

Mascot selection set to start in Atchison

(KAIR)--The process of deciding what mascot, or mascots, will represent two Atchison schools will begin soon.

Plans to select replacements for the Atchison High School Redmen, and the Atchison Middle School Braves, were discussed during Monday's meeting of the Board of Education for Atchison's USD 409.

Included in the process will be the input of a 30-person committee, consisting of various school district stakeholders, with the group scheduled to meet next week to begin the steps necessary to select new mascots.

Announcement of the Committee's formation came during a presentation, jointly made by Atchison High School Principal Lacy Warren and Atchison Middle School Principal Chad Bilderback, during Monday's meeting, the first session of the Board since last month's unanimous vote to remove the two Native American-themed mascots due to cultural insensitivity.

During their presentation, Warren and Bilderback suggested the school board appoint three of its members to serve on the Committee, with that suggestion earning school board favor, and leading to board members Sally Berger, Brandi Ross, and Stefanie Gardner volunteering to serve.

The committee also includes various numbers of school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members, although an exact breakdown was not provided, and names were not announced, during Monday's presentation.

Regarding the selection of community members to serve on the Committee, Berger asked Warren how such members would be determined, with Warren explaining that she, and Bilderback, have selected those members from the district site council list, adding that different business members have also been asked to serve.

The committee's first meeting will be Tuesday evening, May 18th, at 5:30, at the Atchison High School library.

Warren said the initial meeting will serve as a brainstorming session, with members assessing the results of a recent community survey asking respondents whether multiple mascots should be used at various grade levels, or if the district should use one mascot for all levels.

Warren said the meeting would also include a review of the district's

non-discriminatory policy, with additional community surveys to follow the initial meeting.

Although a precise timeline was not provided, Warren said recommendations regarding mascot replacements would be made to the school board following the third meeting of the committee.

Board member Sean Crittendon said he is looking forward to hearing from the kids, and said he was excited to see what comes out of the committee.

Member Diane Liebsch said she hoped they would be mindful about what's going to be appropriate in the long-term, and look beyond what is trendy, when making their decision.

As for the cost of the mascot changes, Superintendent Dr. Renee Scott said she estimates it to wind up being around \$20,000, a figure she believes is, quote – quite minimal.

According to Scott, a final board decision regarding the future of the district's mascots will take place no later than the regular July board meeting.

Scott also said the district would invest money to preserve current Redmen memorabilia in a way that would allow alumni to have access to it.

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