Ferndale Police investigating signs promoting white supremacist ideology

By Robert Mittendorf, August 05, 2019, Bellingham Herald


Ferndale Police are investigating posters linked to a national hate group that were placed downtown two weekends ago — possibly during the Old Settlers Grand Parade.

“If somebody is putting up these flyers in our town, we want to know who they are and why,” Ferndale police and city spokesman Riley Sweeney said in an interview with The Bellingham Herald.

Ferndale resident Ryan Reilly said in an interview with The Herald that he saw at least four flyers for the Patriot Front posted on utility poles at intersections along Main Street as he was leaving the parade on the afternoon of July 27.

“I tore it down,” Reilly said. “I’m sure it was somebody in town for the parade.”

A float in the parade was photographed flying the Confederate flag, an incident that sparked concern last week.

Many people defended the Confederate flag in comments on the story at The Bellingham Herald’s page on Facebook last weekend.

Others decried the image as racist, and the story had more than 850 comments, reactions and shares.

Both the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League — organizations that track hate groups, bigotry and anti-Semitism — have the Patriot Front on their watch lists.

“Patriot Front is an image-obsessed organization that rehabilitated the explicitly fascist agenda of Vanguard America with garish patriotism,” the Southern Poverty Law Center said at its website.

A post at the ADL website called the Patriot Front a racist, anti-Semitic organization.

“Patriot Front is a white supremacist group whose members maintain that their ancestors conquered America and bequeathed it solely to them,” the ADL said.

Reilly said one of the posters that he saw took that viewpoint, claiming that American Indian lands weren’t stolen from their native inhabitants.

“It’s finally gotten here. Ferndale can’t hide,” Reilly said. “After what happened in El Paso over the weekend, this is even more dangerous.”

A gunman linked to anti-immigrant racism killed 22 people and wounded more than two dozen more on Saturday in El Paso, Texas, according to news reports.

Reilly said that another of the posters said “Keep America American.”

In an email, Sweeney said Ferndale is “one of the most demographically diverse” parts of Whatcom County, and city officials denounce the politics of hate.
“Ferndale is a welcoming community to all people, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation or country of origin,” he said. “We stand united against racist, xenophobic groups that promote bigotry and hatred. Our county has an ugly history of racism and that is why it is more important than ever to speak out and say with absolute clarity that Ferndale rejects white nationalists and anyone who wishes to divide us by prejudice.”