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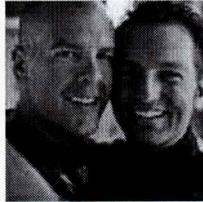
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P'Town To Marry Gay Out Of Staters

by Michael J. Meade
365Gay.com Newscenter
Boston Bureau

Posted: April 12, 2004 11:18 a.m. ET

(Boston, Massachusetts) Despite a state law that says that people from outside Massachusetts whose marriages would be illegal in their home states may not wed in in the Bay State Provincetown is preparing to bend the rules. Or at least turn a blind eye to them, when same-sex marriage becomes legal in Massachusetts May 17.

Officials in the nation's number-one gay summer vacation spot have been deluged with from out side the state by people enquiring about getting married in Provincetown.

They're being told that the town's Board of Selectmen recently voted to permit marriages for out-of-state residents who complete a form stating that their marriage doesn't break any laws, and that officials in Cape Cod town would not investigate to verify the home states or backgrounds listed for gay couples on marriage license applications.

"We've never been the marriage police with heterosexual couples, and we're not about to start with same-sex couples," said town manager, Keith Bergman.

Provincetown has 3,400 year-round residents, but the population swells to as many as 60,000 people in the summer, and the town stands to benefit financially if gay couples see it as a wedding destination.

Other municipalities in the state are also weighing how to handle applications for marriage licenses. The state has so far failed to provide a clear direction on how to proceed, except to point out the existing ban on licenses to people from states where same-sex marriage is not permitted.

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The law that Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly based his direction on was enacted in 1913 and aimed at blocking interracial marriages.

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Provincetown selectmen based their vote on an opinion by the town's attorney, John W. Giorgio. Giorgio said marriage licenses could be issued to out-of-staters who sign the "Notice of Intent To Marry" form because municipal clerks can't be expected to keep track of states that ban gay marriage.

Laurence Pizer who is the town clerk in Plymouth and a past president of the Massachusetts Town Clerks Association, said he agreed with Provincetown's position.

Pizer said that after May 17, he plans to accept the signed "Notice of Intent" from gay couples just as he accepts the word of heterosexual couples. He said town clerks are not investigators, and ask for additional identification only when the couple appear to be under 18 years of age.

"If somebody came in and said they were from Great Barrington [Mass.], I don't know anybody from Great Barrington, so I wouldn't question that," he said. "We don't make a phone call to the attorney general of Aruba to see if there's a reason they shouldn't be married."

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