

Public Hearing on Renaming of Schools
October 29, 2020 School Board Meeting
Comments by Elliott Waters

ACPS BOARD—WHAT STANDARD WILL YOU USE?

I advocate for applying current standards in renaming the two (2) schools which petitions were submitted. The standard reads **“Existing schools may be renamed** for, but are not limited to, **individuals who have made an exceptional and extraordinary contribution to a particular school, school program, or to the school division AS A WHOLE; ...Existing schools may also be renamed in recognition of a place or event of historical significance related to the school facility itself.**

As a flawed imperfect person, I choose not to sit in judgement on the innate goodness of the people whose names appear on a high school and an elementary school in Alexandria. Instead I come as an invited stakeholder to engage in reasoned public discourse focused on helping you as elected officials decide whether there are compelling reasons to rename the two schools.

In my view, there are compelling reasons for renaming them. But before I cite those reasons, I readily admit I was hampered by (1) an incomplete record of the late Superintendent’s public job expectations (2) conflicting accounts of the budgetary conditions he faced and (3) a lack of objective performance standards to include behavior. As a result, I applied current expectations, budgetary conditions and perceived performance standards and evidence reveals the deceased former Superintendent did NOT make an extraordinary contribution to the school system AS A WHOLE in the areas of (1) community relations and (2) student services. Matthew Maury

I believe T.C. Williams and Matthew Maury [as people created in God’s image] are no better or worse than you or me, but their chosen behavior should not be overlooked: (1) Mr. Williams [as a public official, he was highly partial and (2) Mr. Maury maintained his allegiance to the Confederacy. I don’t claim to be a mental health professional, but it seems both were either unable to see the error of his ways or unwilling to amend their behavior to ensure they respected the dignity and worth of all human life, and in the case of T.C. Williams - the public interests of the school system AS A WHOLE. Failing to do so, in my view, disqualifies both individuals from having their name on any public school in Alexandria under current standards.

As students of history, all of us can recall some miraculous transformations in human behavior. My point being it is not wise to portray anyone as unredeemable – especially when recalling the lives of John Newton, Malcolm X, and the Apostle Paul – just to name a few.

I hope we can all agree factors such as expectations and standards under various conditions matter. When these factors are applied in rating the quality of service of T.C. Williams and/or Matthew Maury [as an educator and teacher], I submit their human behavior [alone] is disqualifying [under current ACPS standards] for naming or renaming schools unless you decide to use the antiquated – might makes right. In closing, these renaming petitions affords the City another opportunity to turn the page on a flawed history as proof that places, like people, can be renewed with liberty and justice for all.