



**Tuesday, February 26, 2019
6:00pm – 7:30pm
PTO Meeting Minutes**

Called to order – 6:15pm

Principal's D'Avilar Welcomes Parents

Renaming Process

Presentation by Andrew Case, SLT and PS9 Parent Volunteer

- Last year the PTO voted to change the name of the school to the Shirley Chisholm School, but had to get the consent of the family which we were unable to do
- Had to look for a new name
- Agreed to lead all of the paperwork, if someone else found a name and got the family's consent
- Raul Rothblatt got consent from Sarah Smith Garnett's family
- There has been a lot of community engagement on the name - February PTO meeting, public Town Hall
- 93 out of 120 5th graders signed a petition to change the name to Sarah Smith Garnett School
- Andrew describes the steps if we vote today to change the name - at the end of the day the Chancellor makes a final decision
- Suggests that everyone who brings a name suggests it and then we go through a series of votes, removing the lowest voted name with each round so that we finally vote between 2 names

Questions/Comments

- While this is technically okay to do, is this number of parents enough to make such a large decision
- Evening meetings are difficult. Have had at least 3 meetings on the topic over the last year with similar numbers of people. We do technically have a quorum
- Some people may come a little later. Also we have spoken to several hundred people about this
- Suggestion that people don't actually feel that strongly
- This is actually a great turnout for any meeting or parent participation event. (*Approximately 25 people*)
- How many people want to speak about a particular name?
 - Raul shares information about Sarah Smith Garnett:
 - Met family in October. Her sister lived on Prospect Pl. She was the first African American female physician in New York State. Father was an original landowner in this area - bought land because the property qualifications for voting were increasingly difficult. At 14 started teaching, 1863 she was a principal in a school in New York. Was an education for 37 years. Led the idea of getting more African American teachers
 - The year of 1888's significance: started the first African American women's suffrage organization in this neighborhood because suffrage movement excluded black women. So far - nothing to acknowledge that history. Our school could do that
 - Henry Highland Garnett - one of the most famous black abolitionists. Said that if we are going to be treated so poorly by our country, we have the right to rebel
 - Sarah became national superintendent for black women's suffrage
 - She is a remarkable woman with a unique local history
 - There was a school named after her many years ago that closed in 1999

- Other names suggested
 - Polli Murray - early leader of the NAACP
 - Elizabeth Jennings - desegregated NYC public transport
 - Prospect Hill School - historical geographical connections
 - Heights School - aspirational - connected to both neighborhood, and high aspirations for students
 - STEAM School
 - Whole Child School (registered trademark - can not use this name)
 - Public School 9

- Comment: notion that there are people who want other names makes it concerning to move forward.
 - Can vote to not change name this year if we don't want to
- Read two letters from students
- Discussed stance on Bergen name - adequate representation with Bergen Street and Bergen Beach
- Parent asked for a run down of all the names - Andrew reviews
- Parent from neighborhood whose brother attended PS9 spoke about the inspiration a school name can have. In favor of Sarah Smith Garnett
- Several other parents speak in favor of Sarah Smith Garnett.

Question to Ms. D'Avilar: Do you feel that the school community has had enough time with this decision. Ms. D'Avilar says that she will support the parents decision and help make sure the students understand the new name.

Question on process: We can only vote for people whose names we have permission to use.

Question: What happens if we don't vote to change it today? We would have to take it up again with the new PTO in September and submit it for the March 1st deadline in 2020.

Andrew explains process again, ending in the Chancellor's as the final decision maker.

Motion made to change the name this year. Seconded.

23 for 4 against - VOTED TO VOTE TO CHANGE THE NAME TONIGHT

Andrew reads resolution, asks for comments

Explains voting process, reads names for hand vote

Sarah Smith Garnett - 26 in favor

Heights School -1

Prospect Hill School - 0

STEAM School - 0

Public School 9 - 1

VOTED TO CHANGE SCHOOL NAME TO SARAH SMITH GARNETT

Meeting Adjourned 7:00pm