

## CCS MARCH BOE MEETING NOTES

- 1) Pledge of Allegiance
- 2) Opening Remarks:

March is women's history month, so I hope everyone will join me in celebrating the tremendous accomplishments of not only the women in our lives, including those at this table, but also remember the contributions of women throughout America's history, including Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Anna Mary Robertson Moses, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, Maya Angelo, the notorious RBG and our first female Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris. As we celebrate we should also remember that there was a time when all men are created equal, only meant white men. So while we celebrate Women's History Month, let us also celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and its clarification that equal applies to us all, women as well as black, indigenous and people of color. In addition to Spring, there is indeed much to celebrate March.

- 3) Mascot discussion

At last month's meeting we reviewed a GoogleDoc as part of our discussion about the mascot and name, and based on feedback there appears to be some confusion about what that document is and what I read. The document I read was not my personal opinions. Rather it was a summary of the key messages delivered to us in the many emails, letters and documents we have reviewed to date. Dr. Silvernell provided BOE members with a template and we each had a week to review our notes and populate it with the key messages presented, to retain and to retire, the mascot and name.

I apologize if that was not clear to everyone at last month's meeting. I also apologize that in our nervousness about this potentially contentious discussion, we did not adequately describe, the key messages of those that would like to retain the mascot and name. This quickly became evident in the email we received immediately following the meeting. Consequently those leading the retain campaign requested a meeting with us. Dr Silvernell, Member Zeihm and I met with their leadership at the end of February.

At that meeting the retain the mascot leadership, affirmed their position, and since they did not feel we adequately addressed their key messages in February, I will reiterate them, as affirmed by those representatives at our meeting.

It is the position that those wishing to retain the mascot and name:

- 1) Place a tremendous value and love in their history at CCS, the people, and the experiences – and feel these things are under attack and need to be protected;
- 2) Do not believe the mascot and name are race-based and are therefore not inappropriate
- 3) Believe deeply that both are intended to honor, and want CCS to continue that tradition so kids today and tomorrow and can share those experiences;
- 4) They worry that if the mascot and name are deemed inappropriate their memories and values become tainted; and lastly
- 5) They have presented a compromise on the mascot, but state emphatically that the Indians name, that anchors their memories, is “non-negotiable”.

I learned a lot. What struck me most was the enormity of the gulf between them and those that want to retire the name and mascot. What some dismiss as “Justice Warriors”.

I do not know, maybe being a kid of the 70's and 80's, I am too much of a Cold War kid, but shouldn't we all be warriors for Justice. My goodness, the pledge we took at the beginning of this meeting ends with “Liberty and Justice for all”. Isn't being a warrior for justice what separated us from the German and Italian Fascists and the Russian and Japanese communists of the past? To be clear, before someone goes twisting my words to suggest I'm calling anyone a fascist or a communist, I am not. What I am saying is there are hopefully still some fundamental truths to being American and I hope we can all agree, that as the pledge of allegiance states, Justice for All is one of them. It's why my brother, the closest of my 5 siblings, 1st Sergeant Gifford, spent nearly 27 years as a United States Marine, fighting for American Justice around the globe.

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5 main points for consideration in objective decision making on this issue:

- 1) Courtesy, empathy and respect: We have been asked by nearly every Official representation of Indigenous governments, including the Mahican and Haudenosaunee to retire both the name and the mascot because in their view they do not honor them.
- 2) Pervasive divisiveness: People have used this issue to divide the community, and I do not see how that is going to subside until the mascot and name are changed.
- 3) Times change, and like so much in life when we know better we do better. As witnessed with everything from slavery and Jim Crow to the women's vote and holding a baby on your lap in the car, and as evidenced by Cleveland, Washington and countless others.
- 4) Equity Policy:

So, while I understand the right side of history on this issue is clear and I want CCS to be a leader, not a follower, if we need more time to get back to some of these fundamental American ideals and bridge the divide between those that believe the name is non-negotiable and those that understand the name and mascot to be based on a race of people and may no longer be as acceptable as they once were, I support that effort, and Dr. Silvernell's recommendation to create an impartial forum to at least try to build greater awareness and understanding for both sides of this issue, and bring back some unity to the district.