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# Naples Daily News

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## St. Pat's Day Parade driven out of Naples?

Dramatic fee increases doomed event, leaders say

**Laura Layden**

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

The St. Patrick's Day Parade has been a cherished tradition in Naples.

This year would have marked the event's golden anniversary, signifying 50 years of existence in the city.

However, the event has been canceled, due to rising costs — including the higher costs charged by the city.

Kim Heaslip, president of the Naples St. Patrick Foundation Inc., which puts on the event, said: "It is with deep regret and sincere disappointment that we announce we are no longer able to present the Naples St. Patrick's Day Parade on

the streets of downtown Naples."

The decision came after city council unanimously denied a request to waive city fees for the event on Jan. 21.

At the meeting, Heaslip asked for council's help in saving the parade.

The city's fees for the event came in at more than \$20,700 in 2024, and those fees continued to rise, along with other costs.

"We were enthusiastically preparing

to celebrate the 50th Annual Naples St. Patrick's Day Parade when we were recently informed that municipal fees imposed by the City of Naples — combined with newly required full-route barricade and enforcement costs — have increased to a level that our small, volunteer-led organization can no longer sustain," Heaslip said. "City fees have

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Naples Pride holds a rally Jan. 21 before a City Council meeting at Naples City Hall.

JONAH HINEBAUGH/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS

## Naples council allows a permit for Pridefest

Drag show will be indoors; critics say '25 fees still unpaid

**Tomas Rodriguez**

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Naples councilmembers voted unanimously to approve Naples Pride's permit for this year's Pridefest — with an indoor drag show performance — as speakers accused the nonprofit of not paying their fees for last year's event.

City records show Naples Pride on July 14 submitted its application for this

year's event.

Before councilmembers reached a verdict Jan. 21, they heard input from at least a dozen speakers. Four of them accused Naples Pride of not paying its fees for last year's Pridefest.

Naples Pride has sued the city in federal court, accusing officials of violating the First Amendment. The nonprofit cites the city's \$37,826.47 security fee and a drag show they had to move indoors on the event's eve.

After councilmembers reached their decision, Callhan Soldavini, an attorney and board member for Naples Pride, told the Daily News that speakers' financial accusations are unfounded and part of active litigation.

District Judge John Steele on Jan. 13 sided in part with the city's motion to dismiss Naples Pride's lawsuit and left the city of Naples as the sole

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## Extensions granted to Sievers and prosecutor

Death-sentence appeal arguments put off again

**Tomas Rodriguez**

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Just as the deadline passed, a circuit judge granted a second extension for lawyers to file closing arguments in the death penalty appeal of a Bonita Springs man who orchestrated his wife's murder.

A Lee County jury in December 2019 convicted Mark Sievers of being a principal to commit first-degree murder with a firearm and conspiracy in the death of his wife, Dr. Teresa Sievers, 46.

Sievers' attorneys hope the judge will overturn his conviction and death sentence with the appeal, even as the convicted conspirator says they are not fighting for his innocence.

The new deadline is 5 p.m. Jan. 26. Lee Circuit Judge Bruce Kyle, who has presided over the case, can then make his ruling at anytime after the deadline.

Teresa Sievers died in June 2015. State prosecutors and Sievers' defense had 45 days to file written

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### NO ICE, BUT STILL COLD

An icy winter storm will take a feeble swipe at Florida over the weekend but is expected to leave some of the coldest air of the season in its wake. 5A

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