

Erin Garcia

From: Allen Tai
Sent: Thursday, September 2, 2021 11:55 AM
To: Nancy McPeak; Erin Garcia
Subject: FW: [EXTERNAL] comment on street renaming policy for tonight's HAB meeting

Public correspondence for HAB. Thanks.

From: Drew Dara-Abrams [mailto:dda@dara-abrams.com]
Sent: Thursday, September 2, 2021 11:08 AM
To: Allen Tai <ATai@alamedaca.gov>
Cc: Josh Geyer <joshm.geyer@gmail.com>; Michael Hulihan <Michaelhulihan@gmail.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] comment on street renaming policy for tonight's HAB meeting

Dear Mr. Tai,

I am not sure if I will be able to call into tonight's HAB meeting to give a public comment. Would you be able to share this email with members or include in the packet? Thank you.

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Dear HAB members,

My family and I moved to Calhoun Street in 2019. It's a great place to live, to raise kids, to get to know long-time residents and new arrivals. The street has "good bones" with a narrow roadway, a mix of buildings from different eras, a park and a school, a wide range of residents... However, the street's name stands out as out of sync with many of our shared values. It's a good time to discuss and reconsider how our street honors Senator John C. Calhoun.

Starting in 2019, we've been meeting neighbors, contacting city staff, getting to know others throughout Alameda who have been involved in renaming efforts. For your reference, a few highlights:

- 2019: we emailed the city manager's office to ask about how to bring the name of Calhoun St to the city for reconsideration. never heard a response
- 2020: we started an online petition that has received 759 signatures to date: <https://www.change.org/p/city-of-alameda-planning-commission-a-new-name-for-calhoun-street-in-alameda> (please do consider reading the petition text, since it includes more nuanced thoughts on John C Calhoun in particular and renaming more broadly; also, we are glad to share a spreadsheet of local ZIP codes for people who have signed in support to demonstrate the level of interest)
- 2020: coverage in the Alameda Sun and letters to the editor from multiple residents of Calhoun Street in favor of reconsidering the name, online discussion threads by Alamedans on Nextdoor, Facebook, and Reddit; 100% weren't necessarily in favor of renaming Calhoun Street, but it's fair to say that everyone who engaged was pleased to have a welcoming and calm way to share their positions, to chat with fellow residents, and to think about different ways to use current-day names to highlight different aspects of local and national history.

- 2020: existing city policy sets the Planning Board as the venue for reconsidering street names; we shared our petition with the Planning Board members and planning staff, but never received a response to our initial emails or any follow-ups
- 2021: city council has engaged with this topic by reconsidering the facilities naming policy more broadly.

We're pleased to see the city, including the HAB and the Planning Board, take a systematic review of the city's facilities naming policy. We hope that this will result in city staff and boards being equipped to engage with residents like the hundreds who have signed this petition to reconsider the name of Calhoun St. We're not asking for an instant up-or-down vote; a simple decision -- but we would like a real process that can be followed on a reasonable timeline to engage residents in a welcoming and constructive manner. Thank you to city staff and boards for revising and firming up the policies that are needed to enable such a process.

One specific note: the current draft policy only allows property owners to weigh in on street renamings. This does not seem fair. For example, our neighbors have rented their house many years longer than my family has owned ours. The overarching goal is to engage as many Alamedans as possible in the life of the city. Other city departments, the school district, and the county all have means of easily verifying that someone lives in Alameda before they can participate in a specific program (for example, showing a utility bill). Please find a way to welcome both residents who own their homes and residents who rent their homes to engage in street renaming discussions.

Thanks for your time and consideration,
Drew Dara-Abrams
Calhoun St.