

**West Contra Costa Unified School District
Minutes of the Committee on Renaming Portola Middle School
Madera Elementary School Multi-Purpose Room
8500 Madera Dr.
El Cerrito, CA 94530**

June 10, 2014

Committee Members Present:

Randall Enos, Board Member; James Ghidella, Chair; Charles Ramsey, Board President

Staff Present:

Denise Cifelli, Confidential Secretary; Cliff Dorton, Electronics Technician; Bruce Harter, Superintendent; Marcus Walton, Communications Director

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Ghidella opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m., welcomed everyone, introduced the committee members and Dr. Harter and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Presentation on Name Change Proposal

Mr. Ghidella presented information on the purpose of the committee and went over the handout he prepared which provided additional information on the Board Policy regarding naming of a school or facility. Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Enos gave their views on the naming of sites and what they felt a name should signify.

3. Public Comment

Mr. Ghidella opened the meeting to public comment.

Public Comments:

Tom Wilson spoke in opposition of a name change in general however offered the name of Dr. Pina Barbieri, a celebrated local Richmond educator and businesswoman, for the committee's consideration.

Jenny Hammer spoke in favor of the name change and approves of changing to Fred Korematsu as he set out to do what was right for those who had been interned. She felt he fought for what he believed was right and that the young people of today should know that civil disobedience and non-violent dissent were a part of the American experience and is not necessarily a bad thing.

Kathy Weinstein spoke in opposition of the name change to Fred Korematsu as he did not live in the area and has many things named after him. She felt that a local person, such as Sundar Shadi, should be named to the school instead. Ms. Weinstein had three local names she preferred to have the school named and asked the committee to consider 1) Sundar Shadi, 2) Adachi family, and 3) naming the school Castro Middle School as the area had already lost Castro Elementary. She feels we have many deserving members of our community that could be named to this school rather than an outsider.

Sue Roberts spoke in favor of the name change and has friends still living who spent time in the camps. She believed Korematsu was courageous and honorable in his protests and wanted to bring her support.

Leslie Reckler spoke but did not commit to support one way or the other. She viewed this change as an opportunity to bring the historical factor surrounding internment into the classroom as she did not feel it was or had been taught in the past.

Mr. Ghidella read an email he received in support of the name change. She felt she did not learn about the internment while she was in school and by re-naming it would memorialize the injustice for Fred Korematsu and others.

Elaine Anderson spoke in opposition of the name change as she generally disapproves of name changes. She feels that Portola and others sites like Portola have had a long-standing history and should be respected. She stated that others, such as Fred Korematsu, whom we wish to honor, we should find other ways to honor. Renaming a school is not the appropriate way to proceed.

Joni Hiramoto spoke in favor of the name change and presented a historical synopsis of Fred Korematsu's life and accomplishments. She also said that as a member of the Adachi family (her mother is the youngest Adachi daughter), she respectfully declines any suggestion to name the school after her family.

Committee Comments:

Committee members made comments and asked clarifying questions of each speaker as to their position on the name change. In closing:

Mr. Ramsey thanked all those who spoke and commented that currently our school names span historical, ethnic and gender representation and that he had not heard anything compelling that evening as to why a name change would not be appropriate.

Mr. Enos also thanked everyone for expressing their views and had admiration for all the men who have changed history to benefit all. He also made clear to all that the events surrounding the internment were a topic included in history lessons as he taught those lessons himself as did the other history teachers.

Mr. Ghidella also expressed his thanks to everyone and stated that as a history and AP Government teacher, Korematsu was always included in the lessons.

4. Adjournment

Mr. Ghidella adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Next meeting will be held on June 17th at Fairmont Elementary School. Meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.