

Alumni nominate East team nicknames

Dragons, Corsairs among top choices to be replacement

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East High School's new nickname for its athletic teams could be the Scarlet Knights, Dragons, Red Dragons or the Corsairs.

Those were the nominees that the Akron East High Alumni Association presented Thursday to the Akron Board of Education.

The association gathered the suggestions over several months from students, alumni and other supporters of the school, Executive Director George Tonies said.

About 20 to 30 people suggested new nicknames, he said. But at least twice that number said they wanted to keep the old name — the Orientals — which the board rejected last year because the term is an antiquated reference to people of Asian descent that now is considered offensive.

"It was overwhelming how many people said they want the Oriental name still," Tonies told the board on Thursday. "I know in a politically correct world what a problem that is."

The association wants to sponsor a contest on its Web site to choose the new nickname.

Adults could pay \$1 per vote using PayPal, an online payment service. The proceeds would go into the association's scholarship fund. East High students could vote without paying.

Tonies asked the board to consider allowing the community to vote on keeping the Orientals nickname.

"Maybe we could include that name in the referendum and let the people decide what they think would be best," Tonies said. "Because regardless of what goes on in the rest of the world, in East Akron, if you're an Oriental, that's something to be proud of."

The Rev. Curtis T. Walker Sr., school board president, said the board agrees with the association's idea of holding a fundraising contest to choose a new nickname, but the Orientals won't be on the ballot.

"We've mentioned it to them already, but that's not an option to have that name," Walker said.

In March, an Akron Beacon Journal column by Bob Dyer sparked debate about East High School's nickname and led to the board's rejection of the nickname in April.

The Orientals' nickname traces its origins to Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. co-founder F.A. Seiberling.

Longtime East High School booster Clarence Berry (Class of 1949) reminded the audience of that history at the newly renovated high school's rededication ceremony Sept. 30.

"Seiberling was known as a voracious reader and he believed that wisdom originated from the east, where all the great wise men and prophets originally came from," Berry said. "He wished the new edifice would reflect that as much as possible."

The building, opened in 1919, included two towers capped by minarets that "marked the building as a place of learning."

Students named the school newspaper *The Magic Carpet*.

"In 1943, a tornado swept through East Akron, damaging the two minaret towers," Berry said. "Because of war time, the minarets were never rebuilt. The school paper was now called *The Caravan* and in 1946, annual class yearbooks became *The Minaret*."

Seiberling and Goodyear donated land and worked closely with Akron Public Schools in 1917 to plan the East High School at 45 N. Martha Ave.

The grant required that the school face north "towards Seiberling's eventual dream community, Goodyear Heights," Berry said.

Tonies said he hopes to have a new nickname chosen for East sometime in February.

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