

Washington-Lee Renaming Committee
November 14, 2018 – Syphax Education Center – 7-9 p.m.
Meeting Minutes

Committee Attendees:

STUDENTS: John Holt, Chloe Slater, Thornton Thomas

PARENTS: Patrice Kelly, Allison Chen, Duane Butcher

WL STAFF: Hiromi Isobe, Jackie Stallworth, Dave Peters, Gregg Robertson

ALUMNI: Bill Moser, Julia Crull, Peter Strack, Dana Raphael

COMMUNITY: James Rosen, Allan Gajadhar, Nikki Roy, George Keating, Melissa Perry

HISTORICAL SOCIETY: George Axiotis

Unable to Attend:

Student: Ana Regina Santos-Caballero

Group Facilitator: Sian Madden

APS Staff Liaison: Linda Erdos

Opening:

Sian led the members in another “lightening round” and committee members shared where they were now on reflection of the conversations from the first three meetings.

Members reviewed the charge for the committee to rename Washington-Lee High School. Although many comments have been received from individuals on the online “Engage with APS” form asking that the name not be changed. However, the committee recognizes that the Renaming Committee was not formed or charged by the School Board to discuss options or find ways to overturn the School Board’s June 7, 2018 decision to rename the Washington-Lee High School. Instead, the Renaming Committee was appointed and charged solely with making a recommendation to the School Board for a new name for Washington-Lee High School. Therefore, while the committee understands that many in the community have advocated for no change, the committee is moving forward to finalize a recommendation for a new name which aligns with the charge for which the members have been appointed.

Review/Discussion of WL Names:

All members had received the master list (*attachment*) of all suggested names received to date for review before the Nov. 14 meeting. Sian asked each member to share their 1st choice and explain how their choice connects with their own personal values. They also shared 2nd and 3rd choice. Peter Strack volunteered to record the responses on the chart paper posted on the wall. More than an hour was dedicated for every committee member to share their choices with their committee members.

Names on the initial lists of preferred names included:

1st: Washington-Lincoln
Washington-Tubman
W-L (just initials)
Washington-Lee (Wm/Billy Lee)
Washington-Lee (Lighthouse Harry)
Washington-Lafayette (James Armistead Lafayette)
Washington-Lafayette (Marquis de Lafayette)
Washington-Loving (Richard & Mildred Loving)
Washington (Booker T.) – Loving
Barbara Rose Johns
The Generals Washington-Lee High School
Washington-Liberty

2nd: Washington-Loving
Washington-Parks (Rosa Parks)
Washington-Lafayette (James)
Washington-Lincoln
Washington (Booker T.) – Lee (William)
Washington-Lafayette (Marquis)
Washington (Booker T.) – Tubman (Harriet)
George Washington
Washington-Liberty
Washington-Tubman

3rd: Washington-Lee (Billy)
Washington-Loving
Generals HS
Washington HS
Washington-Lincoln
W-L
Washington-Lafayette (James)
Washington (Booker T.) – Lee (Wm.)
Arlington Central
Washington-Liberty
Washington-Terrell (Mary Church Terrell)

Several names on each list were repeated by other committee members which was noted on the charts as well. Afterwards, the group examined and discussed the list of names listed on three lists to find common patterns and similarities across the lists. The members also asked questions, shared additional rationale for their choices, and expressed possible concerns for the suggested names.

After further review, the group looked at the list of names and identified names that were most frequently shared to develop a shorter list for consideration. The shortened list included:

Washington-Lincoln
Washington-Tubman
W-L (just the initials)
Washington-Lee (William/Billy)
Washington-Lee (Lighthorse Harry)
Washington-Lafayette (James)
Washington-Loving
Washington-Liberty
Arlington-Central
Washington (Booker T.)-Loving

The committee discussed whether to keep “Washington” to indicate George Washington or the suggested Booker T. Washington. In the end, the majority felt that keeping the naming options to reference George Washington was most appropriate.

The committee also discussed whether keeping the name “Washington-Lee” by changing the meaning of the “Lee” part of the name to have it stand for “another Lee” represents a name change. Some members stated their belief that the official name of the school is not currently the “George Washington – Robert E. Lee High School” – it’s just “Washington-Lee” – so substituting the meaning for “another Lee” does not represent any change. Other members felt it is a possible new name and did not want to abandon exploring that option. The committee did not reach any final resolution on that issue.

After further discussion, each committee member received one green dot to indicate their 1st choice and one orange dot to indicate their 2nd choice. Based on the allocation of markers, the list was reduced to five finalists, including:

- **Washington-Lincoln**

Honoring George Washington, a founder of our country as both the General of the American Revolutionary War Army and the 1st President of the nation, and Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, who worked to preserve the nation. Lincoln led the nation through the Civil War, its bloodiest war and its greatest moral, constitutional, and political crisis. In doing so, he preserved the Union, abolished slavery, strengthened the federal government, and modernized the economy. Washington’s Farewell Address to the nation is considered by many to be one of the most important documents in American history, emphasizing the importance of checks and balances, separation of powers, and achieving change in governance through amendments rather than aggression. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address lifted the nation during the Civil War and became an iconic and international renowned endorsement of nationalism, republicanism, equal rights, liberty, and democracy.

- **Washington-Loving**

Honoring Richard and Mildred Loving from Virginia who fought and won the civil rights decision in the US Supreme Court - Loving v. Virginia - which struck down all state laws banning interracial marriage. In the late 1950s, Mildred and Richard Loving, residents of

Central Point, Virginia, challenged and eventually helped to overturn the laws against interracial marriage that were then on the books in Virginia and many other States. The U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld their right to marry was “a watershed moment in the dismantling of “Jim Crow” race laws.” The name supports the APS mission “to ensure all students learn and thrive;” the APS vision “to be an inclusive community;” and the core values of excellence, equity, inclusivity, integrity, collaboration, innovation and stewardship. The Lovings were not “generals” or “statemen,” nor did they start out to be leaders. They were two people who “didn’t want to be heroes, but just to be happy. Nonetheless, their successful fight against unjust laws made Virginia and the nation a truly better place.

- **Washington-Liberty**

An aspirational name that honors the Father of our Country, and the Mother of All People (as represented by the Statue of Liberty, an archetypal symbol of the U.S.). Washington fought for independence and liberty against an oppressive monarchy to establish our fledgling national republic. Liberty stands as a beacon of hope, freedom, and inclusiveness and connects with the school's international diversity, cultural strengths, and IB Curriculum, and reflects the mission, vision and core values of APS and celebrates our aspirations for all students.

- **Washington-Tubman**

Recognizing a woman, former slave and the many achievements of Harriet Tubman that reflect the mission, vision and core values of APS.

Tubman was born into slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 1822. While she was still in her early teens, she suffered a severe head injury from an overseer that would cause her to have seizures and spells of unconsciousness for the rest of her life. She escaped to freedom in 1849 when her enslaver died and she was to be sold, and spent the next 10 years as a leader of the “Underground Railroad,” making about 13 trips into Maryland to rescue friends and family members. She also gave instructions to about 70 more who found their way to freedom independently. During a ten-year span she made 19 trips into the South and escorted over 300 slaves to freedom.

The famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison called her “Moses,” and the name stuck. A lifelong humanitarian and civil rights activist, she formed friendships with abolitionists, politicians, writers and intellectuals. She knew Frederick Douglass and was close to John Brown and U.S. Secretary of State William Henry Seward. John Brown, who led the raid at Harper’s Ferry, and others called her “the General.” She was particularly close with suffragists Lucretia Coffin Mott, Martha Coffin Wright, and Susan B. Anthony. Intellectuals in New England's progressive circles, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Lloyd Garrison, Bronson Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Franklin B. Sanborn, and Mrs. Horace Mann, befriended her, and her work was heralded by many beyond the United States.

During the Civil War, she served the U.S. Army as a spy, scout, nurse and cook. Despite her service, Tubman never received a regular salary and was for years denied compensation. She eventually received a small pension for her service in the Civil War.

After the Civil War, Tubman continued to stand up to racial segregation and showed the same zeal and passion for the women’s suffrage campaign as she had for the abolition of slavery. Tubman died in 1913 in Auburn, NY at the the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged that she had established years earlier. She was buried with military honors at Fort Hill Cemetery.

- **Washington-Lee**

Changing the recognition from “Robert E.” Lee to “William (aka William/Will or Billy)” Lee, originally George Washington’s huntsman and later his personal assistant who served by Washington’s side throughout the Revolutionary War. Selecting William Lee as the “Lee” in Washington-Lee High School fulfills the vision shared with George Washington: equality, education, and freedom. Recognizing William Lee as a patriotic African American and Virginian, who was enslaved because he was the son of a white father and a black slave, and who stood with George Washington through all the perils of our founding, acknowledges, as well, the key APS values of excellence, equity, integrity, inclusivity and collaboration. William Lee shared Washington's journey of understanding and represents the often-overlooked contributions of blacks to the American Revolution. George Washington fully recognized William Lee's important contributions to the nation. In his last months, Washington took the radical step of revising his will to stipulate that his slaves were to be freed upon the death of his wife, William Lee was the only slave who was to receive freedom immediately upon Washington's death in recognition of his faithful services during the Revolutionary War.

Next Steps:

Committee members decided to consider the five finalist names before the next meeting. Members who had written rationale for names on the finalist list offered to email their rationale to Linda Erdos before the next meeting. Linda will compile everyone’s comments into a single draft rationale.

The next meeting will focus on choosing a first choice and an alternate name to recommend to the School Board at the meeting on December 20.

The meeting ended at 9:00 p.m.

Schedule of Renaming Committee Meetings (All at 7-9 p.m.):

- Thursday – Nov. 29 – Syphax Ed. Ctr., 4th Floor (Rooms 452/454/456)
- Wednesday – Dec. 05 – Syphax Ed. Ctr., 4th Floor (Rooms 452/454/456– If Needed)
- Wednesday – Dec. 12– Syphax Ed. Ctr., 4th Floor (Rooms 452/454/456– If Needed)
- Thursday – Dec. 20 – Renaming Committee Recommendation Presented
(School Board Meeting Information Item)
- Thursday – Jan. 19, 2019 – Renaming Committee Recommendation Decision
(School Board Meeting Action Item)