, our final fire, final mechanical," Watson explains. "You deliver all those 'finals,' and they issue your certificate of occupancy. [And then w]e also have health inspections."



Be Bar's new staff gathers to test and learn the bar's menu of candy-themed martinis.

"The reward is seeing the finished product that Michael designed," says McGuire of their unique venue taking shape around him. "It's better than I ever could've imagined, and I imagined it being great. Chills go up my back when I think about it."

Watson sees the reward of finishing as the culmination of everything they've worked toward and every obstacle they've overcome.

"From obtaining our space, to negotiating the lease, getting all those components in place, then moving forward into design and development — each phase had its own struggles. But once you jump over that hurdle, you seem to forget how high it was."



The liquor license comes last.

In these remaining days before the grand opening, the business partners are left to complete the final cosmetic touches to Be Bar. There's also time to reflect on this process that began so many months ago.

"The reward is seeing the finished product that Michael designed," says McGuire of their unique venue taking shape around him. "It's better than I

ever could've imagined, and I imagined it being great. Chills go up my back when I think about it."

McGuire breaks in with a laugh: "Because you're already on to the next one."

Despite the hurdles, neither McGuire nor Watson would warn others not to follow in their footsteps. Instead, they advise anybody thinking about a similar venture to be prepared for anything, to choose battles wisely and to "just do it."

With the end of the journey toward opening night in sight, McGuire and Watson don't seem any worse for wear. On the contrary, they both seem to be bursting with enthusiasm for what they are about to unveil.

With just a few finishing touches "We're hoping we raise the bar, specifically for remaining, Be Bar is nearly ready venues targeting the gay community in D.C.," says **for its Sept. 1 grand opening.** Watson. "I think we're creating something very different than what they've had in the past."

And should there be any question as to who Be Bar is for, McGuire is clear: "We're excited for the community to see our venue. We invite everybody to come."

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Susan Shepherd (left) and Marcia Hams were the first gay couple to wed in Massachusetts in 2004. Since then, opposition to same-sex marriage has declined by 12 percent nationally, according to a new poll. (Photo by Ellen Shub)

More Americans support gay marriage rights

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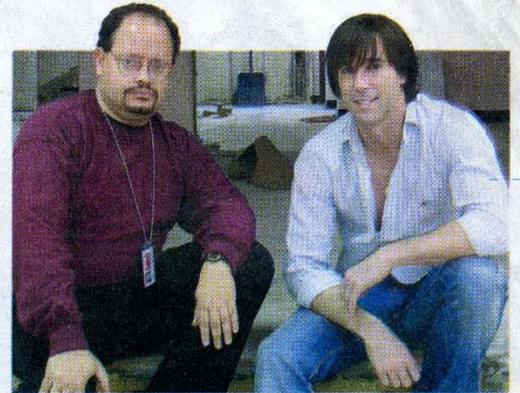
Be Bar would 'undermine moral character' of the community

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Another minister has declared his opposition to a proposed gay-owned bar in the District's Shaw neighborhood, saying it would "undermine the moral character" of the community.

In a March 27 letter to the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration, Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the D.C. Black Church Initiative, said a liquor license for Be Bar at 1318 9th St., NW, would "send the wrong message to children and families."

Evans' letter to ABRA came after Bishop C.L. Long, pastor of the nearby Scripture Cathedral Baptist Church, called for the Shaw Advisory Neighborhood Commission, ANC 2C, to oppose the Be Bar license at



Michael Watson (right), a co-owner of Be Bar, and Alexander Padro, a gay member of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2C, say growing opposition to opening the neighborhood bar is misguided and based on false allegations. (Photo by Katherine Volin)

Please see **BE BAR** on Page 26

METROWEEKLY

LGBTQ Victory Fund endorses three out gay candidates for office in D.C.

Allister Chang, Randy Downs, and Alex Padro get nods from one of the country's most prominent LGBTQ political organizations

By [John Riley](#) on September 23, 2020 [@JohnAndresRiley](#)



LGBTQ Victory Fund endorsees Allister Chang, Randy Downs, and Alex Padro - Photos: Facebook

The LGBTQ Victory Fund has endorsed three candidates seeking citywide or ward-wide public office in November's election: Allister Chang, who is seeking the Ward 2 seat on the DC State Board of Education; Randy Downs, who is seeking the Ward 2 seat on the D.C. Council; and Alex Padro, who is seeking an At-Large seat on the D.C. Council.

In total, five out LGBTQ candidates are running for office in D.C. this year, out of a total of 67 candidates running for citywide or ward-wide seats.

To earn an endorsement from the LGBTQ Victory Fund, a candidate seeking public office must be openly LGBTQ and committed to LGBTQ rights, including transgender rights.

Chang, an education expert with a Master's degree in public policy from Harvard's Kennedy School who previously served as a visiting researcher at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Institute for Lifelong Learning, as well as a researcher with the Global Public Policy Institute and an Urban Leaders Fellow for the D.C. Council, is seeking an the open Ward 2 seat on the State Board of Education currently held by Jack Jacobson, who is also openly gay.

"LGBTQ students and students of color have always faced unique challenges in our education system and those are compounded by the pandemic and decisions about reopening," Elliot Imse, the senior director of communications for LGBTQ Victory Fund, said in a statement.

"The D.C. school board needs an LGBTQ member of color with experience in education who understands these issues and can provide that perspective to other members. Allister Chang is the candidate who can be a voice for LGBTQ students and students of color and his work to uplift underrepresented students makes him the best person to represent Ward 2."

Chang took to his Twitter account to tout the endorsement, tweeting: "I'm honored to be endorsed by the LGBTQ @VictoryFund! As your representative on the @DCSBOE, I will advocate for ALL students."

Downs, an ANC commissioner for Ward 2, is seeking the seat currently held by Brooke Pinto, who won a special election to fill the remainder of former Councilmember Jack Evans's term.

Evans was forced to [resign](#) earlier this year after an investigation alleged that he breached ethics rules by failing to disclose outside income and failing to recuse himself from votes affecting clients of his consulting firm who had business before the Council.

Downs, who was a supporter of ANC Commissioner Patrick Kennedy in both the Democratic primary and the special election — both of which were won by Pinto — is running as an independent against Pinto, Statehood-Green Party candidate Peter Bolton, and fellow independent Martín Miguel Fernández .

“Randy is a tireless advocate for the District’s LGBTQ community and has made protecting the rights of trans residents a focus of his campaign,” Imse said in a statement.

“He understands the unique challenges LGBTQ people in Ward 2 face — from LGBTQ seniors to young LGBTQ people experiencing homelessness — and that perspective and commitment will help move forward LGBTQ rights in the District when he takes office.”

See also: *Openly gay D.C. Council candidate earns Working Families Party endorsement*

“As a leader in the District’s LGBTQ community, earning the Victory Fund endorsement means the effectiveness of my work fighting for LGBTQ rights is validated,” Downs said in a statement. “I am humbled to have the Victory Fund’s faith in my ability to address the priorities for the LGBTQ community.

“I look forward to working with the Victory Fund to ensure affordable housing for LGBTQ seniors and the entire LGBTQ community, expand rights for transgender residents, end the ‘gay panic’ defense in court, address homelessness in the LGBTQ youth and adult population, and invest in the DC Offices of Human Rights and LGBTQ Affairs. To accomplish this and more, the Victory Fund knows a member of the LGBTQ community must be on the DC Council. I’m honored to earn this endorsement.”

If elected, Downs would become the sole LGBTQ member of the Council, and the first since 2014, when Ward 1 Councilmember Jim Graham was defeated in a Democratic primary by current Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, and At-Large Councilmember David Catania (I) gave up his seat to run for mayor.

Downs has previously called it “unacceptable” that there is no longer LGBTQ representation on the Council, saying in a statement: “The D.C. Council needs a leader who is not just an ally, but who is a member of our proud community, able to champion LGBTQ policies from a position of expertise and experience.”

Padro, an ANC Commissioner for Ward 6 who represents the Shaw neighborhood and who previously served as the first board chair of Shaw Main Streets and a member of

the DC Library Board of Trustees, is one of 24 candidates seeking two At-Large seats on the Council. Due to the District's overwhelmingly Democratic lean, incumbent Councilmember Robert White (D) is favored to win one of the seats.

The remaining seat, currently held by the retiring David Grosso (I), must be held by a non-Democrat, meaning that the remaining 23 candidates are likely to divide the remaining vote among themselves. Padro is currently one of four Latino or Latina candidates seeking an At-Large seat, and the only out LGBTQ person among the field of candidates.

"Never before has the D.C. Council had a Latinx member and there are currently no out LGBTQ people on the council," Sean Meloy, the senior political director for LGBTQ Victory Fund, said in a statement.

"Representation in elected office is essential to ensuring our concerns and priorities are included in policies and legislation. Alexander will be a strong voice for equality on the DC Council and that is why we support him in the at-large race."