

Bospar steps in last minute to help San Francisco pride

The firm helped to negotiate a compromise with city police, as well as promoting the event.

Words **Diana Bradley**



SAN FRANCISCO: Bospar helped to pen a compromise statement between San Francisco Pride and the San Francisco Police Officers Pride Alliance to allow some uniformed police officers to march in the city's Pride parade.

Bospar worked quickly. The PR agency started working with the San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration Com-

Pride returns to San Francisco this year after a two-year hiatus. (Photo credit: Getty Images).

mittee on June 1, and the agreement was published the next day. It amended a previous decision that banned officers from wearing uniforms but allowed other types of police-affiliated apparel.

The statement explains that the dispute stemmed from Pride emerging from conflicts between LGBTQ communities and police at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco in 1966 and the Stonewall Inn in New York City three years later.

"We have agreed that all first responders will march to-

gether in one contingent," the statement says. "Most law enforcement officers marching will be in casual dress. Police and fire department command staff will march in their class AA uniforms as regulated. There will be a small number of LGBTQ officers in uniform providing security for the contingent."

San Francisco Pride and the San Francisco Police Officers Pride Alliance have also agreed to build on conversations between the groups over the past two years. The San Francisco Police Officers Pride Alliance and San Francisco Pride over the next year will host a series of community discussions bringing together the LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+ officers.

Bospar also placed the statement with CNN.

San Francisco Pride has said it is the largest Pride celebration in the country, welcoming nearly 1 million guests annually, according to its website.

Curtis Sparrer, the agency's principal and cofounder, said that the San Francisco LGBT Pride Celebration Committee brought his firm on after another agency quit over the dispute. "Not only did the PR team quit, but there were concerns that San Francisco Pride might suffer the same fate as Boston, which saw its Pride fizzle out over similar concerns when it comes to the police presence at Pride parades," said Sparrer.

Bospar counseled the client, led media outreach and crafted the compromise statement.

About the statement, Sparrer said many people were concerned with police presence at Pride. "There were a variety of challenges to make this Pride appeal to every constituency and to bridge a lot of gaps," he said.

Suzanne Ford, interim executive director at San Francisco Pride, stepped into her role in February, just after the organization's communications director, Peter-Astrid Kane, left. Rather than hiring an internal replacement for Kane, Ford said she wanted to bring on a PR firm.

"We obviously need to get the news



San Francisco police officers look on as they assist San Francisco firefighters during a medical call on May 24, 2022 in San Francisco, California. (Photo credit: Getty Images).

out about returning to in-person San Francisco Pride, but also we've had high level negotiations with the city and the San Francisco Police Officers Pride Alliance and the queer police officers," said Ford. "So Bospar has been instrumental in making sure our story has gotten out and making sure I haven't made any huge mistakes."

The organization reached out to Bospar on May 25 and said it was looking for a crisis comms person that it could have on-call. Sparrer called his firm's work with the organization a "labor of love." The group is paying Bospar \$4,000 per month.

Sparrer said his firm talked about how it could work with the San Francisco mayor's office before the contract was signed. Bospar is planning to fly VP Kristin Sommers to San Francisco for the 52nd annual San Francisco Pride weekend, June 24 to 26, to help "marshal all of the vast communications challenges," said Sparrer.

"Bospar has been able to help with very sensitive negotiations," said Ford. "They have helped to get our story out and helped me manage an onslaught of media requests and sort through when and what to do."

Bospar is also helping to tell the story of the return of Pride in San Francisco after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as getting people excited about the parade and event.

"Now that San Francisco Pride has turned the page, we are looking forward to telling the more fun and urgent story, because there are a ton of different laws targeting LGBTQIA people right now, and we need to address that and we need to celebrate who we are as a community," said Sparrer.