

Updated DougCo fairgrounds rules won't ban PrideFest



By Mike McKibbin / NewsBreak Denver / May 10, 2023

[DOUGLAS COUNTY, COLO.] — Despite opposition from several residents to events such as last year's PrideFest drag queen show at the Douglas County Fairgrounds, the county commissioners on Tuesday adopted updated rules and regulations that don't prohibit them.

On Aug. 27, a performer in drag displayed fake breasts in what was later deemed a “wardrobe malfunction.” That led to an [outburst of opposition](#) — mostly on social media — against similar fairground events.

The updates included a mission statement that called for all events to be “family-friendly.” The statement added the county can “eject any or all persons who fail to comply with (the policies and procedures) or the directions of county staff.”

Protecting children key concern

Many concerns focused on whether children should be allowed to view drag shows. Others wanted such displays to be held indoors and under adults-only rules.

Joy Overbeck of Parker described a drag show video she said she tried to email the commissioners where a similar exposure occurred, often using graphic language.

“This can only be called recruitment” of children by the performer,” she said.

Pam Hampton of Parker said such shows are only suitable for people over 18.

“Treat these like an NC-17 movie,” she stated. “Not all parents know what’s appropriate for their children, and how can you assure us what happened last year won’t happen again?”

Michael Campbell of Castle Rock said the issue represented “an erosion of family values.”

“No one is saying limit the First Amendment rights of Castle Rock Pride or tell them to not be themselves,” he stated. “But this is adult-themed entertainment, just like a strip club. It should be held indoors and for adults only.”

Event sponsor promises G-rated event

Art Kerkezian, treasurer of the [Castle Rock Pride](#) board of directors and PrideFest co-chair, said last summer’s event did not represent the group’s principles.

“We have put safeguards in place to prevent any nudity, and what happened is something we do not want to see again,” he added. “If a parent chooses to take their children to PrideFest, that will be fine. We have taken steps to eliminate any sexual lyrics or gyrations and this will be a G-rated drag show.”

Castle Rock Pride reserved the fairgrounds for Saturday, Aug. 26, a week after this year’s county fair. The [PrideFest website](#) states the event will include local LGBTQIA+-supporting exhibitors, food and beverage vendors, live performances all day and activities for kids and teens.

Commissioners support rules update

Commissioner Lora Thomas noted some parents consider drag shows works of art and want their children to see them. [After last year’s event](#), Thomas wrote in a weekly newsletter that banning PrideFest would place the county at risk of a likely discrimination lawsuit.

“There might be things I don’t like in these shows, and I’ve told Castle Rock Pride I won’t be bringing my family,” she added Tuesday. “If there’s any nudity, they will be shut down.”

Thomas also noted the rules and regulations apply to all fairground events and are not targeted toward any group.

Commissioner George Teal — who posted on social media after last year’s incident that PrideFest would never be allowed back on the fairgrounds — said, “If we don’t begin (to update the rules and regulations), we’ll never get to where we desire.”

Commissioner Abe Laydon noted elected officials take oaths of office to uphold the Colorado and U.S. constitutions and the First Amendment.

“I’m a Republican, a Christian, a father and a member of the LGBTQ community,” he said. “If someone views all drag queens as evil and out to get our kids, I strongly disagree. What happened last year will never happen again and I know PrideFest is committed to that.”

Laydon also stated the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders perform on national TV, “dancing in a sexual way with dental floss costumes” that children can easily view.