

Atchison Public Schools' mascots could be on way out
(KAIR)--The Atchison High School Redman and Atchison Middle School Braves' mascots could soon be on their way out, although a formal decision has yet to be made by Atchison Public School leaders.

A special Thursday evening meeting of the USD 409 Board of Education, held to serve as a Mascot Educational Presentation and Public Input Forum, allowed that input to be heard, with every person who spoke calling for the controversial Native American-themed mascots to be dropped.

A total of nine individuals, with varying degrees of school district involvement spoke, with Wanda Brown Wolf, who identified herself as a member of the Kickapoo tribe and Sac and Fox tribe of Oklahoma, telling the Board of Education she believes the Redmen mascot is “a racial put-down for our Native American students, and that it could turn into bullying.”

Kurt Schlanker, long-time history teacher at Atchison Public Schools, said he has had Native American students in his classes who felt uncomfortable talking about their history, a scenario he attributes to the mascot.

Others in attendance, who also spoke in favor of the mascot change, were Charro Kelly, Ryan Pickman, Liz Weinmann, Kevin Hill, Lauri Randall, Benedictine College professor Joshua Wolf, and Seth Stillings.

Their comments came after a presentation from Dr. Alex Red Corn (how it was spelled in the agenda), a citizen of the Osage Nation, who also serves several roles in the College of Education at Kansas State University. During his presentation, conducted through the Zoom online meeting application, Dr. Corn cited numerous professional studies, including one from the American Psychology Association, that found that Native American mascots, imagery, and branding undermines the educational experience of members of all communities and creates a hostile learning environment.

About two dozen people attended the special board meeting, held at the Atchison Elementary School.

According to Superintendent Dr. Renee Scott, the School Board will again receive public comment about the issue at their Monday evening meeting, scheduled for 6:00 in the Atchison Elementary School gymnasium, located at 825 North 17th Street, in Atchison. Scott says no decision pertaining to the mascot matter will be made at that meeting. Instead, she said that decision could come in April.

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