National gay leader to head campaign for Kalamazoo anti-discrimination ordinance

By Todd A. Heywood 6/26/09 9:35 AM

Jon Hoadley, the executive director of Stonewall Democrats, a national gay rights organization, is returning to his Michigan roots to head up an anticipated fight over an anti-discrimination ordinance in Kalamazoo.

City officials in the southwest Michigan city passed an ordinance last year, but opponents collected enough signatures to place the ordinance on the ballot. City officials voted to rescind the ordinance, but vow to adopt it again. That vote is expected Monday.

A four and a half hour special meeting of a committee of the Kalamazoo City Commission showed a deeply divided community, and delineated the battle lines. Opponents focused on the protections extended to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, and made a great fuss about transgender protections. Proponents talked about how passing the ordinance would encourage younger people to move to and live in Kalamazoo.

Shawn Brier, a spokesman for the Kalamazoo Alliance for Equality (KAFE), issued the following statement to Michigan Messenger on Hoadley’s involvement in the campaign:

Jon Hoadley is helping the Kalamazoo Alliance for Equality (KAFE) support the passage of the ordinance by the City Commission and manage some of that process, but I know he also still has Stonewall Democrats responsibilities.

Hoadley got his start in politics in Michigan. According to the Stonewall Democrats website, he graduated from Michigan State University with degrees in Social Relations from the James Madison College and Women’s Studies from the College of Arts and Letters. In addition, he
ran the South Dakota campaign to oppose a Constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. That amendment passed by two percent.

KAFE has been quietly organizing a political force, and recently posted a job opening seeking to fill the post of community organizer and lead community organizer. Deadline for applications was June 17, and Hoadley was listed as the contact. The job description noted the position would report to the campaign manager.