

**STATEMENT BY MAYOR ROBERT H. CONLEY
ON THE
“WELCOMING COMMUNITY” RESOLUTION
AT THE FEBRUARY 6, 2017 COUNCIL MEETING**

We are living in interesting times – not just the past few months but also the past few years – a time of globalization, a time of the world growing smaller yet growing apart.

Yesterday, I visited a few churches to share my thoughts on why we need to declare Madison a “Welcoming Community”. I will share the genesis behind this resolution shortly, but first I want to share some of the words I spoke yesterday.

It is fair for us to be judged on our actions, on how we treat others. It is fair for us to be judged on our words, spoken, written, posted or tweeted. As your Mayor, it is fair for me to be judged on how Madison handles issues such as we are discussing today.

What is not fair or right is to be judged by the color of our skin, the sound of our name, the neighborhood we live in, the church, temple or mosque we may attend, or even the fact we choose not to worship. It is not right to be judged by the country we may come from or the war that we seek refuge from. This was not right when our Country was founded and it is not right today.

Certainly since our Country was founded, immigrants have landed on our soil to start new lives, and yes they were not always welcomed from the start. But each wave of immigration has made our Country stronger. This has been evident in Madison as the Rose City, 100 years ago. And it is evident today, in this room. We cannot afford to take a step backwards.

That is why we are here today, not to pass a resolution and say we have done our duty. We are here to take the first step in making Madison a Welcoming Community. And as we take this step, we know that much is going on in courts across this country as they address steps taken by the new administration. We hope courts will help undo some of the directives of the last two weeks.

The idea of a Welcoming Community was started when I saw Assemblywoman Mila Jasey post on Facebook the resolution passed by her hometown of Maplewood. I felt it was essential that Madison follow that lead and do it quickly.

This was not only to send a message to Washington, but also to our neighboring communities in Morris County. We should not just leave it to the major cities in this state. Towns such as Madison, who has always prided itself on diversity, must also take a stand.

Since we posted the resolution on the Borough website, I have heard an outpouring of support and pride in Madison for taking such a step. I have also heard from a few that feel that this is not necessary. And I have heard from some that this resolution doesn't go far enough. To those I say I hear you and understand, but this is an important step and certainly not the end of the discussion of this important issue.

We need to send a message now by approving this resolution and we need to understand that a piece of paper does not make for a Welcoming Community, only our actions, actions that I am willing to be judged on.

I will read the resolution and then open the floor to comments.

To volunteer for the committee to guide Madison in its goal to be truly a Welcoming Community, please send your contact information to mayor@rosenet.org with "Madison Welcoming Community" in the subject line.