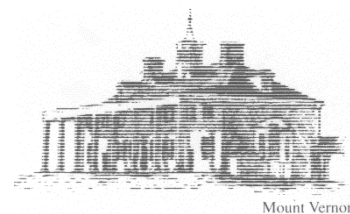




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Supervisor Dan Storck Jointly with Chairman Jeff McKay and Supervisor Rodney Lusk

Request for BOS to send History Commission Letter on Potential Re- Naming of Fort Belvoir to the Secretary of the Army

March 7, 2023

In May 2021, the National Defense Authorization Act considered military bases across the country for potential renaming. Fort Belvoir was added to the list of bases.

Subsequently, Supervisor Lusk, Chairman McKay, my office, Senator Surovell, and representatives of the Fairfax County History commission were invited to participate in a Fort Belvoir Renaming Stakeholders information meeting with the Army's Naming Commission in September 2021 to learn additional context around Fort Belvoir history and alternatives to renaming.

On March 2, 2022, the Fairfax County History Commission, unsure that primary source evidence on Belvoir's 1935 name change would be included in the Naming Commission's Report, voted to produce a supplementary report for the BoS and the Naming Commission.

Two weeks later, The Naming Commission determined that Fort Belvoir does not meet the criteria provided in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act for a renaming recommendation. The report recommended that the Army conduct their own investigations into the renaming. As a result, the Fairfax County History Commission paused efforts to produce a report.

The final Naming Commission report was then released in September 2022. The Naming Commission strongly encouraged the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Army to review these historical facts and consider

renaming Fort Belvoir based on existing protocols for the naming/renaming of installations and facilities.

According to the History Commission members who researched the history of the Fort Belvoir name, the findings regarding Fort Belvoir are limited with specific inaccuracies and omissions.

In addition, based on their letter sent to Chairman McKay and I on February 4, 2023, the Fairfax County History Commission believes that The Naming Commission's report does not reflect a full and accurate picture of the events that led to Belvoir's renaming. The presentation given at the February 1st History Commission meeting brings attention to two key inaccuracies:

- The Naming Commission report cites Andrew A Humphreys as the original namesake for the base. Based on the History Commission's research, the original name was actually Camp Belvoir from 1912 to 1917. It was only referred to as Camp Humphreys at the request of Colonel Parks, the commandant of the camp at that time.
- The Naming Commission report also argues that the name was changed back to Fort Belvoir in 1935 at the request of Virginia Congressman Howard Smith, a known segregationist. However, there is record of a letter to President Franklin Roosevelt that shows Congressman Smith only requested the name change on behalf of General Markham, the Chief of Engineers at that time.
- Furthermore, local research into the 1935 name change from Camp Humphreys to Fort Belvoir uncovers complex interactions with ties to road building, tourism, military planning, and historic preservation.

In their argument against the renaming, the History Commission also points out a key statement from the National Trust for Historic Preservation on the difference between symbolic monuments and historic sites:

“We differentiate symbolic monuments from historic sites that have developed over time, some of them places built by African Americans held in bondage. These historic sites today must serve as critical places to explore the legacies of slavery and discrimination, and as sites of conscience where the honest exploration of our shared history and reconciliation can occur.”

We fully support the recommendation made by the History Commission on the potential renaming. Any action taken by the Army to rename Fort Belvoir should be transparent, based on evidence and include the local community and stakeholders. Also, removing the name Belvoir may reduce the likelihood that these stories of the enslaved African Americans and the free black residents who lived on base will be told.

In addition, based on the findings from the History Commission's Confederate Names Inventory Report, Fort Belvoir has 4 streets named for Confederate Generals that are in need of renaming: Beauregard, Stuart, Johnston and Lee. These streets are all located on the North part of the post within a collection of streets named for U.S. Army Engineers from the Revolutionary war to the Twentieth Century.

Additionally, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act considering renaming of bases, it is our understanding there is a desire from Fort Belvoir Leadership to work with the History Commission and local historians to be consulted on renaming these streets. Any new proposed names should abide to the following criterion: 1) use names of prominent families in the historic African American community of Woodlawn. 2) use names of African American war heroes that were removed when the segregated housing area called Young's Village was demolished in the mid to late 60s.

Therefore, I move that the Board of Supervisors direct the Fairfax County History Commission to send their February 4, 2023 letter to the Secretary of the Army and the Naming Commission historian voicing their concerns on the potential renaming of Fort Belvoir, and ask in a letter that the Secretary of the Army address the following questions:

- What are the criteria for deciding whether to rename Belvoir? The Naming Commission concluded "that renaming Fort Belvoir falls outside the legislative language provided in the FY21 NDAA for making a recommendation to rename the base." Is there another policy or mechanism for changing the name, and will it be applied consistently across assets?

- The History Commission, has stated “We respect the effort undertaken by the Naming Commission historians but do not believe the interpretation of history presented in the Naming Commission report is a full and impartial weighing of historical evidence.” Will there be a fact checking of the Naming Commission report or re-evaluation of the evidence and if so, will it be transparent to the community?
- Does the Army plan to seek input from descendants of African American enslaved people in the community or any others?

I further move that the Board of Supervisors direct the History Commission to designate a small subcommittee to support any efforts by Fort Belvoir in renaming 4 streets on Fort Belvoir, currently named for Confederate Generals: Beauregard, Stuart, Johnston, and Lee. These efforts should be done in consultation with any descendants of the community of Woodlawn Village to consult on the renaming.