



Stonewall Inn patrons pushed back during a police raid in June 1969. Six days of demonstrations followed.

50 YEARS LATER, A POLICE APOLOGY

Commish says raid on Stonewall was 'wrong, plain and simple'

BY IVAN PEREIRA
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Nearly 50 years after New York City police and members of the LGBTQ community clashed outside the Stonewall Inn, the department's commissioner apologized for the NYPD's actions, much to the relief of advocates who have long sought a public apology.

Commissioner James O'Neill began his briefing on the security measures for this year's Pride Month events, which include the June 30 Pride march, by addressing the NYPD's actions at the Greenwich Village bar in 1969. As the police attempted to raid the Christopher Street bar on June 28, 1969, patrons pushed back. The resistance quickly escalated to a riot, and six days of demonstrations followed.

O'Neill told those in attendance Thursday that the police's actions 50 years ago were "wrong, plain and simple."

"I'm certainly not going to stand up here and pretend to be an expert on Stonewall. I do know what happened should

not have happened," he said to cheers. "The actions and the laws were discriminatory and oppressive, and for that, I apologize."

O'Neill's mea culpa came a day after City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and NYC Pride, the nonprofit that is producing this year's World Pride Celebration, called on the NYPD to acknowledge its mistakes and actions during the riots, which sparked the first major LGBTQ rights movement in the country.

Johnson said he was thankful that O'Neill responded to their calls and took responsibility for the NYPD.

"[The riots] happened because the police kept raiding Stonewall over and over again, and people being fed up with it, so for Commissioner O'Neill to apologize, I am grateful," he said. "I'm glad he said it will never happen again. It's a great day."

For one LGBTQ group, however, the commissioner's apology wasn't enough. The Reclaim Pride Coalition, which has consistently criticized the NYPD for its treatment of the community, said O'Neill and the police haven't shown enough change with their policing policies.

"Where has this apology been for the last 50 years?" the coalition said in a statement.

James Fallarino, a spokesman for NYC Pride, did say, however, that the commissioner's statement was a step in the right direction for police relations with LGBTQ New Yorkers.

"This doesn't undo the decades of violence we have experienced and continue to experience, but it's a good step for the community," he said. "He took responsibility over something that he had nothing to do with, and he recognizes his role in this institution and his responsibility."

O'Neill said the department has worked to repair its relationship with the LGBTQ community over the years. He announced the creation of the Lavender Alliance, a program run by the NYPD's SHIELD program, that will provide civilian training and assistance to LGBTQ organizations in the city.

"We have and we do embrace all New Yorkers," he said. "Every culture and every community must be treated as equals and with respect."

The commissioner said NYPD officers will be on high alert during Pride Month celebrations, including the annual Pride March on June 30. Police officials, however, said they did not have any credible threat aimed at Pride month events.

NJ deals blow to gas pipeline

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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In its second major setback in a month, National Grid and Williams Co.'s plan for a substantial new gas pipeline to Long Island and New York City was denied two key permits by New Jersey regulators Wednesday.

The state's denial, which allows the developer to update and resubmit its applications, could further delay and potentially kill a major new pipeline to the region, people on both sides of the issue say.

National Grid, claiming it faces a looming gas shortage, has already stopped processing new applications for firm (meaning uninterrupted year-round service) natural gas hookups on Long Island, Brooklyn and Queens, pending a final review by New York. The state rejected a water quality permit for the pipeline last month. The New Jersey denial keeps that no-processing status in place, the company said.

NJ's water quality worries

In a statement announcing the rejection, New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection found that Williams' proposed dredging for the pipeline "could adversely impact surface water quality within New Jersey waters of the Raritan Bay." The department said Williams must show steps it would take to minimize disruption to the bay and ensure compliance with water-quality standards.

Williams, in a statement, said it planned to quickly refile its application.

"We are currently assessing the discrete technical issues raised" by the regulators, Williams spokesman Christopher Stockton said in a statement. "We believe that we can be responsive to the issues raised by the agency and intend to resubmit the application."

The pipeline would bring an additional 400 million cubic feet of gas per day to Long Island and the metropolitan region, addressing what National Grid said is a shortage. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the pipeline May 3. The 24-mile gas project

would encompass about 18 miles of pipeline under New York Bay and connect with existing infrastructure at sea, beyond the Rockaways.

Similar rejection in NY

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation expressed similar environmental concerns in rejecting Williams' water quality permit last month, but also allowed the company to resubmit its application with updates. The company has already done so.

In its rejection last month, New York's DEC noted the project, called the Northeast Supply Enhancement project, or NESE, "would result in significant water-quality impacts from the re-suspension of sediments and other contaminants, including mercury and copper." DEC said it would also "cause impacts to habitats due to the disturbance of shellfish beds."

Stockton said the company believes the issues raised by the New York DEC "were addressed in our previous application and, in this application, we have provided additional information showing that these issues have been addressed."

National Grid response

National Grid, in a statement following New Jersey's rejection, said it remained "cautiously optimistic that the project will proceed on schedule" and be in service by the winter of 2020-2021.

Long Island business groups expressed concern.

Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island, a developer group that backs the pipeline, said New Jersey's decision "will choke Long Island's future economic viability."

Opponents in the environmental community, which argues that there is no actual gas shortage, declared another tentative victory Thursday, but noted the fight wasn't over.

"This victory affirms that dangerous gas pipelines have no place in our communities," said Kimberly Ong, senior attorney for environmental watchdog group the Natural Resources Defense Council.

With AP