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# City Removes "Sermons" From Pastor Subpoenas, Blames "Media Circus" and Anti-HERO Lawyers for Stoking Outrage

By Natalie Harms

Published Fri., Oct. 17 2014 at 2:30 PM



Natalie Harms

Mayor Annise Parker and City Attorney David Feldman at a press conference Friday.

Mayor Annise Parker and City Attorney David Feldman shifted more blame in the [subpoenaing-anti-HERO-pastors debacle](#) that's riled up Christians across the city -- and, thanks to Twitter and the

#HoustonWeHaveAProblem campaign, the nation. Parker and Feldman blamed their pro bono lawyers, the media and the opposing lawyers, without shouldering much blame themselves during a press conference Friday.

Parker, visibly frustrated, said that her legal representation could've been more sensitive when it subpoenaed five local pastors last month in the city's legal fight against anti-HERO activists who want to repeal the city's equal rights ordinance. But Parker doesn't "read those kind of legal documents in detail," she said. Feldman, who also said he didn't read the subpoenas before they were sent last month, said the entire controversy could have been avoided had the other side's lawyers brought their issues to him, rather than the media.

"You're supposed to confer the issue; had they done that -- and they never did, they just filed a motion to quash -- they could have told us they had an issue with the request and we would have agreed," Feldman said. "But they decided to make it a media circus."

The city cleared up the wording Friday morning by filing a revised subpoena with the district clerk. The revision removes the term "sermons" and requests only "presentations" or "speeches" related to HERO or the petition process. Mind you, this changes only one of the 17 requests outlined in the city's original subpoenas to the pastors. While the rest of the subpoena remains broad, Parker emphasized that the "request -- the whole lawsuit -- is about the petition process."

The mayor explained that the pro bono attorneys of Susman Godfrey L.L.P, which filed the subpoenas last week, will continue to work with the city as it prepares for the trial, scheduled to take place in January. And while Parker hopes this revision will appease the other side, she isn't ruling out the idea of more revisions down the road. "The revised subpoenas that we are issuing today may be further revised, as I understand," she said.

It already seems that the minor rewording won't satisfy opponents. "In this 'new' filing, the Mayor still insists on seeing private emails, texts and other communications related to the Mayor's office and the city's 'bathroom bill,'" Family Research Council President Tony Perkins said in a statement sent shortly after Parker's press conference. "While two words -- 'or sermons' -- are dropped from the 'revised' subpoena, the government intrusion into private religious affairs remains. The 'revised' subpoena is a difference without a distinction."

