

Below are our email exchanges with Noho Pride and the Northampton Chamber of Commerce:

Hi JM,

I was told that you are the person I should contact.

I am a writer at The Shoestring and I have some questions for you about the Noho Pride parade. I particularly have questions about the funding and advertising of the parade.

Are you available for a phone call or to meet in person? Or should I email you my questions?

I have emailed info@noho pride and have not received a response. I have also left four voice messages with Syd with zero response.

Thanks,
Blair

Dear Blair,

Thanks for getting in touch. I am the spokesperson for Noho Pride. Typically, all of our interviews and press work are handled in the weeks leading up to our annual event and on the day of the event. I do not know much about your organization, but I would be happy to answer any questions next year as we are gearing up for our big day.

I appreciate your interest. We have been around for many years, and the Northampton Pride event is known as the kick-off for Pride season throughout the country. That was historical, and, of course by now there are pride events throughout the year in various towns and cities. As time marches on, we continually work to meet the needs of our community members and allies of all kinds.

Best, JM Sorrell

Thanks JM. I actually have important questions about this past pride parade and the one's before that. Many people in our queer community in Northampton would like to know more about how Pride is planned and how funds are prioritized and spent, who those decisions benefits and who that might alienate from the parade. That is what I am writing an article about.

Can you answer questions or speak with me about that?

and if you would like to learn more about the Shoestring, you can check out our site here: theshoestring.org

Thanks
Blair

Dear Blair,

Thank you again for your inquiry. It seems you may have uncertainty about Noho Pride, and I have some suggestions. First, here is some background. I have been involved in one way or another during many of the years of organizing--since 1983. I have seen many changes over those years. We were called the Northampton Lesbian and Gay Liberation March during those earliest years, and the event and day evolved with the times to where we are now. Noho Pride is a fluid organization with a strong mission to serve LGBTQ + community members and allies.

The expenses for march permitting, the fairgrounds, equipment, and dozens of other costs are covered by sponsorships, vendors, and the thousands of participants who benefit from this annual event. The parking and admission are always free so that everyone is welcome.

If you have concerns about programming or inclusion, my best advice to you is to get involved next year. As a non-profit, Noho Pride relies solely on volunteers to make the day happen. There are many areas where volunteers can get involved and can help shape the day. My good friend, Andrea Ayvazian (a nationally recognized social justice trainer and teacher), always says, "Want an ally? Be an ally."

I have served as a mediator, trainer and advocacy leader in much of my professional work, Blair. My instinct is always to suggest that we are playing on the same team. Get involved in a team-building, affirming way with Noho Pride next year. As I mentioned, it is a fluid organization with a clear mission to serve the needs of our community. Inclusion is a core principle within the context of unity. Given the larger, often hostile world we live in, it is essential that we work together to create this annual event.

Best regards, JM Sorrell
Spokesperson, Noho Pride

Questions we initially sent to info@nohopride.org before contacting JM

Based on the information provided on your website, Noho Pride received, \$47,750 from your 2018 sponsors. This total does not include the private donations from Joseph Friedman, JABOP - Smith Vocational GSA, South Congregational Church, Indigo Coffee Roasters.

How much did Joseph Friedman, JABOP - Smith Vocational GSA, South Congregational Church, Indigo Coffee Roasters contribute? Did Noho Pride receive any additional sponsorship not listed on the webpage? What grants did Noho Pride receive in 2018 and how much were they for?

How much did the Noho Pride 2018 parade cost? What were the specific expenses that were paid for (can you share an itemized list of costs)? How much did the Northampton Police Department get paid to provide their services? What services did the Northampton Police Department provide?

I noticed upon searching your website that the 1969 Stonewall Riots are not mentioned in relation to the Pride parade. Is the omission of the Stonewall Riots intentional?

Are you aware that a vendor at this year's Noho Pride was selling a confederate flag hat? Do you have any comment on this?

Does Noho Pride hold open meetings in which the public can share its input regarding the planning of Noho Pride parades?

Roughly how much tourism (non-locals coming specifically for Pride) does the event bring to town?

We did not receive a response.

Hi Chamber of Commerce staff,

We have a couple questions regarding LGBTQ+ tourism in Northampton, especially in recent years.

On your website, there is a heavy focus on LGBTQ+ tourism, referring to LGBTQ+ visitors as a “high potential market” - when did you receive the grant from the Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau to expand your marketing program and how was that grant used?

How much extra revenue does Northampton expect around Pride season? Is it the most profitable event the town hosts? What percentage of the Tourism program is directed specifically at LGBTQ+ tourists?

How does the Chamber of Commerce feel about the Mayor’s panhandling task force and the survey released to the public about the downtown environment? Has the Chamber of Commerce (and specifically those involved in promoting tourism) been involved in plans to get the houseless population off the streets? Were any Chamber of Commerce directors involved in the creation of the panhandling task force?

Does the Chamber of Commerce Tourism Program include LGBTQ+ representatives? How many queer-owned businesses are Chamber of Commerce members?

Thanks,
Mod and Blair

Hi.

That’s more than a couple of questions, wouldn’t you say? In order to respond, it will take me a few days.

-Suzanne

We did not receive a response after this email.