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NORTH HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

53 Rochester Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15229

JUNE 22, 2022

7:00 P.M.

SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

IN RE: School Mascot

Reported by:

Cavaliere Court Reporting
Jeanne Manko
Court Reporter
162 Cobblestone Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15237
412.508.0035

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I N D E X

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD:

WITHEREL & ASSOCIATES
MICHAEL WITHEREL, ESQUIRE, SOLICITOR
966 Perry Highway
Pittsburgh, PA 15237

R. PATRICK J. MANNARINO, SUPERINTENDENT

BOARD MEMBERS:

ALLISON MATHIS, PRESIDENT
HELEN SPADE, VICE-PRESIDENT
DEANNA PHILPOTT
PHIL LITTLE
KATHRYN PONIATOWSKI
RACHAEL RENNEBECK
SANDRA KONERA
MIKE SANTUCCI
ELIZABETH NEASE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MATHIS: Good evening,
everybody. I would like to call the North
Hills School District Town Hall meeting into
order. I would ask for all to please rise for
a moment of silence and Pledge to the Flag.

(Whereupon the Pledge was taken.)

MS. MATHIS: Good evening,
everybody, and welcome to the North Hills
School District Mascot Town Hall. Thank you
all so much for joining us this evening.

This Town Hall is an opportunity
to listen to community input. No decisions
about the mascot have been made nor will any
decisions be made tonight. This is strictly
an open forum for you to share your thoughts
with us.

There will be no board member
comments or discussions (indiscernible). We
had more than 140 people sign up to speak and,
as announced, each person will be given two
minutes. If you are speaking on behalf of a
group, you will have up to three minutes.

1 As you came in, you probably saw a
2 list of speakers. Residents and employees are
3 listed first in the order in which they signed
4 up, followed by non-resident alumni.

5 This is the order which we will
6 follow. This list will also be scrolling on
7 the screen over here in front of me, so you
8 will see your name when your turn is coming
9 up.

10 The screen will also show a
11 countdown of the timing you have left once
12 you've started speaking. At the conclusion of
13 your time, I will let you know and I will mute
14 your microphone.

15 When I announce the next speaker,
16 I will also announce who is on deck. At that
17 time please make your way to the closest
18 microphone. We have one microphone in each
19 aisle. And I would just like to apologize in
20 advance if I mispronounce anybody's name.

21 In order to keep the orderly
22 progress of the meeting, please be respectful
23 of each other's time and differing opinions.
24 We would appreciate it if you would not boo or
25 cheer.

1 Per our participation policy, I
2 may interrupt or terminate a participant's
3 statement if the statement is personally
4 directed, abusive, obscene, or irrelevant.

5 Lastly, there will be no recesses.
6 So if the members of the public or Board need
7 to take a break, please do so as needed at
8 your own discretion.

9 If you are planning on making a
10 public comment, be mindful of where you fall
11 with the scheduled list of speakers. If you
12 are not present when your name is called I
13 will move on to the next person.

14 With that being said, we will move
15 on to the first participant, who is Valerie
16 Aquila. And Josh Hoey is on deck.

17 MS. AQUILA: Hello. My name is
18 Valerie Aquila, and our oldest child is about
19 to start kindergarten this year. I'm
20 incredibly excited about the opportunities
21 here in North Hills, but I am also very
22 concerned that our children will be asked to
23 praise and love a mascot that should be
24 retired and remember a historical part of our
25 community instead of its current

1 representative.

2 I'm not here today to talk about
3 the tradition of our mascot. I'm not here
4 today to talk about the cost of changing our
5 mascot. I'm not here today to talk about how
6 to honor the class students that incorporated
7 the mascot. Those are all very important
8 issues that can be discussed and negotiated
9 once a decision has been made. But they are
10 not why we are here tonight.

11 We are here tonight to face the
12 fundamental question of how we want our
13 children to see the world. Do not be
14 distracted at the questions of how to
15 implement the change when the only question on
16 the table is should there be change. And,
17 yes, there should be change, and it should be
18 soon so that we can stop dragging wedges in
19 our community and get back to the business of
20 educating children.

21 The National Congress of American
22 Indians is the largest and most recognized
23 organization of native people in North
24 America. Since 1968 they have been advocating
25 to eliminate the use of Native American

1 mascots.

2 Their position is that the use of
3 Native American sports mascots, logos, or
4 symbols perpetuates stereotypes in the
5 American Indians that are very harmful, that
6 degrade our native people, particularly native
7 youth. Examples of these I have seen here
8 tonight.

9 The world has changed since the
10 early 1900's when this mascot was chosen, and
11 we have an obligation to change with it.

12 How can we can teach our children
13 to be good citizens of this country when
14 keeping our mascot is not representative of
15 how to be a good citizen? Thank you.

16 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Josh
17 Hoey. Josh is not here --

18 MR. HOEY: I'm here. Sorry.

19 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. And,
20 then, Lisa Herbert, you're on deck.

21 MR. HOEY: Hello, members of the
22 community and members of the Board. My name
23 is Josh Hoey, and I'm a father of two
24 elementary students currently in the district
25 with a third that is on the way.

1 North Hills has been really great
2 for my children so far. It's been a caring,
3 attentive environment. Just walking in here,
4 Officer Trina said hi to me. And we love
5 everything about the school with the exception
6 of the mascot.

7 Yeah. If there's one thing I
8 could change, that's it, and that's why I'm
9 standing here tonight. I know not everyone
10 here tonight feels that way. But I would hope
11 that one thing we can all agree on in this
12 room is that we want the best possible
13 education for our children.

14 Perhaps that's what drew you to
15 the district, as was the case for my family.
16 But North Hills, I believe, has a potential to
17 be a top district in this region.

18 I think our elected officials here
19 are working hard to achieve that goal, but
20 with those lofty goals comes high
21 expectations. And as far as high expectations
22 goes, when it comes to the mascot, we can do
23 better. I hope we can use this mascot
24 conversation to unify everybody in the
25 district around the issue.

1 We have high standards for our
2 children, for our school board, for our
3 teachers and staff. We should apply that same
4 standard to our mascot. This is not a recent
5 phenomenon. There's been a topic of
6 conversation about this for over 50 years, and
7 changes have been happening on every level
8 from professional sports, to colleges, to K
9 through 12. More and more schools in our
10 country and in our state are making these
11 types of changes at greater and greater
12 percentages.

13 (Indiscernible) has been
14 implemented at educational institutions from
15 Grove City College to Carnegie Mellon
16 University. It's clear that the future of
17 top-level educational institutions is becoming
18 increasingly globally minded and inclusive.
19 So I would ask the North Hills nation to
20 respectfully retire the Indian mascot and find
21 one that everyone can support.

22 MS. MATHIS: Your time's up.

23 MR. HOEY: Thank you.

24 THE COURT: Lisa Herbert. And Jim
25 Baker is up after Lisa Herbert, who doesn't

1 seem to be here. Is Jim Baker here? Please
2 approach the microphone, Mr. Baker.

3 MR. BAKER: Hello. My name is Jim
4 Baker. I am a resident of North Hills
5 district for about 25 years. I've had one
6 child graduate from North Hills and I'll have
7 another one graduate in the next couple of
8 years.

9 While I understand tonight is not
10 an open conversation opportunity, I would like
11 to note what the real reason is that is
12 driving this issue now. There was an issue
13 with the music department's trip to Florida
14 involving the marching band uniform. They
15 were told that they were not permitted to wear
16 them because it included the Indian name and
17 logo (indiscernible). Disney has every right
18 to make this request and tell us we cannot
19 wear our uniforms while on their property.

20 However, Disney does not have a
21 stake in our school district or community and
22 we should not be letting someone who is
23 located a thousand miles away dictate what we
24 do here. Recently, Dr. Mannarino stated at a
25 school board meeting that the cost in changing

1 the mascot and nickname would cost about
2 \$500,000.

3 Does Disney want to pay for this?
4 I think as a district we need to get our
5 priorities in line. There are many other ways
6 we can spend this money.

7 For instance, we can make sure our
8 students are getting the best (indiscernible)
9 as possible in order to get a quality
10 education. Also, I do not need to remind
11 anyone of the politics of (indiscernible)
12 schools in our country.

13 This kind of money could be used
14 in a proactive way to ensure that our schools,
15 students, and faculty are safe as can be.

16 Over the years, I've attended many
17 school activities. (Indiscernible) While
18 attending I didn't notice that students or
19 parents disrespected the Indian mascot or
20 nickname. I have never witnessed a tomahawk
21 shop or other offensive or disrespecting
22 gestures.

23 The Indian name has always been
24 one with pride in our school each year. When
25 people hear of the North Hills School

1 District, they think of the Indians. The
2 Indians have been part of our culture for
3 generations, and not only within our schools
4 but within our region.

5 The mascot is a nickname and a
6 tribute in a way to honor these people that
7 once occupied this area. Our school's values
8 are pride, tradition and excellence. The
9 Indians (indiscernible) pride and tradition.
10 Changing the name would be taking that away.
11 (Indiscernible) --

12 THE COURT: Sorry. Your time is
13 up. Brian McKenna. And Nicole Eljounfri is up
14 next.

15 MR. MCKENNA: Thank you. When we
16 ask our children who sailed (indiscernible)
17 the hemisphere, we expect them to know it was
18 Christopher Columbus. (Indiscernible), but
19 then we found out that (indiscernible).
20 Similarly, our children learn the Pilgrims
21 couldn't practice religion (indiscernible),
22 but then they had Thanksgiving with the
23 Indians.

24 On one side you expect decisions
25 and high level of detail. On the other, we

1 allow broad generalizations. Why don't we
2 expect our kids to (indiscernible), or that
3 the (indiscernible)? School teaches our kids
4 that accuracy and getting the details right
5 matter. But using a term Indian as a nickname
6 and mascot flies in the face of that
7 (indiscernible).

8 The Indians did not live here in
9 our region. In the Pittsburgh area, you have
10 the Adena, the Shawnee, the Iriquois and
11 others. When we lump these hundreds of tribes
12 together, we've titled them Indian and ignored
13 their differences, their cultures, their
14 languages. We make it easier for our children
15 to ignore the unique values that
16 (indiscernible). For example, the
17 (indiscernible) has captured our mascot. It
18 is traditional only for playtime like
19 (indiscernible). The totem pole used on the
20 yearbook cover is (indiscernible) for tribes
21 within the Pacific northwest, not a
22 representative of tribes that lived in this
23 particular region.

24 So what is it we are trying to
25 represent? By using the term "Indian," you

1 are using inaccurate and inarticulate language
2 that we will not accept in our children's
3 education. So why do it here?

4 When our students go off to
5 college to start their careers and finish high
6 school, they'll be asked where they lived.
7 They will say North Hills. The mascot won't
8 even be brought up. So why do we have a
9 mascot? They're supposed to be for fun.
10 They're supposed to bring their community
11 together. Our mascot says stop fulfilling
12 that purpose. It no longer brings our
13 community together.

14 For many of us who will no longer
15 wear the Indian symbol or use the word
16 "Indians," we functionally have
17 (indiscernible).

18 I respectfully ask that we find
19 something that we can all get behind and
20 celebrate as a community. Thank you.

21 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Nicole.
22 And then David McDonald will be on deck.

23 MS. ELJOUFRI: Hi. My name's
24 Nicole Eljourni, and I have three kids in the
25 district's school. This is a turning point in

1 our community. We can keep the mascot because
2 we want to stick with the way things have
3 always been and pretend like we are honoring
4 Native Americans or we can choose to be honest
5 with ourselves and grow and teach our children
6 to be anti-racist with humility.

7 Calling indigenous people by the
8 word Indian and dehumanizing them through
9 these mascots is about power and control.

10 To take over their land, settlers
11 began a centuries long (indiscernible) which
12 ended up in cultural and spiritual genocide.
13 Creating stereotype images allows this to
14 continue. This is not an innocent mascot, but
15 a tool in controlling the perception of truth.

16 Cultural dominance is established
17 by dividing and separating ethnic groups by
18 changing a name for them such as Indian
19 instead of allowing them to be known by what
20 they call themselves.

21 I don't know if there are any
22 Shawnee people here tonight since their
23 villages here in the North Hills were
24 (indiscernible) in the late 1700's. And I
25 certainly do not speak for them. But I

1 thought it would be helpful to share a few
2 ideas that I read from the book "The Shawnee
3 Statement on Mascots". These are their words:
4 "Natives are the only race depicted as
5 mascots. Society has recognized the
6 inappropriateness of cultures being made into
7 characters, put on helmets, t-shirts and
8 bumper stickers. Fighting and skin color is
9 not our only positive traits. Although it is
10 true that the Anasazi and the Shawnee have
11 shown and proven themselves in battle, there
12 are other gifts that will bear that we are
13 thankful for. Anasazi honor and foster many
14 other traits, and these gifts make us complex
15 diversive indigenous people we are today."

16 So we have to ask ourselves, are
17 we going to teach our kids to cower and hide
18 from mistakes or are we going to teach --

19 MS. MATHIS: Sorry. Your time is
20 over.

21 MS. ELJOUFRI: Thanks.

22 MS. MATHIS: David McDonald. And
23 Timothy Lego is up after Mr. McDonald. It
24 doesn't seem like David is here. Timothy
25 Lego? And then John Schalcosky will be on

1 deck next.

2 MR. LEGO: Good evening, North
3 Hills parents, residents, students, and
4 alumni. I'm here to publicly support keeping
5 the North Hills mascot as the Indians. I've
6 grown tired of the years of a small but vocal
7 group of a community who says they are
8 offended by the mascot and are trying to erase
9 history.

10 Pittsburgh (indiscernible) says
11 this: The past cannot be changed or
12 forgotten, edited or erased; it can only be
13 accepted. I grew up on the ideal of majority
14 rules. And I have watched that ideal
15 (indiscernible) these past several years. I
16 consider myself to be in the silent majority,
17 usually staying out of Facebook conversations.
18 But now I can no longer remain silent.

19 If we choose to change the mascot,
20 it will come at a cost which ultimately will
21 get passed on to the taxpayers to yet another
22 tax increase. In fact, back in 2016 Houston
23 Independent School District voted to change
24 the names of eight schools that were named for
25 Confederate generals that cost taxpayers of

1 that district 1.24 million dollars.

2 We have had several consecutive
3 years of tax increases in this district, with
4 another one coming for this upcoming school
5 year. Families are suffering already with out
6 of control inflation along with costs of
7 everything through the roof. We don't need
8 another tax increase to pay for something that
9 has nothing to do with education or the safety
10 of the students in this district.

11 I understand that the Board is not
12 voting on the mascot tonight and this meeting
13 is about hearing comments and opinions from
14 North Hills community or alumni.

15 Should this come up for a vote in
16 the future, I will be sure to follow who voted
17 for and against the proposal and urge others
18 to do the same. There are five board members
19 who will be up for reelection next year, so
20 please remember if you vote to cancel history,
21 the voters can vote to cancel your seat on the
22 Board. Thank you.

23 (CLAPPING)

24 MS. MATHIS: Please hold your
25 applause. John Schalcosky, and then James

1 Steigerwald is up next.

2 MR. SCHALCOSKY: Hello. Most
3 people in this room (indiscernible). I'm the
4 president of the Ross Township Historical
5 Society and president of Western Historical
6 Society, among many other things, and all of
7 Pittsburgh, of course. But I'm here today as
8 a North Hills alumni, Class of 2001. And
9 three of my children went to North Hills to
10 this day, and my godmother was Arlene Bender,
11 which I'm sure some of you may have known.
12 She was the former president of the school
13 board for many, many years.

14 And you know, I thought real long
15 and hard about, you know, what is the
16 implications of our mascot, that not a single
17 person in this room chose the mascot.

18 Did anybody in this room choose
19 the mascot?

20 (NO RESPONSE)

21 MR. SCHALOSKY: Exactly. So we
22 cannot -- and I say this all the time when it
23 comes to history of any object or anything,
24 but specifically North Hills history. We all
25 know that every school district is all

1 about -- Moreland County, all of western
2 Pennsylvania, was all Native American land.
3 Every single school district counsel has the
4 right to call themselves also the Indians or
5 the Native Americans.

6 So by saying that you are taking
7 away the history of the Native Americans by
8 taking away the mascot is simply not true.
9 And it's unfortunate. I am torn about this.
10 I do, you know, of course, have pride being a
11 North Hills, you know, alumni resident. But
12 of course it is a tradition that comes along
13 with it, because there's nothing more
14 traditional than North Hills. We're all about
15 tradition.

16 But excellence -- that's the thing
17 that got me. How will we be excellent? For
18 real. You know, these are things that none of
19 us created. None of us created the mascot.
20 It does not represent us. It represented us
21 as a different generation for different
22 reasons, reasons that no longer apply to us
23 today.

24 I'm not here necessarily to say
25 I'm for it or I'm against it, but I am open to

1 change and I don't think it's a bad thing by
2 taking it away. We can still represent the
3 Native American History in North Hills. It's
4 just us wanting to do that. And we can make
5 those steps and I would encourage everybody to
6 do that and look at the North American -- I
7 mean, Native American History.

8 MS. MATHIS: Your time is up.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. SCHALCOSKY: You're welcome.
11 James Steigerwald, are you here?

12 (NO RESPONSE)

13 MS. MATHIS: James Steigerwald,
14 are you here? And, if not, Jessica Wanner
15 will be up next.

16 Are either of those people here?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 MS. MATHIS: Okay. We will move
19 on to Lisa Gordon. And Kathryn Grabel will be
20 on deck.

21 MS. GRABEL: I'm Kathryn.

22 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Go ahead,
23 Kathryn. Thank you.

24 MS. GRABEL: Thank you. Okay. I
25 didn't want to step on Lisa's toes. So my

1 name is Kathryn Grabel, and I've been a
2 resident of West View for 11 years of my life,
3 attending Oakwood/Ridgewood (sic) Elementary.
4 After spending 15 years in Washington state,
5 Idaho, and Utah, I currently reside in West
6 View. And as the North Hills School District
7 taxpayer, I see the need for change with the
8 Indian mascot.

9 It seems like every update to the
10 North Hills School District website includes
11 less and less of the mascot image. Wouldn't
12 it be great to have a mascot that all students
13 can be proud of? We know better, and it's
14 time to do better. But please don't take my
15 word for it. Listen to how Native Indians
16 used as mascots directly affects Native
17 Americans.

18 This is Dakota Brown from
19 The National Advisory Council on Indian
20 Education. He references a Redskins mascot,
21 and while this turn is more outwardly racist
22 than Indians, the reasons to change the mascot
23 reign true. Thank you for listening.

24 (AUDIO PLAYED)

25 MS. MATHIS: Sorry, your time is

1 up. Brian Moffitt. Veronica White will be on
2 deck next. Are either Brian or Veronica
3 present?

4 (NO RESPONSE)

5 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Then Diane
6 Woods would be up and Eric Wilcox would be on
7 deck. Are either Diane or Eric present?

8 (NO RESPONSE)

9 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Nikki Ridgeway
10 and then Louis Nudi.

11 (NO RESPONSE)

12 MS. MATHIS: Are either Nikki --
13 and then Gailann McKee will be on deck after
14 Mr. Nudi.

15 MR. NUDI: Good evening,
16 Superintendent Mannarino, Board President Ms.
17 Mathis, and Board members. I'm Lou Nudi, a
18 resident of 3322 Maple Drive, Ross Township, a
19 1957 graduate of West View High School.

20 The Indian was adopted as a
21 mascot -- I actually like to refer to it as a
22 symbol -- by the West View Junior/Senior High
23 School in 1930. I understand it said
24 somewhere in the news today that it was a
25 mascot for 94 years. I don't know how that

1 happened, but as far as I know, West View High
2 School had its first graduating class in 1939.

3 The North Hills (indiscernible)
4 Indians will be known forever for their
5 bravery and tenacity by American youth.
6 Legend and lore was passed on to the youth in
7 the area in the classroom, in three Boy Scout
8 troops and three Cub Scout troops located in
9 West View and Ross Township.

10 Indians (indiscernible) presence
11 in North Hills. They drove (indiscernible)
12 first attempt to settle. His land
13 (indiscernible) as a result of revolutionary
14 war services. He later returned and settled
15 on what is now Georgetown Avenue in West View
16 and at the same time settlers established the
17 church at Hiland Presbyterian Church in
18 (indiscernible).

19 The reason (indiscernible)
20 settlements is they wanted to obtain access to
21 the forest and go up ground (indiscernible)
22 and known as West View and Ross. The center
23 of the hunting grounds is now what is Highland
24 Estates.

25 As the youth remember, Highland

1 Country Club excavated for whatever reasons.
2 My friend and I would go sift through the pile
3 of earth looking for arrowheads. After
4 several attempts and lots of searching, I
5 found three arrowheads. This is my --

6 MS. MATHIS: I'm sorry. Your time
7 is up, Mr. Nudi.

8 MR. NUDI: Is that it?

9 MS. MATHIS: Yes. I'm sorry.
10 Gailann McKee, and Barbara Galbraith.

11 MS. MCKEE: Good evening, all. My
12 name is Gailann McKee. I lived in Ross
13 Township all of my life except for my military
14 service. I returned to North Hills to raise
15 my four children, and all have either
16 graduated or attended North Hills.

17 I am (indiscernible) stands for
18 the honor, pride, and respect of our
19 (indiscernible). However, I feel that the
20 school board has already made its decision. I
21 believe that that the 500,000-plus dollars
22 that it would cost to revamp the school could
23 go to so many more pressing issues; more
24 counseling for elementary school, middle
25 school, and high school so that the elementary

1 school does not have one per building and
2 there's one per grade.

3 There is an exceptional amount of
4 depression, anxiety, and PTSD from COVID in
5 this area. Increasing the number of nurses
6 per building to care for our children instead
7 of having one nurse care for multiple
8 buildings. Hire (indiscernible) for the
9 elementary school so the principals can
10 complete their jobs.

11 Provide after-school programs to
12 support working and single parents. Bring
13 back after-school clubs such as homework club.
14 Hire more teachers to reduce the class size.
15 Several teachers retired this year or left
16 altogether due to burnout.

17 Ross Township continues to build
18 housing developments. Schools will become
19 overcrowded. Hire more ESL teachers for the
20 increasing number of English as a Second
21 Language students. Hire more special
22 education and learning support teachers to
23 support staff to provide support for their
24 students with IEPs and learning disabilities.

25 Remember "No Child Left Behind."

1 Hire more math support teachers to assist our
2 children currently in elementary school.
3 Hire more resource officers to reduce violence
4 towards teachers and staff and students and
5 prevent school violence.

6 Promote (indiscernible)
7 resolutions and bullying interventions instead
8 of having our school on the news for fights.
9 (Indiscernible) in the IT department for
10 multiple members of the team have left, which
11 leaves three support people to cover six
12 buildings. After --

13 MS. MATHIS: I'm sorry. Your
14 time's up.

15 MS. MCKEE: Thank you.

16 MS. MATHIS: Barbara Galbraith.
17 And Amy Bialek, you're up next. Are either
18 Barbara or Amy here?

19 (NO RESPONSE)

20 MS. MATHIS: And after Amy is
21 Daniel Munch.

22 MS. BIALEK: Good evening. My
23 name is Amy Bialek. I'm a North Hills
24 resident, alumni, and veteran educator. Being
25 a teacher is my greatest joy in life. It's

1 also my biggest responsibility. Teachers
2 today are faced with unprecedented challenges.

3 Every day has potential for
4 laughter, learning (indiscernible) and death.
5 Yes, death. The increase in violence,
6 especially school students, weighs heavily on
7 all of our minds. As I look into my students'
8 eyes, I see their stories, who and what they
9 love from their third favorite dinosaur, the
10 stuffed animal they sleep with, to the
11 families supporting and guiding them.

12 Each heartbeat in my class has its
13 own special rhythm. Some of them are full of
14 support and love while others come to school
15 hungry, tired, and scared.

16 We as the North Hills community of
17 educators are learning more and more about the
18 impact of trauma. Some of our students come
19 to me with stories that break my heart,
20 stories of families who struggle. The impact
21 this trauma has on the (indiscernible) carries
22 all throughout a person's life.

23 We as a school district
24 acknowledge the impact of intergenerational
25 trauma. One of the examples our school

1 psychologist cited is ongoing
2 intergenerational trauma as Native American
3 (indiscernible). Native children were forced
4 to be removed from their families in this
5 effort to make them more white.

6 They were stripped of their
7 clothes, their hair was cut, they were not
8 allowed to communicate in their given
9 language. Many students died of disease,
10 malnourishment, and abuse. How can we as a
11 community say that we want to honor the Native
12 Americans by making them a mascot?

13 (Indiscernible) from Native
14 American boarding schools are only now
15 beginning to be realized. How can this be an
16 honor to their families, their community?

17 How can we say that human beings
18 as a mascot when we knowingly and freely
19 killed them in an effort to make them more
20 like us?

21 Tonight we sit here and say who
22 this matters to and why. When I look at my
23 students and see their eyes, I am entrusted
24 with their stories. I cannot knowingly bring
25 pain, increase trauma in a space that is

1 supposed to be safe.

2 MS. MATHIS: I'm sorry. Your
3 time's up.

4 MS. BIALEK: Thank you.

5 (CLAPPING)

6 MS. MATHIS: I'm going to ask that
7 we please hold our applause after comments.
8 Daniel Munch and Marlene Schnorr, are either
9 of you present? And if not, Kathleen Kabbert
10 would be next. And then Donna Egan after
11 that.

12 MS. KABBERT: Good evening. As a
13 Native American woman of (indiscernible) Tribe
14 with two children in the North Hills High
15 School, I am regularly confronted with mascot
16 images that dehumanized Native American
17 people. This type of negative stereotyping is
18 particularly deceptive in educational
19 institutions as it normalizes the
20 dehumanizations of Native American people.
21 (Indiscernible) uses mascots and
22 (indiscernible) that it is acceptable to
23 participate in the culturally abusive
24 behavior.

25 The American Psychological

1 Association studied to see what facts Native
2 American mascots have on native and not native
3 people. The results of the study came in 2005
4 when the APA called for the immediate
5 retirement of all Native American mascots from
6 schools, universities, and associations.

7 The reason behind this is wrong
8 and undermines the educational experiences of
9 all communities, especially those that have
10 little to no contact with Native American
11 people. It teaches non-native children it is
12 acceptable to participate in culturally
13 abusive behavior and perpetuate inaccurate
14 misconceptions of Native American cultures.
15 It establishes an unhealthy learning
16 environment for Native American students.
17 These mascots affirm negative imagery and
18 stereotypes that are promoted by mainstream
19 society. It is found that these mascots have
20 an extremely negative impact on the
21 self-esteem of Native American students.
22 Three, it represents stereotypical Native
23 American imagery that is not representative of
24 who we are. If schools could develop strong
25 relationships with the local tribes to embrace

1 their culture rather than (indiscernible)
2 mascot seems to be a discriminatory symbol.
3 We've come to educational tools for deeper
4 understanding. In some instances sports
5 organizations seem to have good intentions to
6 the Native American culture mascots to honor
7 the community. Wouldn't it be --

8 MS. MATHIS: Your two minutes are
9 up. Donna Egan and Fawn Mullinary. Are
10 either of you present?

11 (NO RESPONSE)

12 MS. MATHIS: And if not, moving on
13 to Nikki Schuller and Diane Carlisle.

14 (NO RESPONSE)

15 MS. MATHIS: And Darlene Carlisle.
16 It doesn't seem like any of those people are
17 present. Zachary Bopp? Cynthia Richey
18 Miller?

19 (NO RESPONSE)

20 MS. MATHIS: Nick Colaizzi?
21 Sheridan Robinson or Lisa Reinhardt, are
22 either present?

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24 MS. MATHIS: Kaden Salvatore or
25 Melinda Roedler?

1 (NO RESPONSE)
2 MS. MATHIS: Rowan Stelmach?
3 (NO RESPONSE)
4 MS. MATHIS: Belinda Redpath?
5 (NO RESPONSE)
6 MS. MATHIS: Olivia Duty?
7 (NO RESPONSE)
8 MS. MATHIS: Matthew Pfennig?
9 (NO RESPONSE)
10 MS. MATHIS: Cindy Schatzman or
11 Holly Schnorr?
12 (NO RESPONSE)
13 MS. MATHIS: Angela Craft?
14 (NO RESPONSE)
15 MS. MATHIS: Mike Hetzler?
16 (NO RESPONSE)
17 MS. MATHIS: Jenna O'Connor?
18 (NO RESPONSE)
19 MS. MATHIS: Randi Mueller?
20 (NO RESPONSE)
21 MS. MATHIS: Doug Crowley?
22 (NO RESPONSE)
23 MS. MATHIS: Heather DiConstanzo?
24 (NO RESPONSE)
25 MS. MATHIS: Harry Lydic?

1 MR. LYDIC: My name Harry Lydic.
2 My wife and I, Dorothy, have been residents of
3 Ross Township and North Hills School District
4 for over 57 years. Matthew, Marsha, and Misha
5 (phonetic), our children, graduated from North
6 Hills High School.

7 As someone who has served in the
8 United States Marine Corps, let me tell you
9 about some Indians that were Marines and
10 served our country with honor.

11 These Indians were known as the
12 Navajo Code Talkers. I have a picture here.
13 This was Corporal Patterson who was the last
14 of the Navajo Code Talkers and passed away at
15 the age of 93.

16 The Navajo Indians served with
17 honor, (indiscernible), and bravery during
18 World War II. The United States Marines
19 selected many Navajo men who were known as the
20 Navajo Code Talkers to serve and take on very
21 dangerous missions.

22 These Navajo Indians created a
23 code based on the complex, unwritten, Navajo
24 language. The code used word association by
25 assigning Navajo words to key phrases and

1 military tactics.

2 This system enabled the code
3 proctors to translate three lines of code in
4 20 seconds rather than 30 minutes with the
5 normal code (indiscernible) machine. The
6 Navajo code proctors served the front lines
7 and risked their lives every day.

8 Even at the end of war, the Navajo
9 code remained unbroken by the enemy forces.
10 The Navajo code proctors saved hundreds and
11 thousands of lives, maybe the life of one of
12 your relatives, and maybe that's why you're
13 here today.

14 We should thank and honor the
15 Navajo Indian warriors who made the ultimate
16 sacrifices for our freedom. They used their
17 culture and their tribal language to send
18 secret messages on the battlefield. I am sure
19 these Navajo Indians would be grateful that we
20 honor their service and dedications to this
21 great country.

22 What better way to honor these
23 Navajo Indians than to have the devotion, the
24 dedication, and be remembered as part of the
25 North Hills Indians.

1 (CLAPPING)

2 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Your
3 time's up. Julie Zahratka. And Kerry Lyden
4 would be next.

5 MS. ZAHRATKA: Hi. I'm a North
6 Hills alumni, resident, and have children in
7 the district. I understand that for a lot of
8 people the mascot is important. When I think
9 of my time at North Hills, the mascot's not a
10 part of it. It's not what defines us, but so
11 many other things.

12 When I think of North Hills, I
13 think of the amazing teachers I had and my
14 daughter now has. I think of Mr. Miller's US
15 History class where I learned that the entire
16 point of learning history is to learn and grow
17 from the past.

18 I have a master's in social work,
19 and there I have learned to think about things
20 like how the use of our language impacts us.
21 It influences the way we all think about
22 certain topics, and this is why I believe it's
23 time to retire the mascot.

24 I don't think we need
25 (indiscernible) the Indians. I think instead

1 we can be proud of the fact that we've now
2 decided to move on from the name based on what
3 we have learned.

4 On June 8, 2020, an article called
5 "The Psychological Effects of Native American
6 Mascots," a comprehensive (indiscernible),
7 historical research findings was published. I
8 wanted to read a summary of their findings to
9 you to consider making your decision.

10 Although most people in the U.S.
11 don't perceive using Native American mascots
12 as problematic, all of the academic studies
13 undertaken to study the psychosocial effects
14 as the mascots demonstrate either direct
15 negative effects on Native Americans or that
16 these mascots activate, reflect, or reinforce
17 theory of hating and prejudice among
18 non-native persons.

19 The review describes the negative
20 psychological effects for native students, in
21 particular, lower self-esteem, lower community
22 worth, less (indiscernible)
23 achievement-related possible (indiscernible),
24 and greater level of its negative effect.

25 As (indiscernible) honor Native

1 Americans, the author wrote that there was no
2 evidence from any study in Native American
3 mascots that showed positive or beneficial
4 psychosocial effects for Native Americans.
5 Thank you for your time.

6 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Kerry
7 Lyden and Emily Baron would be next.

8 MS. LYDEN: Why? Why now? The
9 students of North Hills need us parents and
10 you as the school board to now do our job,
11 which is everything in our power to protect
12 and guide them along the road to success.

13 The mission statement of the North
14 Hills School District reads as follows:
15 To prepare each student to become a
16 responsible global citizen by focusing equally
17 on personal development and intellectual
18 growth. After the past two years, we need to
19 help our children now more than ever.

20 There is so much more we can spend
21 our tax dollars on to help the students of
22 North Hills, such as bring D.A.R.E. back, have
23 and execute anti-bullying programs in all
24 schools.

25 A few more counselors to help the

1 anxiety and depression students have
2 experienced as a result of COVID. Bring in
3 speakers to talk to the kids about their
4 successes and obstacles they have to overcome.

5 Get students who have received
6 grades E's and F's caught up academically.
7 And to me the most important is security. If
8 you honestly think all these Columbine
9 circumstances cannot happen in North Hills,
10 just listen to the parents at one of these
11 devastating tragedies. I'm sure that's what
12 they thought, too, the days they sent their
13 kids to school. Have we considered the
14 possibility of even adding metal detectors to
15 our schools?

16 Have you as a school board looked
17 into all clubs to change everything that has
18 an Indian on it? It will cost hundreds of
19 thousands, if not millions, of dollars, to
20 change things like gym floors in the senior
21 high, the two here at the middle school,
22 signage around the district, uniforms and
23 countless Indian references that would need to
24 be changed.

25 Our tax dollars should be and need

1 to be spent on helping our children now. The
2 use of our tax dollars to address the Indian
3 mascot situation goes against our jobs as
4 parents and as a school board.

5 Remember the North Hills School
6 District mission is to prepare students for
7 the future with personal development and
8 intellectual growth. Thank you.

9 (CLAPPING)

10 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Again,
11 I'm going to ask you please hold your
12 applause. Emily Baron. And then Lauren
13 Hergert will be on deck.

14 MS. BARON: The North Hills
15 community, under the definition of the School
16 Board's nondiscrimination, anti --
17 (indiscernible) policies, the Indian head
18 mascot is (indiscernible) individuals and
19 based on their race and (indiscernible) which
20 are protected classifications of people in
21 this policy. The (indiscernible) is harmful
22 and humiliating and based on (indiscernible)
23 found on district property, we can certainly
24 say that we acted severe, persistent, and
25 pervasive.

1 Even if you wish to ignore the
2 impact on those who are profoundly affected,
3 you cannot deny this Town Hall (indiscernible)
4 and has brought out the worst in this
5 community, dividing it deeply.

6 The mascot no longer meets
7 documentary cited definitions of the unifying
8 symbol, therefore making it clear that under
9 (indiscernible), a large percentage of this
10 district's population is not welcome here.
11 This is about the future of our district and
12 the children will receive their education
13 here.

14 North Hills values our pride,
15 tradition, and excellence. Tradition not in a
16 mascot, but providing equitable education for
17 all, and excellence, to consider the best
18 interest of students first, to encourage
19 innovation, risk-taking and resiliency, and to
20 foster corroboration for continuous
21 improvement, all of which we can demonstrate
22 here tonight. And we must admit that we are
23 presenting our children to a paradox in the
24 form of a racist symbol that undercuts all of
25 our efforts to teach the essential values. We

1 must find a way forward to grow a community
2 with mature behavior and not hold on to
3 outdated symbols. This is a teachable moment
4 not to cast shame upon ourselves but where we
5 can celebrate our ability to change and grow
6 as a community, remembering what was,
7 appreciating what's here, and celebrating what
8 is to come. The change of the mascot is
9 fitting as who we are as a community and our
10 ability to adapt and thrive with constant
11 change. My goal as a parent is to give my
12 child better than I had, a better education,
13 opportunities and, more importantly, better
14 values than the ones (indiscernible). This
15 means (indiscernible) notions of
16 colorblindness, removing symbols and
17 traditions that are problematic and --

18 MS. MATHIS: Sorry. Your time's
19 up. Lauren Hergert. And Sarah Fleming is on
20 deck.

21 MS. HERGERT: This is not an issue
22 about being politically correct. This is not
23 an issue about being offended. This
24 perception often comes from people of
25 privilege that are unable to comprehend what

1 racial pressure is, what it actually feels
2 like to experience and suffer from it.

3 This perspective (indiscernible)
4 to dismiss the issue and insisting that
5 betraying these negative stereotypes and
6 victims are merely an issue of political
7 correctness about (indiscernible) opposing
8 views on the issue.

9 However, the reality of the
10 situation is that the usage of these Indian
11 images despite the repeated objections from
12 First Nation communities causes serious risk
13 and negative consequences. If a cultural
14 community is telling you it is wrong, you
15 don't get to say no. You do not get to tell
16 this community you are being too sensitive or
17 taking a situation too personally.

18 The people who have privilege do
19 not get to decide what should or should not
20 offend First Nation citizens. You cannot say
21 that Indian mascots aren't racist because you
22 personally aren't offended. That is your
23 privilege. The fact of the matter is that
24 hundreds of tribal nations, national and
25 regional tribal organizations, civil rights

1 organizations, and individuals have pleaded
2 for the end to harmful Indian mascots. First
3 Nation individuals have their own sports
4 teams, and yet you won't see them in feathered
5 headdresses covered in war paint. You won't
6 see them chanting in war song or be portrayed
7 with tomahawk chops, because real Indians
8 don't do that.

9 So why should white people have
10 the right to trade these actions? We are not
11 honoring them. Honor assumes that the
12 receiving party feels something positive such
13 as pride at the association, not to mention it
14 implies respect for something and harassment
15 and bullying towards anti-mascot protestors
16 has clearly demonstrated that their voices are
17 not respected. And if this community tells
18 you it's not an honor, then it is not an
19 honor. If you feel so strongly about honoring
20 First Nations people, then spend time with
21 these people and listen to their stories
22 and --

23 MS. MATHIS: Sorry. Time's up.
24 Thank you. Sarah Fleming. And Melissa
25 Plotnich is on deck.

1 MS. FLEMING: I would like to
2 begin by reading the e-mail I received from
3 Jess Sprimaker (phonetic), the public liaison
4 for the LENOTI (phonetic) Nations, PA.

5 "Thank you for reaching out. This
6 issue has become central in our society.
7 Tribal Counsel has discussed the matter and
8 produced this (indiscernible). We prefer not
9 to be used as a mascot or logo in any form,
10 regarding honoring us in a way we feel that
11 too often mascots and logos contain harmful
12 stereotypes or misrepresentations of our
13 people or cultures. However, even if they do
14 not, it still tends to root us in the past,
15 solidifying us as a historical exhibit rather
16 than a living people. The National Congress
17 of American Indians, American Indian College
18 Fund, Association on Indian Affairs, and
19 numerous other tribal counsel have
20 specifically stated the mascots like ours are
21 harmful."

22 James Earl Gray, former chief of
23 the Association wrote mascots exaggerate our
24 images and make fun of our culture. Where is
25 the power and acceptance to characterize us in

1 such a demeaning way come from?

2 I suggest it comes from a place of
3 colonial imperialism that allows someone else
4 to determine who we are, what we are, and what
5 we should know or not know about our own
6 history. The power to manufacture
7 dehumanizing images comes from a society that
8 ignores all of our contributions except that
9 which has been invented of us. We have been
10 rewritten, redefined, and repackaged by
11 academia, media, governments, and industry.

12 The Indian mascot from Hollywood
13 fairytales recast us as the noble,
14 bloodthirsty savage in an effort to make us so
15 unrealistic that we will go away. I say
16 enough. The bottom line, folks, is it's not
17 up to us to decide if our mascot honors Native
18 Americans. It's for Native Americans to
19 decide, and they have consistently said it
20 does not honor them. I have faith in this
21 community, and I love this community, and I
22 know that we will listen to native people and
23 change our mascot into something we can all be
24 proud of. Thank you.

25 MS. MATHIS: Melissa Plotnick.

1 And Lindsay Bromberg will be on deck.

2 MS. PLOTNICK: Good evening. I've
3 been a resident -- my husband and I have been
4 residents for the past six years, and we are
5 thrilled that our oldest is going to be
6 attending kindergarden this fall. He's so
7 excited. But the mascot is kind of a place
8 where my husband and I have a little hesitance
9 about this. Part of the vision of the school
10 district is to be inclusive. But you have to
11 be more than just say that. You have to act
12 on it. Words are meaningless without
13 following through on it.

14 So what are we teaching our
15 children if we say to be inclusive but we're
16 not following through? Having the Indians as
17 a mascot (indiscernible) a thing of the past,
18 a novelty, but they're not, they're very much
19 present today with us. They're a great
20 culture that should be respected. We have to
21 show that we can be inclusive to all people.
22 We have to show respect for everyone.

23 It's time for a change of the
24 mascot. Change can be difficult but change is
25 a part of the life. We can change and we

1 need a change for the better. Thank you.

2 MS. MATHIS: Lindsay Brombert.
3 And Olav Carter is on deck. Are either of you
4 here?

5 (NO RESPONSE)

6 MS. MATHIS: Okay. We'll move on
7 to Kendall Miller. And Traci Brown would be
8 on deck.

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Moving on to
11 John Hoffman, Junior, with Laureen Wallace on
12 deck.

13 MR. HOFFMAN: Yes, I do represent
14 a group this evening. My name is John
15 Hoffman, a lifelong resident of the district
16 and a graduate of North Hills High School,
17 living here for more than half a century.

18 There is a growing trend in
19 today's world to rewrite history, erase the
20 symbols from our past. The travesty here is
21 to forget history. Those who forget it are
22 doomed to relive it. None of us are perfect,
23 with the exceptional, notable one, Jesus.

24 Rather than learn from our
25 mistakes and carry on, we use these symbols as

1 a remembrance. Yes, there were terrible
2 things done to the Indians, but now they
3 represent a place of honor, bravery. I hear
4 folks here this evening stating just the
5 opposite. Our mascot symbolizes pride,
6 honor, and courage, all attributes which we
7 seek to obtain in our own lives.

8 Those who chose the Indian as a
9 mascot were showing a deep appreciation for
10 Native Americans. Don't erase this symbol, a
11 reminder of our lives.

12 Furthermore, rebranding our mascot
13 comes with an extremely high price tag. I
14 heard it mentioned here that it's not that
15 much. But it's (indiscernible) always to
16 start. It's a lot. It's very important to
17 consider the use of those funds. We do have a
18 school that is being remodeled here shortly.

19 One thing you have to remember is
20 to teach our students history, the good and
21 the bad. There have been statues of Columbus
22 that have been torn down because Columbus did
23 bad things. Columbus did some good things,
24 too. Many things are named after him. The
25 same with other brave citizens such as

1 Aunt Jemima. Also Uncle Ben and one of the
2 stars of the great movie who played Ben. All
3 of those symbols have been erased from
4 history. These people did great things.
5 Thank you very much.

6 MS. MATHIS: Laureen Wallace and
7 then Christopher Fromme is on deck. Are
8 either of you present?

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 MS. MATHIS: Okay. And then
11 Michael Spinelli will be on deck next.

12 MS. WALLACE: Hello. My name is
13 Maureen Wallace and I'm an alumni and a
14 resident of Ross Township. Loyalty,
15 tradition, pride, and honor, they're just a
16 few words that describe us, what it is to be a
17 North Hills Indian. There's no disrespect or
18 malice intended to a community whose history
19 is very deep in the earth in the North Hills.
20 I don't know about you, but as a student when
21 I hear the name called from a loudspeaker, I
22 felt nothing but pride. And as an alumnist I
23 feel honored to stand before you this day and
24 still feel the same. No disrespect for a
25 nation of people, no malice, just pride.

1 The Indian name was chosen to
2 honor, not disrespect, a nation of people. No
3 malice, just pride. The descendants I've had
4 the pleasure of talking to find the logo
5 beautifully done, no matter what some say.

6 Why would you ban so easily to
7 today's cancel culture and change the name
8 that would, in essence, erase Native
9 Americans? I feel the few who want to name
10 change are the ones who made it feel
11 derogatory and disrespectful.

12 My tax dollars could be better
13 spent for security for our students and
14 faculty, mental health assistance for our
15 students, perhaps seat belts in our school
16 busses. A well-rounded education with school
17 experience. I, for one, don't think taxpayer
18 dollars should be spent for rebranding,
19 reassigning, and erasing because, let's be
20 honest, we're the ones paying the bill at a
21 cost of half a million dollars.

22 By the way, the sign at the
23 entrance is a legacy signage from past classes
24 and I don't feel that the school board should
25 be speaking on behalf of indigenous people.

1 Thank you.

2 (CLAPPING)

3 MS. MATHIS: Christopher Fromme.

4 And Michael Spinelli on deck.

5 MR. FROMME: My name is
6 Christopher Fromme, a Ross Township taxpayer
7 for more than 30 years that currently pays
8 over \$6,000 in property taxes for three houses
9 in Ross.

10 Changing the Indian logo will be a
11 financial nightmare, as costs will be over a
12 half a million dollars. Each year the millage
13 rate goes up because the cost to run the
14 schools increases. And by law, the Board can
15 only vote for millage increases set by law.

16 So if the Indian logo is replaced,
17 will the Board cut a half a million dollars
18 from other places? That's a question that
19 needs to be addressed.

20 Also, I know that people move to
21 Ross Township because in the past they knew
22 their kids would get a quality education in
23 the North Hills School District. Do not let
24 that change because of making poor financial
25 decisions.

1 (CLAPPING)

2 MS. MATHIS: Michael Spinelli.

3 And then Katlynn White.

4 MR. SPINELLI: Yes, so everyone's
5 entitled to their opinion here, whether if you
6 are offended or you're not. But that's all it
7 is, is an opinion. It doesn't make it a fact.
8 It doesn't make it true. I would suggest you
9 learn from what the (indiscernible) has
10 presented at the recent school board meeting.
11 Ask them first instead of, you know, jumping
12 on some social band wagon du jour. See what
13 they feel. Bring on some tribal leaders from
14 western Pennsylvania tribes and Indian
15 Nations, chiefs, if you will, and see what
16 they actually feel.

17 If not, talk to the University of
18 Utah or Florida State University. They went
19 to the Youth Nation and the Seminal Nation,
20 and they're proud and honored to be depicted
21 the way they are at those universities.

22 The Indian represents discipline,
23 integrity, a warrior spirit, honor, duty, all
24 the things that our kids today could certainly
25 benefit from rather than iPads and

1 electronics.

2 So if you can't find those
3 people -- you know, in the end it really
4 doesn't matter what a bunch of white people
5 think. It matters what the Indian Nation
6 feels. That's what you need to do. That's
7 what you need to look at.

8 MS. MATHIS: Katlynn White. And
9 Emmanuel Viray will be on deck. Are either of
10 you present?

11 (NO RESPONSE)

12 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Jean
13 Batykefer. And Wehonna Toth would be on deck.

14 MS. TOTH: (Indiscernible) My name
15 is Wehonna Toth and I'm a (indiscernible)
16 Nation Tribal member, and I'm here to
17 represent one of the tribal nations from
18 western Pennsylvania. So, hi. I would just
19 like to give a little voice to the native
20 people and represent others that are not here
21 to speak on their behalf. So I would like to
22 say that -- I'm not going to be here to give
23 you a history lesson, but instead I would just
24 like to say that it is a little condescending
25 still seeing a mascot that represent so-called

1 then Mark Stanko is on deck. Are either of
2 you present?

3 (NO RESPONSE)

4 MS. MATHIS: Okay. Sharon Assisi.
5 And then Michelle (sic) Boyle would be next.
6 Oh, Michael Boyle. I'm sorry. I apologize.

7 MR. BOYLE: Not a problem. I'm a
8 resident of North Hills. I have two children
9 in the district right now. One just graduated
10 a couple years ago. It's time to retire the
11 mascot. It is culture appropriation. It is
12 not upon us to say whether or not a Native
13 American mascot is appropriate for us because
14 we don't -- because we aren't being derogatory
15 towards it. It's not our decision. It is the
16 decision of the Native American People.

17 The term "Indian" has so many
18 negative connotations that cross history.
19 Like was mentioned, the Indian schools. The
20 preservations themself displacing people,
21 putting them in some place that was not their
22 home and taking that land from them.

23 It's -- these are things that we
24 need to grow and move on from. You know, we
25 don't need to forget them. We don't need to

1 bury them in the past, but we need to learn
2 that we can do better. Someone mentioned a
3 mission statement about being better global
4 citizens. Being a global citizen means
5 respecting everyone around you and all nations
6 and all peoples.

7 Not that traditions should be
8 maintained. There are bad traditions and
9 there are things that it's time to grow and
10 move on from. Someone mentioned Disney, the
11 marching band not being able to wear their
12 uniforms. That's not going to that change.
13 There's just going to be more and more places
14 that this symbolism will not be appropriate,
15 and that will limit what our children can and
16 cannot do, what they can and cannot attend.

17 And someone else said students
18 aren't defined by their mascots. They are
19 North Hills students. They are not Indians.
20 They are North Hills students and that's what
21 they define themselves as. It's time for us
22 to move on from that mascot and find something
23 new. I don't know what it is, but I would be
24 happy to help someone learn and help find
25 something for the future. Thank you.

1 MS. MATHIS: Your time is up.
2 Thank you. James Dames is up next, and then
3 Ethan Gentile is on deck.

4 MR. DAMES: First off, I would
5 like to thank you for taking the opportunity
6 to hear from the community regarding this
7 issue. I have lived in the North Hills School
8 District my entire life, and I'm a graduate of
9 the 2001 class, and I have two children
10 enrolled in the upcoming school year. I was
11 so inundated with the imagery and tradition of
12 the Indian mascot during my time as a student
13 that it all seemed normal, and it wasn't until
14 I was removed from that environment and
15 expanded my world view that I realized the
16 school mascot was problematic.

17 As has been made clear by many
18 speakers earlier, there are plenty of
19 resources documenting the harmful impact these
20 practices and stereotypes were caused
21 regardless of the intent behind their use, as
22 well as numerous indigenous groups that make
23 it clear that the appropriation of their
24 heritage and culture is offensive and
25 demeaning. This does not bring pride to our

1 community.

2 We do not have to claim
3 responsibility or ill guilt for the choices
4 made by those that came before us, but we are
5 responsible for continuing to choose inaction
6 rather than attempting to right a longstanding
7 wrong. This meeting isn't about wokeness or
8 Disney coming after our school from the
9 outside. We are the parents, citizens, and
10 taxpayers of our community asking for us all
11 to do better because we know better.

12 We can make the choice to be
13 counted among those who welcomed repairing the
14 mistakes of the past. Let's make the right
15 decision rather than the most cost-effective
16 decision. Holding on to traditions rooted in
17 the oppression of another group of people does
18 not bring pride to our community.

19 I urge you to take immediate
20 action and change the North Hills mascot and
21 squad names that entail student involvement.
22 Thank you.

23 MS. MATHIS: Ethan Gentile. And
24 Carol Nowark would be on deck.

25 MR. GENTILE: Hello. My name is

1 Ethan Gentile. I'm a North Hills graduate of
2 the class of 2018 alumni. I'm against
3 rebranding the North Hills Indian logo. I
4 would like to draw the attention to the
5 opportunity cost of making this change.

6 Spending money on the logo
7 rebranding means that the school district is
8 choosing a nonissue over its children's
9 education, school security, and its motto.

10 First, changing the Indian head
11 logo means that the district is directing its
12 resources to something other than students and
13 education. Everyone knows that the students'
14 educational development has suffered
15 throughout the lockdown (indiscernible).

16 While many (indiscernible) were
17 temporarily suspended, the National Bureau of
18 Economic Research said that (indiscernible)
19 declined 42 percent on average from 2020/2021.
20 Rather than working to improve academic
21 excellence, supporters of this change would
22 rather focus on a cultural crusade.

23 Secondly, the school's
24 prioritizing the logo rebrand over the
25 security of our students. Our school children

1 are unofficially protected against threats.
2 Every year there are numbers of tragedies
3 occurring in classrooms. Highlighting
4 (indiscernible) is a necessity to the
5 increased spending already in schools.

6 (Indiscernible) have demonstrated
7 the insufficiency of local police
8 (indiscernible) involving taxes. Either way,
9 the rebranding is showing more of a concern
10 for the logo than ensuring the safety of their
11 students. Lastly, the school's motto; pride,
12 tradition, and excellence.

13 How can you have pride when the
14 allegations are that a district's logo is
15 racist and their (indiscernible) school
16 symbolizes racism? How can you preserve
17 tradition by changing the Indian head
18 (indiscernible)? How you can further
19 excellence when (indiscernible) opportunity
20 and security?

21 Overall, the Indian head
22 rebranding only serves its supporters' moral
23 high ground without actually accomplishing
24 anything (indiscernible) students while
25 simultaneously seeking knowledge from these

1 real benefits. (Indiscernible) moral
2 authority include privilege, racism, and many
3 other ones which have been demonstrated here
4 tonight. Thank you for your time.

5 (CLAPPING)

6 MS. MATHIS: Please hold your
7 applause. Carol Nowark. And Barbara Stull is
8 on deck. Carol -- okay. Moving down the
9 list, Valerie Mahathey.

10 MS. STULL: Sorry. It takes me a
11 long time to get to the microphone. My name
12 is Barbara Stull. I am happy to say that I
13 graduated from West View High School, the
14 Class of 1958, and happily our class has
15 maintained very strong connections through
16 these 60-plus years, primarily, through the
17 work of our (indiscernible) committee, which I
18 am an active member. We are planning a Class
19 of '58 class reunion this September.

20 Now, my brother Jim Steigerwald,
21 now a retired Pennsylvania State Trooper and
22 former Marine, graduated from North Hills High
23 School in 1963. My sister Alexis graduated in
24 1980, and my daughter Sandra graduated from
25 North Hills High School in 1983.

1 Now, none of us ever, including my
2 former classmates, my family, ever, ever
3 considered the term "Indian" to be demeaning
4 or derogatory. Instead, we considered it a
5 symbol of strength, courage, and bravery.

6 Also, secondly I would like to say
7 I've been a Ross Township taxpayer since 1966,
8 and I really think this is a misuse of our
9 hard-earned tax dollars. Surely our
10 hard-earned money could be spent to enrich the
11 curriculum, provide safety measures for the
12 school and other much more important measures.
13 Thank you for your time and attention.

14 (CLAPPING)

15 MS. MATHIS: Valerie Mahathey.
16 And Dale Dunlap is on deck. Are Valerie or
17 Dale present?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 MS. MATHIS: Okay.

20 MR. DUNLAP: My son was born in
21 Pittsburgh and just finished first grade in
22 Industry (phonetic). He loves it and
23 (indiscernible) to the staff members making
24 school a good experience for him. I
25 (indiscernible) I've lived here for most of my

1 life, and my appearing here seems to blend in
2 pretty well. It only takes a few sentences
3 coming out of my mouth for people to notice
4 I'm not quite from these parts.

5 Even though my experiences are
6 (indiscernible), are a far cry from what other
7 minority groups endure. I can't help feeling
8 solidarity with the flight to fight against
9 any and all forms of discriminations and
10 propagations and negative bureaucrats.

11 I didn't go through the American
12 school district firsthand, but I want my son
13 to get the full experience. I want to support
14 him in being part of the school district's
15 community without compromising my own values
16 of humanity.

17 Finally, for those concerned about
18 the costs, please consider how many more
19 shirts and hats you could sell if the logo
20 didn't feel harmful to our community. Thank
21 you.

22 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Matthew
23 Huffmyer. And Helen Bisers would be on deck.

24 MS. BISERS: Thank you for your
25 service as school directors. I have owned my

1 home in West View for almost 15 years. I've
2 lived 95 percent of my life in the North
3 Hills. I was a Shaler (indiscernible) and my
4 first children were (indiscernible). Now
5 that's an easy mascot. Until I moved to this
6 district, I was a watcher of North Hills.
7 Because of the prideful (indiscernible) to our
8 north, NA, we were all underdogs. But that
9 was the definition that North Hills seemed to
10 take, humble, hardworking, and making the best
11 of everyone.

12 I got to see this close up when I
13 did my student teaching in North Hills Junior
14 High 12 years ago, mostly 9th graders.
15 (Indiscernible) work really hard, but we also
16 had the kids who needed extra work on algebra
17 for two periods with two teachers. And in
18 North Hills there was a real commit to the
19 narrative that everybody counts. 9th graders,
20 they'll see what they can get away with,
21 bullying in the halls with someone smaller.
22 Kids stepping over the line with a racial or
23 ethnic stereotype. But when an adult calls
24 them on it, tells them under no uncertain
25 terms that bullying and stereotyping doesn't

1 cut it here at North Hills, they take it to
2 heart.

3 They are looking to the adults in
4 their community to lead. So, school board,
5 lead. Show them that negative stereotypes
6 won't cut it here where everybody counts.
7 Thank you.

8 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Matthew
9 Huffmyer here. And then Douglas Patz.

10 MR. HUFFMYER: Thank you for
11 taking the time today to talk about this very
12 important issue. I graduated from North Hills
13 in 1988 and was a proud member of the band and
14 pride tradition and excellence. And I just
15 want to say I would like to say that the
16 school board should support keeping the
17 mascot, for several reasons. I'm not
18 necessarily concerned about the monetary
19 aspect, although it's important.

20 If we do have members in our
21 community who are offended, let them debate
22 the issue and find out why, rather than
23 sweeping away a mascot that does represent
24 pride, tradition, and excellence. It's a
25 positive repetition from time it was selected

1 46 years ago. I would like to put my vote in
2 to say let's keep it and let's not speak for
3 the challenges that we have (indiscernible)
4 and run by taking it away. Let's engage as a
5 community and find out where their pain is and
6 address it and go from there. Thank you very
7 much for your time.

8 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Douglas
9 Patz. And Damen Taylor is on deck.

10 MR. PATZ: Yes. My name is
11 Douglas Patz and I graduated from North Hills
12 in 1983. 1983, I had a pretty good education.
13 I would just say one thing, some things were
14 lacking in North Hills. The education could
15 have been a little bit better. One thing is
16 you can always do better. And speaking of
17 this particular one, I do share some of the
18 same aspects as John was talking before.
19 (Indiscernible) I've studied art history. I
20 think it is time to move on. But if we're
21 going to move on, I believe it should be over
22 time and save money, because there's so much
23 money that's going to be used in this, and
24 that money can be used for other programs that
25 are needed for safety in the school district,

1 for programs to help kids learn and to
2 improve.

3 I myself went through college and
4 I became a teacher. I worked at McKeesport
5 High School. We had no (indiscernible). We
6 had plans to do things. I think North Hills
7 can do better and be a good (indiscernible).
8 We can do just as well. So do what you can
9 with this mascot issue. I basically say if we
10 work together we can solve this issue. There
11 are a lot of good points tonight, I really
12 enjoy hearing everybody speaking on this
13 issue. But I think the most important thing
14 it comes down to is we have to think together,
15 work today, save money, and educate the
16 student. And when they walk out the doors,
17 then they can be proud and be able to handle
18 life better, be good citizens in their
19 community. Thank you.

20 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Damen
21 Taylor. And then Krista Kay is next on deck.

22 MR. TAYLOR: Good evening. I want
23 to thank the gentleman from McKeesport. I
24 appreciate it. I grew up in McKeesport, so
25 thank you very much. My name is Damen Taylor,

1 and I have two students, one who recently
2 graduated from North Hills class of 2022 and
3 one who is a 2022 alum from Highcliff
4 Elementary School and is going to middle
5 school. So I'm going to take my 1 minute and
6 42 seconds to do this.

7 Our nation was born genocide
8 (indiscernible) the Indian was an inferior
9 race. Even though a large number of
10 (indiscernible), the scars of racial hatred
11 had already disfigured colonial society. From
12 the 16th Century forward blood flooded from
13 the battlefields of racial supremacists. We
14 are perhaps the only nation (indiscernible)
15 its indigenous populations.

16 Moreover, they elevated that
17 tragedy experience with a mobile crusade and
18 being human today we have not permitted
19 ourselves to (indiscernible). Our literature,
20 our folks, our films, our drama and our
21 folklore were all (indiscernible). That is a
22 quote from Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King.

23 Ladies and gentlemen, in the 56
24 seconds that I have, let me explain to you why
25 this is not about a symbol. This is about

1 history. This is about tradition. This is
2 about, you know, all those things that this
3 gentleman spoke very eloquently about. But it
4 goes back to you, ma'am, the 1958
5 (indiscernible), and that was tradition and
6 that's not okay.

7 The American Indian serves as a
8 derogatory term, as one lady had spoke, and we
9 in this room have the obligation to be on the
10 right side of history. I totally agree that a
11 half a million dollars is a lot of money. I
12 totally agree that there a whole lot of other
13 things we could be spending our money on.
14 Let's be on the right side of history here.
15 Phase out the mascot and let our kids pick
16 one. My 11 year-old has five different names
17 for this school already, so let them do it.
18 Thank you for your time.

19 (CLAPPING)

20 MS. MATHIS: Krista Kay. And
21 Donald Alexander is on deck. Is either Krista
22 or Donald present?

23 (NO RESPONSE)

24 MS. MATHIS: Donald is on deck.

25 (NO RESPONSE)

1 MS. MATHIS: Donald?

2 MR. ALEXANDER: Good evening to
3 the school board and to members of the
4 community. My name is Don Alexander. My kids
5 are third generation to go through the North
6 Hills School District. My dad graduated in
7 the 60's. I graduated in the Class of '93,
8 and I have a daughter that graduates this year
9 and two others here in the school.

10 So I am truly a life-long resident
11 of the North Hills School District. As a
12 parent I'm proud you have academic rigor that
13 our teachers provide for my students, my
14 children. I'm very well proud of emphasis
15 placed upon the arts and the music in our
16 school district. But my pride for North Hills
17 School District has absolutely nothing to do
18 with the mascot, whether or not I am offended,
19 to me he is completely irrelevant in the
20 debate that we're having today.

21 The National Congress of American
22 Indians has asked schools and professional
23 teams to end the use of the Indian mascot.
24 They do not feel honored. Instead they
25 considered it a mockery of their culture.

1 And we know the NCAI, as someone else
2 mentioned, includes tribes who were from
3 western Pennsylvania.

4 I strongly believe that honoring
5 this request is the very least we can do for
6 people who have suffered and continue to
7 suffer from the long-term effects of genocide,
8 racism, and learn to practice respect,
9 compassion, and empathy of what I personally
10 value most about North Hills education and I
11 feel this is our opportunity to do just that
12 and to show some dignity and to make change
13 that's necessary and make the right decision
14 by changing the mascot. Thank you.

15 MS. MATHIS: Linda Rumin. And
16 Keith Watkins is on deck.

17 MS. RUMIN: Hello. As a
18 taxpayer, my concern with replacing the Indian
19 logo is monetary. During these times when
20 skyrocketing inflation, with gas prices
21 exceeding \$5 a gallon, spending over a half a
22 million dollars to change this mascot is
23 simply ludicrous.

24 As an alumni from the Bicentennial
25 Class of 1976, I'm simply appalled by what I'm

1 hearing and what is being said this evening.
2 The Indian, to us, is a symbol of pride and
3 strength. We drew encouragement from its
4 representation in our achievements, in our
5 sport, in our academics, and in life in
6 general. It's shameful to see how this
7 current thinking can take that innocence.

8 So what should our mascot be?
9 Should it be a cupcake? No, wait, wait.
10 People who are diabetic would be offended by
11 that. Well maybe a cute moo cow. No, no,
12 wait. They don't hurt anybody, but the
13 vegetarians would be offended by that. Don't
14 you get it? There's always going to be a
15 distortion if you allow a few people to dig
16 far enough. Everything is going to be
17 twisted, and that's what's being done here. I
18 say keep our Indian.

19 (CLAPPING)

20 MS. MATHIS: Keith Watkins is up
21 next, and then Jake Roberts is on deck.

22 (NO RESPONSE)

23 MS. MATHIS: Are either Keith or
24 Jake present?

25 (NO RESPONSE)

1 MS. MATHIS: Ryan Fleming, and
2 then Carol Butler would be on deck.

3 MR. FLEMING: The North Hills
4 whites. The North Hills blacks. The North
5 Hills Juniors. Sounds real ridiculous, right?
6 Why? Because when you hear that name, you
7 think of people like yourselves or people you
8 know. When you think of Indians, do you think
9 of totem poles? You are imagining a
10 stereotype. Native Americans aren't
11 monogamous. They are flesh and blood people
12 that are alive today. Natives in our area
13 didn't wear headdresses like the one our
14 mascot wears. Was our mascot intended to
15 represent them? Was there a debate with our
16 tax dollars when the mascot was introduced?
17 By the way, can we appreciate how bizarre it
18 is to explain the Indian American to
19 kindergartners, that they are the North Hills
20 Indians?

21 Let's face it, the teaching of the
22 mascot and the (indiscernible) of Native
23 Americans with the sensationalized versions
24 heard on the radio. Were they racist? No.
25 Was it done with good intentions? Sure. But

1 that doesn't give non-Native Americans the
2 right to use their culture as we see fit.
3 Cultures accessibility is evolving over time.
4 Would you call the abolition of Jim
5 (indiscernible) woke? No, it was the right
6 thing to do. Mascots are characters,
7 exaggerations. Are we really honoring Native
8 Americans by using them as school logos as
9 pirates, lions, tigers (indiscernible)? Some
10 (indiscernible) the North Hills Indians. Even
11 supporters say wow in disbelief. It would be
12 in bad taste to have somebody (indiscernible)
13 a football game. Maybe it's time to move on.
14 Phase it out over time. It doesn't have to
15 happen overnight. Let the students decide.
16 It's something you should give the students
17 and the community an opportunity to do. They
18 need to find a new mascot we can all be proud
19 of. How about the North Hills face masks?

20 MS. MATHIS: Carol Butler. And
21 Abby Kreps would be on deck. Are either Carol
22 or Abby here?

23 MS. KREPS: Hi. I'm Abby Kreps.
24 I'm a current student of North Hills. I feel
25 like as a school we have this vibrant setting

1 for just learning, gathering together, and
2 teaching each other about ourselves. So why
3 are we still having a mascot that directly
4 offends people? We've heard here today from
5 Native Americans themselves that we have a
6 mascot that makes them feel like they are not
7 included and around this environment.

8 So why are we still part of an
9 environment that although should continue
10 growth in differences is shutting people down
11 and not appreciating who they are? I think,
12 also, I should be proud of my North Hills,
13 you know, walking down the street, going to
14 college and showing people that I'm from North
15 Hills, a school of pride, tradition, and
16 excellence, and I am not proud to be wearing
17 an Indian on my shirt saying that I'm
18 offending people by walking down the street.
19 Thank you.

20 (CLAPPING)

21 MS. MATHIS: Joseph Muha. And
22 then Brett Berry is on deck.

23 MR. MUHA: Yeah, I just wanted to
24 add some personal observations I've had.
25 Mascots are chosen for positive reasons. I'm

1 not really sure about the negative
2 connotations and -- a couple years ago North
3 Dakota was approached by the NCAA to change
4 their name from the Fighting Sioux. The Sioux
5 actually wrote a letter to the NCAA, asking
6 them to keep the name, they like the name.
7 But of course the NCAA, we know better, we
8 know what's good for you, and they made them
9 change it.

10 Even here in North Hills, one day
11 at a football game there was a group of Native
12 Americans sitting in front of me, all -- and I
13 say "all" had sweatshirts and hoodies with the
14 logo on it. So they were enjoying the game
15 just like everybody else.

16 You know, some other names -- what
17 would we do with other names like Spartans,
18 Quakers, Celtics? Will those need to be
19 changed?

20 So another question. How does it
21 affect our students? Through volunteering,
22 and my son comes in contact with a lot of the
23 students throughout the years, hundreds of
24 them -- honestly, I find them overall to be
25 very tolerant of all groups of people. So I

1 don't think it has a negative affect on the
2 students. Plus, at one time, I don't know how
3 often they do it, a group of Native Americans
4 came into the school and presented their
5 culture and their traditions to kids. And I
6 thought it was a good thing. And kudos to the
7 school for doing that. Maybe it's something
8 they should do more often.

9 So another question comes up.
10 What is the benefit of changing? Well, it
11 seems to benefit the contractors who would be
12 doing the work. I don't see any real benefit
13 for the students. I don't think it's going to
14 make them --

15 MS. MATHIS: Sorry, your time's
16 up.

17 MR. MUHA: Okay.

18 MS. MATHIS: Brett Berry, are you
19 here? And then Thomas Wallace.

20 MR. WALLACE: I'm Tom Wallace, a
21 1986 graduate of North Hills. I've been a
22 taxpayer, resident of Ross Township since I
23 was about 6 years old. I've resided in Ross.
24 I went to North Hills School throughout my
25 youth and I just -- I'm here in support of the

1 Indian. May 16, 2016, the Washington Post,
2 they put a poll together and they asked Native
3 Americans, Indians, what they thought about
4 them, the Washington Redskins name. Well, the
5 Washington Redskins, they had no opposition to
6 it, and there was only nine out of ten
7 people -- nine out of every ten people that
8 they polled had no problem with the name.

9 I don't understand why we're even
10 here today having this -- why is this an
11 issue? For 93, 94 years and now, all the
12 sudden, it's an issue.

13 I don't agree with it. When I
14 went to North Hills, we were proud of the
15 Indian. That's all I have.

16 (CLAPPING)

17 MS. MATHIS: Bret Barry and then
18 John --

19 MR. UHL: I'm John Desso Uhl.

20 MS. MATHIS: Thank you, go ahead.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. UHL: I am John Desso Uhl. I
23 am a proud resident of North Hills High School
24 since 1978. My mom and my grandmother -- my
25 mom and my niece both graduated from West View

1 High School. There are (indiscernible) kids
2 out there that graduated from North Hills.
3 And I have nieces and nephews that graduated
4 from North Hills. So we have like a 90-year
5 tradition here going through North Hills
6 School District in West View. I'm proud of
7 being a North Hills Indian. I served in the
8 United States military from when I got out of
9 high school until 2000 in the Navy, and in the
10 National Guard from 2000 until 2008. And I'm
11 proud of (indiscernible). And I'm proud of
12 doing that also, too. I was a technological
13 communications technician, which is what we
14 heard about the Code Talkers of the Native
15 Americans. And we're very proud to be part of
16 that tradition going on. North Hills Indian
17 is a tradition. The north North Hills Indian
18 shows us pride. The North Hills Indian is a
19 (indiscernible) of who we are. We are strong.
20 We are strong and have good backbones. We are
21 people who are proud of what we do and where
22 we go. The North Hills Indian is a long,
23 proud tradition and (indiscernible). It is a
24 tradition that should keep on, and there is no
25 one that should ever tell us where there's big

1 corporation, a small group of people.
2 Overall, the Indian is what we are proud of
3 and it should stay.

4 If you want to find out more about
5 what's going on, maybe you should educate
6 people in the area about what exactly this
7 area came from and where it went to. Why do
8 you have the name Monongahela? Where did the
9 Algonquin Indians come from? Where does
10 Allegheny come from? If we're going to change
11 the Indian, you need to change everything in
12 the area. No. I think the name should carry
13 on with our proud tradition of having the
14 North Hills Indian and show the backbone that
15 we have, because that is what and who we are.

16 MS. MATHIS: James Hughes. And
17 George Nelson is on deck.

18 MR. HUGHES: I'm a little tall.
19 Hi, everyone. So I'm James. I'm pretty new
20 here. Actually, I've only been in the North
21 Hills for about a year and a half now, and
22 this is actually a really nice area. I moved
23 here for work. I love living here. I will
24 consider raising a family here if -- if it
25 wasn't so embarrassing to have a mascot like

1 the Indians. It's really weird. So it never
2 really sat well with me. And I think one of
3 the reasons was because I went to IUP. I
4 started back at (indiscernible). IUP, in 2006
5 they were also an Indian mascot. And they
6 decided they were going to change it back in
7 2006, almost two decades ago. We're still
8 having this right now. Like, just get over
9 it, huh.

10 So I took a sociology class on the
11 Navajo Reds where I learned a whole lot more
12 about issues affecting Native Americans today
13 all the way back to the 1600's -- 1400's,
14 really. One of those issues is casual racism,
15 which is what this mascot is. It just doesn't
16 sit with a lot of people. It's a
17 representation that's just not up with the
18 times, really. It's very old. And also it
19 just doesn't really make sense. Like it has a
20 warb (phonetic) on it.

21 Now I know this town's called West
22 View. We can't see that far to the west.
23 You're not looking at (indiscernible) it has a
24 warb (phonetic) on it. Dakota people actually
25 had that. Iroquois people, no, they didn't

1 dress like that. We had a person here -- I'm
2 really glad she was here saying what actually
3 they wore. But, yeah, anyhow, I'm getting a
4 little off topic.

5 Some people could more eloquently
6 state the reasons that this is a casual racist
7 mascot. But one of the things I really
8 haven't heard today is the costs for not
9 changing the mascot. Changing cultural norms
10 (indiscernible) a giant industry, making a lot
11 of money on the new mascot. If you wait
12 longer, the cost factor is even more, so why
13 not change it now. Something a little more
14 history-fitting --

15 MS. MATHIS: Sorry, your two
16 minutes is up. George Nelson and then Tara
17 Gupton.

18 MR. NELSON: Good evening, and
19 thank you for the time to voice our opinion
20 here. Thank you for the brave voices from the
21 Nation who spoke on their behalf. The
22 National Conference of American Indians in the
23 NCAI is the oldest and largest and most
24 representative national organization that
25 shared the unified voices of hundreds of

1 tribal nations, over a million of native
2 people. And their message has been consistent
3 and clear for decades.

4 Any Indian mascot theme symbolizes
5 the disrespect that degrades, mocks, and harms
6 Native people, particularly Native youth.
7 While many in the U.S. do not perceive Native
8 American mascots problematic, practically all
9 rigorous academic studies undertaken that
10 studied the psychosocial effects of these
11 mascots demonstrate either direct negative
12 effects on Native Americans or that these
13 mascots activate, reflect, or reinforce
14 stereotypes and prejudice on non-native
15 persons.

16 It is difficult to reason that the
17 American Indians would have associated their
18 cultural practices in a sports pep rally or a
19 halftime athletic entertainment, or being a
20 sidekick for cheerleaders. Schools should be
21 places that are safe to unlearn the
22 stereotypes that such mascot represents.

23 Many schools around the country
24 use the Indian Native mascots and logos as
25 representations of American Indians' cultures.

1 Many school officials claim they are honoring
2 Indians and insists the school-sponsored
3 activities are complementary.

4 There is nothing in American
5 Indian culture that inspires to be a mascot,
6 logo, or nickname for athletic teams of
7 schools. The use of the generic Indian name
8 and the Indian mascot is (indiscernible)
9 amounts to counterfeit American Indian
10 paraphernalia. Just two short months ago our
11 fantastic North Hills marching band was not
12 able to march due to wearing these current
13 band uniforms. These situations will become
14 more frequent with time. Remember our mission
15 and our values. We want to have logos that
16 represent our community. Thank you very much
17 for your time.

18 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Tara
19 Gupton. And Melissa Kauffman is on deck. Is
20 Tara or Melissa here?

21 MS. KAUFFMAN: Hi. I'm a graduate
22 of North Hills. (Indiscernible) I was on the
23 marching band for five years and I no way ever
24 saw the mascot as offensive. I think that
25 this whole opinion that people have is just --

1 they're not looking at it as -- I just don't
2 think this is offensive at all. This mascot
3 has been here for 90 or 80 years, as people
4 say. It was never offensive then, so why is
5 it offensive now?

6 The marching band can certainly go
7 somewhere else and march. I marched in DC. I
8 marched in Indianapolis. We had no issues
9 then, so I don't know why this is an issue
10 now. I feel like the money situation -- I'm
11 not a taxpayer but I'm an alumni, so I can't
12 speak on that, but I just feel that this
13 should not be changed. Thank you.

14 MS. MATHIS: Kayla Soergel. And
15 then Kati Von Lehman is on deck. Are either
16 Kayla or Kati here?

17 (NO RESPONSE)

18 MS. MATHIS: Christopher Scott and
19 then Matt Schmitt is on deck.

20 MR. SCOTT: That dude is really
21 tall. My name is Christopher Scott and I
22 graduated from North Hills High School in
23 1990. An emblem is neither good nor bad on
24 its own. What makes an emblem good or bad is
25 the intention behind its use. West View High

1 School decided to honor the Native Americans
2 in 1944 by making it the theme of their West
3 View yearbook because, and I quote, "We think
4 of the uncomfortable spirit of the Indian
5 Warrior and it's symbolic of the West View
6 Spirit of '44" (indiscernible). This was
7 during the height of World War II.

8 Now, I grew up in the North Hills
9 School District. The imagery of the American
10 Indian was a constant part of my environment,
11 thanks to my school's emblem and branded
12 (indiscernible).

13 From the very first moments that I
14 saw the North Hills Indian it captured my
15 consciousness and never let go. It was from
16 this seed that started my strongness for
17 Native American cultures, my sympathies for
18 their plights. It was the North Hills Indian
19 that drove me to join the forensics team and
20 to write my very first speech, which was about
21 righting the wrongs done to the Native
22 Americans. It was the North Hills Indians
23 that motivated me to muster Operation Face
24 Mask in Washington County to make 500
25 (indiscernible) face masks to send to the

1 Navajo Nation which was being ravaged by the
2 COVID 19 pandemic.

3 It was the North Hills Indians
4 that prompted me to engage the black and
5 Indian Nation mission in Washington, D.C. to
6 assist my Knights of Columbus Assembly and
7 adopting the St. Peter Indian Mission School
8 in Bapchule, Arizona for ongoing support, both
9 materially and prayerfully.

10 The Knights of Columbus is a
11 Catholic organization that's been around since
12 1882 and counts among its 2 million members
13 many Native American and Nations peoples. My
14 (indiscernible), Mike and Jim Scott, who were
15 (indiscernible) and passionate people of the
16 American Indian culture, who no doubt because
17 they were raised in the North Hills School
18 District.

19 MS. MATHIS: Thanks. Your two
20 minutes is up.

21 (CLAPPING)

22 MS. MATHIS: Matt Schmitt. And
23 Tim Piscitelli is on deck.

24 MR. SCHMITT: My name is Matt
25 Schmitt and I'm here tonight as a proud 1995

1 alumni and a parent of a current elementary
2 student. I'm going to piggy-back on the
3 previous speaker. To understand what this
4 meeting is about is to deny the history of
5 your North Hills/West View community which did
6 not really have its nature of origin until
7 World War II.

8 The student body of West View High
9 after living in an era torn apart by war,
10 witnessing their fellow classmates go off to
11 war and never to return, struggled to select
12 an appropriate mascot or theme to represent
13 the fighting spirits felt by all in this
14 community.

15 West View students did not need to
16 be reminded of the war, so they felt little
17 desire for a military theme or mascot. Well
18 aware of the deep Native American homes in
19 West View and throughout the North Hills, they
20 unanimously approved the parade, the warrior,
21 a representation of the history of the area
22 and the fighting spirit of the fighting
23 Indian.

24 This passage (indiscernible) from
25 the 1944 West View yearbook, we think of the

1 uncomfortable spirit of the Indian warrior
2 symbolic of West View. But this leads us to
3 today. Our North Hills School slogan is
4 pride, tradition, and excellence. The chief
5 Indian holds a lot of pride, tradition, and
6 excellence to the whole community and in every
7 school (indiscernible) regardless of your
8 opinion.

9 But now in this cancel culture
10 world, the important lessons of the past are
11 being forgotten. It leaves the future with no
12 foundation to build upon. The chief Indian
13 mascot has been a fixture of our community
14 since it was adopted by West View High. It
15 should be built to last, not thrown out like
16 last week's garbage. But now five of you
17 Board members will use whatever excuse that
18 they can to change or remove the pride,
19 tradition, and excellence of our school in our
20 community.

21 Two of you are alumni of this
22 district. You do not stand up for the
23 traditions of this school. You let them
24 dictate our traditions at the excuse to remove
25 the chief Indian from the (indiscernible).

1 But you already have your five votes because
2 it only takes a majority. Five woke board
3 members should not have that power to remove
4 it. It should remain. It was unanimous --

5 (CLAPPING)

6 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Your time
7 is up. Tim Piscitelli and then Stephanie
8 Faller is on deck.

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 MS. MATHIS: Stephanie Faller,
11 Susan Revelant, Alex Carmody. Are either of
12 you present?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 MS. MATHIS: Bradley Cisar?
15 Bradley Cisar?

16 (NO RESPONSE)

17 MS. MATHIS: Alec Thomas?

18 (NO RESPONSE)

19 MS. MATHIS: Sandy Frischemeier?

20 (NO RESPONSE)

21 MS. MATHIS: Susie Meister?

22 (NO RESPONSE)

23 MS. MATHIS: Brandon Deah?

24 (NO RESPONSE)

25 MS. MATHIS: Nicole Wilson?

1 (NO RESPONSE)

2 MS. MATHIS: Jillian Hanna?

3 (NO RESPONSE)

4 MS. MATHIS: And then Katie
5 McLaughlin will be on deck if she's here.

6 MS. HANNA: Good evening, all.
7 Thank you, and thank you to the Board members
8 for opening up public discussion about this.
9 Most of the points I wanted to make this
10 evening have already been made, more
11 eloquently than I could ever say.

12 There are a few points that I
13 would like to make, though. After graduating
14 from North Hills in 1996 I went on to pursue a
15 degree in culture anthropology. That gave me
16 the opportunity to work with and study
17 alongside Indigenous and First Nations people
18 from New York to New Zealand. I've had this
19 mascot discussion with many people and I would
20 never speak on behalf of these groups of
21 people, but in my personal experience in the
22 discussions I've had, unequivocally they have
23 all said they do not want to be mascots.
24 They think being that way it is racist,
25 shameful, disrespectful and typically wildly

1 And then Ryan Warsing is on deck. Are either
2 Katie or Ryan here?

3 (NO RESPONSE)

4 MS. MATHIS: And Jeremy Scholze
5 would be next.

6 MR. WARSING: Hi, everybody. I'm
7 Ryan Warsing, the Class of 2011. And I had a
8 speech, but when you're number 117, people
9 tend to take your talking point, so I'll keep
10 it short. And I'm grateful that I don't have
11 anything to say because it's already been said
12 by so many people who also believe the mascot
13 should be changed.

14 I think that -- what I keep coming
15 back to in my head is that we've gotten pretty
16 clear wishes from the Native American
17 community, such as it exists, that this is not
18 something they support. It is something they
19 find offensive. And I just wonder how many
20 more of those people in the room we need to
21 have telling us directly that's what we want
22 before we negate our own feelings about the
23 subject and we respond. So that's all I would
24 like to say.

25 As to the cost, people have

1 brought up the cost about this. It's a lot.
2 The cost to replace the mascot is \$500,000 but
3 the cost to just stop using it is much closer
4 to zero. You know, we could get paint and
5 tape. And not that I would support just
6 covering up all over the place, but we can do
7 this in a really gradual way. But you first
8 start with stop using the mascot and not
9 buying uniforms with the mascot name on it.
10 It can be a gradual process. It doesn't have
11 to be \$500,000 all at once.

12 I think that most of us, you know,
13 if we had a Native American neighbor telling
14 us directly all of this, we would listen to
15 them. For a variety of really awful reasons,
16 we don't have that. We don't have these
17 neighbors around here anymore, and it's the
18 distance from the problem that allows us to
19 tell ourselves it's all okay when it isn't.
20 So that's what I've got to say. Thank you for
21 your time.

22 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Jeremy
23 Scholze and then Maxwell Fabian will be on
24 deck. Jeremy or Maxwell, are either of you
25 here?

1 (NO RESPONSE)

2 MS. MATHIS: Rebecca Rodack and
3 Robert Huerbin.

4 (NO RESPONSE)

5 MS. MATHIS: Are either of you
6 here?

7 (NO RESPONSE)

8 MS. MATHIS: Savannah Porter?

9 (NO RESPONSE)

10 MS. MATHIS: Michael Bannon?

11 (NO RESPONSE)

12 MS. MATHIS: Christa Cardone?

13 (NO RESPONSE)

14 MS. MATHIS: Janet Noble.

15 MS. NOBLE: Hi. Okay. I'm from
16 the Class of 1976 and I met my husband there
17 smoking in the boys room. I don't know if you
18 remember that song. But anyhow, we are both
19 from the Class of '76. And my husband, at
20 that time -- if you knew Jack Noble, some
21 people know him. He's about this tall
22 (indicating), straight black hair, dark skin.
23 And his grandmother had a story that she
24 wouldn't share with him. She was a bit
25 ashamed. And she didn't say he was Indian.

1 She didn't not say. And the family generally
2 thought because of the darkness in them that
3 they were. So he grew up and we raised our
4 children believing they were Indian. Later
5 DNA gave me an answer. But that's not for us
6 here. For us here, he had part of him that
7 thought his grandmother was ashamed of what he
8 was. And that was back then. And I'm seeing
9 some of that now, people ashamed of an emblem
10 that was meant to be positive for our
11 community.

12 He was very proud to be an Indian.
13 We took our children to pow-wows. He played
14 football for us. He went to Penn State. I
15 went on to IUP and studied sociology. That's
16 the study of people and issues, small groups,
17 big groups. So I've been watching a lot of
18 what's going on in the world with both the
19 cancel culture, the whole reason behind
20 everybody saying don't call it this, don't
21 call it that. And I'm like why is an Indian
22 negative but the fighting Irish is positive.
23 Get a grip on where you're at. It's just an
24 attitude.

25 The Indian where we came from in

1 '76 was exalted here. It was positive. It
2 was proud. What happened to the world? What
3 happened?

4 (CLAPPING)

5 MS. MATHIS: Thank you. Your time
6 is up. Jessica Semler. And Mary Myers is on
7 deck.

8 MS. SEMLER: Hi. I'm here
9 speaking for myself. I'm an elected official
10 and borough councilwoman, and two other alumni
11 elected officials, State Representative Sara
12 Innamorato and Allegheny County councilwoman
13 (indiscernible). Does that mean I get three
14 minutes or not? I can make it work either
15 way.

16 MS. MATHIS: No.

17 MS. SEMLER: All right. That's
18 fine. So I'm a 2005 graduate. And I have
19 some things to share from a couple other
20 elected officials from North Hills.
21 Collectively during our time here we were all
22 proud athletes. Between the three of us, we
23 were on the swim team, Lacrosse team, tennis
24 team, cheerleading squad, and one of us was
25 even the Indian mascot.

1 Participating in these activities
2 helps mold who we are today. But we've
3 learned a lot in the past several years. The
4 Native Americans have called for decades to
5 not be minimized as mascots. It's time North
6 Hills joins other schools and other athletic
7 associations to change the mascot.

8 The Indian as a mascot is a
9 fictional character. Indigenous people are
10 real people. We have to ask people
11 (indiscernible). You want to know what's
12 happening, what people actually think. You
13 heard from folks in this room and we're still
14 acting like they're people that aren't here.

15 So you want to compare Indians,
16 Native Americans to cupcakes? Although I
17 would be totally in favor of a cupcake mascot.
18 My most vivid memories of high school are
19 cheering at football games at (indiscernible)
20 stadium, the electricity feel for the kickoff.
21 And I can still sing the whole alma mater. I
22 remember the dance. I could probably do most
23 of the fight songs. I don't remember the
24 Indian being a part of this. I have school
25 spirit. I remember cheering for the red and

1 white, my fellow students who played sports,
2 and all the crowd. We can still have pride,
3 but when we know better we do better.

4 (CLAPPING)

5 MS. MATHIS: Mary Myers. And then
6 Denise Tabacchi would be next. Mary or
7 Denise?

8 (NO RESPONSE)

9 MS. MATHIS: George Meyer?

10 (NO RESPONSE)

11 MS. MATHIS: Okay. I believe we
12 have reached the end of our speakers who have
13 signed up to speak this evening. So I would
14 like to thank everybody very much for their
15 time this evening. We appreciate all your
16 comments and I will adjourn at this time.

17 (WHEREUPON, TESTIMONY CONCLUDED AT
18 7:52 P.M.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the transcript of the proceedings and evidence contained herein are a true and accurate transcription of my stenographic notes taken by me at the time and place of the within cause; that the transcription was reduced to printing by me; and that this is a true and correct transcription of the same.

Jeanne Manko
Court Reporter