

Policy

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Christopher Braunschweig/Newton News

The Newton School Board discusses the student disclosure of identity policy during its July 10 meeting.

safe space to say, 'I think I'm gay' or whatever the conversation was at the 1980s or early 1990s."

If he had been afraid of individuals being forced to tell his parents and out him to his parents, Padget said he would have never had a safe space. When it came time for Padget to want to come out to friends and family, he did so in stages. "You don't just come out on a billboard," he said.

Sometimes it requires LGBTQ individuals to come out to a few exclusive people to know they have some level of acceptance before branching out even further.

"That process has changed dramatically in the last 30-some years. When I was coming out I maybe I knew of three other gay people in the world, maybe four. I was pretty isolated and I wasn't sure there was a safe space," Padget said. "...For me, coming out was a gradual process."

To gradually come out to friends at school or a trusted teacher may not be possible now thanks to the new law.

"I would have had no

choice in that matter," Padget said. "I can't tell you how I would have felt about it, but it would have been horrifying and scary. I've had friends that were kicked out of their families for being gay. I know people who have been kicked out of their families for being transgender."

Padget also told Newton News the policy contradicts the school board's mission and vision.

The district's mission states: "The Newton Community School District empowers every learner to achieve a lifetime of personal success."

The district's vision states: "We are a collaborative and cohesive team that inspires all learners in a culture of safety and acceptance."

"It doesn't say cisgender or identifying as a particular gender. It says all learners, every learner," Padget said. "The state is denying us our actual vision and putting our vision at risk. Because if there are kids that aren't safe, they don't have a culture of safety and acceptance. It could interfere with their learning."

Sentencing

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surveillance. Jasper County Attorney Scott Nicholson wanted to show the footage in court prior to sentencing. Lewis's defense attorney, Marc Wallace, objected to the request, saying it "undermines" the plea agreement.

Inevitably, the judge decided against viewing the video footage, and the hearing proceeded without it.

Lewis told District Court Judge Charles Sinnard he takes full responsibility for his actions and will serve his time to "become a better person." Sinnard questioned if Lewis truly understood the consequences of his actions. Lewis said he knows his actions affected his family, the victim's family and the community.

"How about the victim?" Sinnard asked.

"Her as well," Lewis responded.

On May 15, Lewis withdrew his initial plea of not guilty and waived his right to a jury trial. He subsequently pleaded guilty to attempted murder and stalking-third or subsequent offense, which are both considered felonies in Iowa and carry with them a maximum sentence of 25 years and 10 years, respectively.

The judge has limited options when it comes to sentencing, but Sinnard did have some discretion over whether Lewis will serve a consecutive or concurrent sentence. Considering Lewis's prior criminal record and the nature of the two offenses, the judge ultimately decided on a consecutive sentence.

Sinnard noted this was not the first time Lewis has a violent criminal history. Newton News reported that he was arrested and charged with domestic assault in May 2015. The woman he assaulted, who was unnamed in the report, went so far as to jump from a moving vehicle to

get away from him.

But what Sinnard found "very troubling" was that almost immediately upon release from his bond for a crime committed on March 3, Lewis's "response was to escalate things" and "to do so publicly." This was not a "discreet offense," Sinnard said, the attack was committed in broad daylight.

Lewis later asked the judge to reconsider enforcing a concurrent sentence instead, saying the court should recognize the years where he was not in trouble and provided for his family. To be served a consecutive sentence, Lewis said he "might as well die in jail." He also wanted to be able to see his children.

Sinnard said Lewis might still have that opportunity to interact with his kids, but the judge stood by his decision. While Lewis argued for the court to not deprive him of seeing his children, Sinnard was quick to point out that Lewis did not hesitate to deprive his children of a parent when he attacked their mother.

Again, Lewis pushed back, saying the plea agreement from the prosecution recommended a concurrent sentence. Lewis said he did not want to spend the rest of his life in prison. He asked again for the judge to reconsider, but Sinnard did not back down and ended any further conversation.

"It's not what we agreed to though," Lewis said to the prosecutors before being taken away by Jasper County Jail staff.

Harvey embraced her loved ones before leaving the courtroom. They hugged her tight and patted her gently on the back, telling her it was over.

As per state law, Lewis — who was supported by his sister at the sentencing hearing — would be eligible for parole when 70 percent of his sentence for attempted murder had been served, or roughly 17-and-a-half years. But he would also have to serve his sentence for the felony stalking charge.

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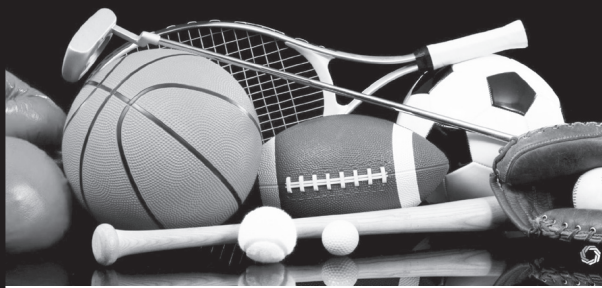
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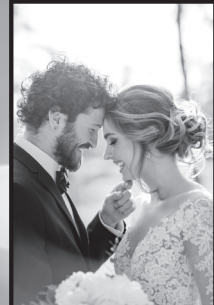
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Dr. Patrick Cogley
family practice

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