

NUTLEY BOARD OF EDUCATION

**SPECIAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 29, 2003**

The Nutley Board of Education held a Special Meeting on Monday, September 29, 2003 in the Radcliffe Multi-Purpose Room, 379 Bloomfield Avenue, Nutley, NJ 07110.

President Alamo opened the meeting at 7:05 PM

**CALL TO
ORDER**

MEETING NOTICE

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President Alamo stated that in compliance with Chapter 231, Public Law 1975 entitled Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of this meeting had been provided as specified in the Act. Said notice was legally advertised in The Nutley Sun on September 25, 2003 and posted at the entrance of the Board of Education offices, mailed to The Nutley Sun, The Star Ledger, The North Jersey Herald & News and The Nutley Journal and mailed to the Nutley Township Clerk.

FLAG SALUTE

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President Alamo led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

ROLL CALL

**ROLL
CALL**

Present: Mr. John Cafone
Dr. Philip T. Casale
Mr. Gerard Del Tufo
Mr. Alan Genitempo
Mr. Sal Olivo
Mr. Alfred R. Restaino, Jr.
Mr. James Viola
Mrs. Maria Alamo

Absent: Dr. Gerard M. Parisi

Also Present: Dr. Kathleen C. Serafino, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. James Vivinetto, Assistant Superintendent
Mr. James Mallen, Business Administrator/Board Secretary

Also Absent: Miss Meghan Ashley, Student Representative

President Alamo noted that when tonight's meeting was planned Dr. Parisi informed the Board that he had a professional conflict with this evening's date. She added that this was the only night the majority of the Board could be present.

President Alamo said that this Special Meeting was called to gather community input regarding the possible renaming of a school after the late John Walker.

HEARING OF CITIZENS

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Resident Chris Osieja commended the Board for revisiting this issue. She feels that we need to honor Mr. Walker in some way, but not with the renaming of an existing school. She said each school's name is part of the history of this town.

Resident Greg Palmer concurred with Ms. Osieja.

Resident Patricia Blanchard spoke about Mr. Walker's commitment to the children and his dedication to this town and feels that is what makes him a part of Nutley's history. She felt a fitting memorial would be the renaming of one of the schools in his honor.

Susan Capalbo, Nutley business owner, former resident and President of the John H. Walker Foundation stated that the Walker Foundation believes that the middle school should be named after John H. Walker. She added that the reason for this choice is that history already had been modified since Franklin School was originally named Nutley High School. She said the John H. Walker Foundation would like to offer to pay for the supplemental expenses associated with the transition of the name change.

Resident Jack Magnifico said Mr. Walker was a wonderful man and educator but feels that naming a school in his honor is setting up a precedent and does not recommend it.

Resident Gertrude Fry said the children of Nutley learned, through John Walker, that they could love and trust a man of another race.

Resident Michael Geltrude said he lived in Nutley for 52 years and although he feels Mr. Walker was a great guy there were other outstanding educators through the years that this honor could be bestowed upon. He added that Yantacaw School should keep its name.

Susan Capalbo reiterated that the John H. Walker Foundation is not looking to change Yantacaw School's name but the Franklin Middle School's name.

Resident Patricia Stoechel spoke about the history of Nutley and Yantacaw School and said we, as a town, do not have enough money to build a school to honor all the wonderful

educators of Nutley. She feels Yantacaw School's name should remain the same and suggested building a statue in Mr. Walker's honor to be displayed at the school.

Resident Melanie Mitrano, a life-long Nutley resident, said that pride is taken not only in the name of the schools of Nutley but also the sections where the schools are located. She said that although she never knew Mr. Walker she heard many wonderful things about him but there are a lot of new children who will never know him. She finds it insulting that people would think that if you are against changing the name of a school you are a bigot or racist. She added that this is not about race or color but about the history of the town and the future of our schools.

Resident Brenda Sherman spoke about the history of the expansions of the Nutley schools and her relationship with Mr. Walker. She feels that although this is a very tough decision to make, changing history is not the way to go.

Resident and Nutley teacher Pam Mitchell said that history is changing around us everyday. She added that she wants to be part of the group of people in Nutley that makes history.

Resident and Nutley teacher Lisa Rossi said she would be very excited and proud to have a school named after John Walker because he is a symbol for the teaching profession as a whole.

Resident Ro Tangorra read a letter on behalf of Resident Virginia Fazzi regarding the impact Mr. Walker had on her life encouraging her as a handicapped person to pursue her education. Her letter supports her reasons for renaming the middle school to John Walker Middle School.

Resident Caroline Rossi said she agrees that Mr. Walker was a wonderful man but stated that she has not seen any clamoring at Yantacaw School to rename it. She feels that some of the children in Yantacaw School would be upset if the school's name were changed.

Kim Walker-White, the youngest daughter of Mr. Walker, thanked everyone for the many wonderful things that her father has been recognized for. She stated that her father would not want to see Yantacaw School's name changed. She added that it would be a great honor to see the middle school named after her father.

Resident Gertrude Frey suggested naming the middle school the Franklin-Walker Middle School.

Resident Skip O'Cully said buildings change their name all the time, i.e., PNC Art Center, Continental Arena, etc. He said you will never find a person who sacrificed so much for this town and feels there is nothing honoring an educator as much as naming a school after him.

Resident Maureen Barrett spoke on behalf of her daughter who is a substitute teacher at Washington School and could not be present tonight. She said when her daughter mentions Mr. Walker to the children they view him as the legend he is. She said naming the middle school after Mr. Walker would be a history-making experience.

Resident Nancy Greulich spoke affectionately about Mr. Walker and feels there will never be another man like him. She thinks it would be an honor and tribute to name the middle school after Mr. Walker.

Resident Gail Klein said it was an honor and privilege to have known Mr. Walker and feels it would be an honor and a privilege to have the Franklin Middle School named after him.

Resident and Nutley teacher Becky Olivo said it saddens her to hear people say that the children currently enrolled in the elementary schools do not know who Mr. Walker was. She said that could be remedied by naming a school after him and explaining who he was and what he stood for. She reminded the Board that the schools were closed to honor Mr. Walker the day of his funeral and that was never done for any other educator. She encouraged the Board to continue that honor and not let the memory of Mr. Walker be forgotten.

Resident Chrys Carlo does not agree with renaming a school after Mr. Walker because she feels you don't honor someone by taking away from someone or something in the past. She suggested naming the proposed addition to the middle school the John Walker wing.

Resident Steve Picciano concurred with Mrs. Carlo. He also stated that he hopes the Board has established criteria for naming or renaming any building in this town.

Resident Walt Smith spoke fondly about Mr. Walker and said the thing that made him so special was the respect, knowledge and caring of all the children and their parents. He said memories fade, and feels nothing would be more fitting but to name one of our seven buildings after John Walker.

Resident Tom Pandolfi spoke about the tremendous impact John Walker made on his life. He feels that he is an institution to this community because of the impact his educational and athletic values made on so many people.

Resident Tammy Rossi stated that Mr. Walker's dedication to this town has not gone unnoticed but this town is based on a strong sense of tradition and changing the name of a school

is not appropriate. She suggested a new structure be named in his honor.

Resident Jacqueline McCue said that although Mr. Walker was an outstanding man she is not in favor of renaming one of the schools after him. She suggested placing a statue modeling the figures on the John H. Walker Foundation's letterhead to honor him.

Resident Carol Rusignuolo finds it hard to believe that Mr. Walker could be compared to anyone else who ever came through the town of Nutley. She said she did not originally feel that a building should be named in his honor, but now she does.

Resident Maureen Callahan spoke about the caring man Mr. Walker was and feels that something should be named in his honor.

Resident Tammy Rossi said that everyone is in agreement that some structure should be named after Mr. Walker but many feel that it should not be at the expense of removing another name.

Susan Capalbo clarified the history of the Nutley schools.

Chris Osieja reiterated her feelings that something needs to be named after Mr. Walker but not by removing the name from another building.

Jack Magnifico suggested again that the Board name a new wing after Mr. Walker in the schools and cautioned the Board again on setting up a precedent.

Resident Ken Reilly stated he does not have a feeling either way whether a building or a wing be named after Mr. Walker because he does not think anyone can remember who the people were that half the buildings and parks were named after in this town. He suggested that whatever is decided it is incumbent of this Board and future Boards to put in the curriculum in every single school a lesson on who John Walker was and his major impact on this community.

Resident Ann Lynn Eisenfelder said if we did not change history we would not be called Nutley we would be called Franklin. She feels that a new school is not going to happen and a wing is an afterthought. She added that there will never be another John Walker and if there is, then the name can change again.

Nancy Gruelich suggested that a lesson on Mr. Walker be incorporated in the schools during black history month.

Greg Palmer suggested putting the choice on the next Board election ballot.

A resident stated that if people wanted a vote they should have come out for the meeting tonight.

President Alamo thanked all for sharing their thoughts and stated the Board will take all comments very seriously. She added no one could debate what a truly remarkable man Mr. Walker was.

ADJOURN

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There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM on a motion by Trustee Viola, seconded by Trustee Casale, and unanimously approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

JAMES MALLEN
Board Secretary