



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 16, 2023

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: DANA WEDELES, STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OFFICER

DOCKET TITLE:

Receipt of the Scope of Work for Renaming Confederate Streets.

ISSUE: Receipt of the Scope of Work for Re-naming Confederate Streets.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council receive the process that the City Council Naming Committee intends to follow for re-naming streets named for Confederate Soldiers.

BACKGROUND: On January 10, 2023, Mayor Justin Wilson introduced a [proposal <https://alexandriava1-my.sharepoint.com/personal/dana_wedeles_alexandriava_gov/Documents/CMO/Street%20Renaming/Street%20Names%20Process.pdf>](https://alexandriava1-my.sharepoint.com/personal/dana_wedeles_alexandriava_gov/Documents/CMO/Street%20Renaming/Street%20Names%20Process.pdf) to rename streets in the City that are named for Confederate soldiers. He stated, "Our predecessors used street naming policies as a form of permanent protest against the burgeoning civil rights movement and growing political power for African-Americans. As a symbol, these honors persist today, honoring virulent racists, many of whom took up arms against our nation. These honors are not defensible and should be removed.....While it is important to remove these inappropriate honors, it is also important to consider the practical concerns as thousands of Alexandria residents and visitors use these existing street names to navigate our community. As such, I believe a reasonable, yet deliberate pace of renaming these streets over time should be embarked upon."

Many of these streets were named in 1953 through an ordinance (Attachment 1) that specifically stated that "streets running in a generally north-south direction shall, insofar as possible, bear the names of Confederate military leaders." This ordinance was approved one year following the annexation of Alexandria's West End (west of Quaker Lane) where many streets in the City had not yet been developed nor been named. This ordinance also came to be in anticipation of the landmark Supreme Justice Court *Case of Brown v. Board of Education* - a defining point in the Civil Rights Movement, which, as the [Southern Poverty Law Center <https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_whose_heritage.pdf>](https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/com_whose_heritage.pdf) stated in a 2016 report, "led to a backlash among segregationists," including the naming of streets and civic buildings for Confederates. City Staff have developed a map (Attachment 2) and list of streets confirmed to have been named for Confederate soldiers in the City (Attachment 3), including their original name (if the street existed prior to 1953), and the year of the change, as also documented in City Code [Sec. 5-2-62 <https://library.municode.com/va/alexandria/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIITHCOGEOR_TIT5TRENSE_CH2STSI_ARTCSTNA_S5-2-62CHNA>](https://library.municode.com/va/alexandria/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIITHCOGEOR_TIT5TRENSE_CH2STSI_ARTCSTNA_S5-2-62CHNA). A few of these streets were named for Confederate soldiers prior to 1953. The list also includes streets that are potentially named for Confederate soldiers, though

unverified. There are also streets named for known segregationists/Klan members that have not formally been identified, such as Taney Avenue. The Naming Committee will use these documents to determine its prioritization for street renamings. The Committee will also consider how many residents and businesses will be impacted and the length of the street.

The [Historic Alexandria Resources Commission <https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/historic-alexandria-resources-commission-harc>](https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-alexandria/historic-alexandria-resources-commission-harc) (HARC) will develop a list, with the support of the Office of Historic Alexandria, of individuals and locations worthy of honor by the City. The Commission is requested to pay special attention to inclusion of historically marginalized populations, such as women and BIPOC communities (as well as events and locations significant to populations that have been historically marginalized throughout our history), who have frequently been ignored through history. Additionally, the Commission will consider street names that had been retired previously.

The City Council Naming Committee is currently comprised of three (3) members of City Council.

- Councilman John Taylor Chapman, Chair
- Councilmember Sarah Bagley
- Councilwoman Alyia Gaskins

DISCUSSION: The Naming Committee will follow the process outlined below to re-name streets named for Confederate Soldiers:

HARC Work Plan

1. April - September 2023:
 - a. HARC will identify potential names for the Re-naming committee to consider.

Naming Committee Work Plan

1. March 2023
 - a. The Naming Committee will receive the recommended scope of work and process for Confederate Street re-namings. (Held on March 6, 2023)
2. May 2023
 - a. Hold a second Naming Committee meeting to review revised scope of Work in advance of City Council legislative session. (Held on May 1, 2023)
 - b. Staff will develop a webpage that has:
 - i. Timeline and Background
 - ii. FAQ's for residents (Attachment 4)
 - iii. Community process for both Naming Committee and HARC
 - iv. Historical documentation
 - c. At the second legislative session on May 23, the Naming Committee will bring the scope of work to City Council for their awareness of the process.
3. September 2023
 - a. The Naming Committee will meet to discuss and select its three prioritized street re-namings for 2023. They may also select 2 to 3 alternative streets. At this meeting, HARC will provide their list of potential names and the Naming Committee will select its top three for consideration. This meeting will include a public comment period.
 - b. Following the meeting, staff will issue a media release and communications to the community with a public feedback form on the recommended names. In addition, the press release will invite suggestions from the Community. Any names from the community must include:
 - i. the justification for the proposed name;
 - ii. documentation on a community-led meeting to discuss the name.
 - iii. It may also include recommendations from representatives in the community, such as a community organization (HOA/Civic Association), and an explanation of any additional information on a community outreach process.
 - c. The City will provide a postcard with information about the naming process, including the FAQ's and upcoming meetings, to all addresses on impacted streets prior to the next Naming Committee meeting and City Council public hearings.
4. October 2023
 - a. The Naming Committee will hold an open public hearing. In addition to abutting property owners, the individuals or groups who submitted recommendations will be notified at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date and location and are encouraged to attend. The City's Naming Committee will receive the submission(s), public

- comment, and any related materials from the nominator(s) or designee(s).
- b. The City Naming Committee will make a recommendation to City Council.

5. November 2023

- a. City Council will receive the recommendation of the City's Naming Committee and will schedule the recommendation to be considered, along with a corresponding proposed ordinance, per Code Sec. 5-2-66, at a City Council Public Hearing.
- b. City Council will make an official decision following the City Council Public Hearing.

6. December 2023

- a. If approved, City Staff will begin the process of address, system, and signage changes.

7. If a street name is not recommended by the Naming Committee the process begins anew.

FISCAL IMPACT: The annual budget will support three street re-namings per year. This includes signage, 911 system changes, and all re-addressing needs. This cost is estimated to be between \$20,000 to \$60,000 per street, varying by street length and number of impacted addresses.

ATTACHMENTS:

- (1) Ordinance No. 769
- (2) Map of Streets named for Confederate Soldiers
- (3) List of Streets named for Confederate Soldiers
- (4) FAQ's regarding street name changes

STAFF:

Jack Browand, Deputy Director of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities and Staff Liaison to the Naming Committee

Gretchen Bulova, Director, Office of Historic Alexandria

Ebony Fleming, Director, Office of Communications and Public Information

Lindsay Dubin, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office