



## PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS & ENGAGEMENT

501 North Dixon Street / Portland, OR 97227

Telephone: (503) 916-3270

**Date:** April 23, 2021

**To:** School Board of Education

**From:** Filip Hristic, Principal Ida B. Wells High School  
Camille Idedevbo, Office of Strategic Partnerships and Engagement

**cc:** Jonathan Garcia, Chief Engagement Officer  
Dani Ledezma, Senior Advisor of Racial Equity and Social Justice

**Subject:** Approval Request Ida B. Wells High School Mascot

---

### **BACKGROUND**

On January 26, 2021, the Portland Public Schools' Board of Directors unanimously approved [Resolution No. 6235](#) to change the name of Woodrow Wilson High School to Ida B. Wells-Barnett High School. For several years, students, families, and staff at Wilson High School advocated for changing the name of the school because of the misalignment with our district values and commitment to Racial Equity and Social Justice.

On March 30, 2021, Ida B. Wells High School renaming committee submitted a name recommendation for the school mascot after completing the second phase of a student and equity-centered design process. School Board discussion surfaced questions about "Evergreens" as a proposed school mascot for Ida B. Wells-Barnett High School and whether this symbol might conjure up painful memories of our country's troubling history of lynching.

Following the Board of Education meeting, the Ida B. Wells mascot renaming committee--a group of students, educators, staff and neighbors, who have driven a student-centered community process--revisited the mascot recommendation and decided to move in another direction. After reviewing the community votes, Guardians emerged as the next strongest mascot recommendation. In an effort to complete due diligence, the Ida B. Wells renaming committee commenced an extended community engagement process, including discussion with the Wells-Barnett family.

Through the extended community engagement process, the renaming committee aimed to

- Center the advocacy and preliminary work of students of the naming committee, especially students of color
- Process student feedback on the new mascot recommendation
- Update the community, namely Black leaders on the change of the mascot recommendation, and invite discussion about ongoing school culture transformation

Today, we are excited to re-submit for approval the name of the new Ida B. Wells High School mascot: Guardians. Ida B. Wells devoted her life to promoting and protecting justice, truth, and human dignity. She gave voice to those who were silenced and she defended those who were mistreated. She used the power of writing and public speaking to shed light on the ugly truth of racism. She was a true guardian of democracy and social justice. As Ida B. Wells High School Guardians, the Ida B. Wells community aspires to promote her legacy and to foster her lasting message of determination, valor, and tolerance among students, families, and staff. One respondent said, "*Guardians is non-gender specific, non-*

*aggressor, yet strong mascot name. At Ida B Wells we are GUARDIANS of equity, justice, diligence, excellence and integrity. GUARDIANS!"*

As Portland Public Schools continues to lean into our district vision and disrupt systems that are no longer in alignment with our organization's direction, we are presented with opportunities to redefine our ways of working. From the beginning of this project, PPS staff was clear that the renaming and rebranding work of Ida. B. Wells would serve as our organization's case study from which we would extract meaningful lessons. As a learning institution, we celebrate the school's ability to pivot in the face of new information. Rebranding is a necessary step towards school transformation, but the Ida B. Wells High School community is committed to continuous culture building through local and national partnerships. We are grateful for the support of the board, and look forward to collectively honoring the legacy of Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

## **RELATED POLICIES/BEST PRACTICES**

2.20.010-P Naming School District Property  
2.20.011-AD Procedures for Naming School District Property

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The community engagement process was defined by both quantitative and qualitative approaches to solicit feedback from the community on the new mascot, including three surveys and a final recommendation from the Renaming Committee.

- The first survey was sent out on February 22 and closed on March 3, giving 10 days to the community to provide input on mascot ideas.
- On March 3, the school's renaming committee narrowed all of the 419 community responses to 5 finalists.
- From March 4 - March 12: MKT Box Creative Agency produced concept drafts of what each mascot idea could look like for community feedback on their preference.
- From March 12 - March 18, the Ida B. Wells community sent out two surveys including the 5 graphic mockups as a reference. One survey was sent to students and teachers which required them to use their PPS ID and collected 895 responses. A similar survey was sent to the community collecting 620 responses.
- On March 18, the Ida B. Wells Renaming Committee made the final mascot recommendation for Evergreens.
- On March 30, the Ida B. Wells Renaming Committee made an initial proposal to the PPS school board in support of the Evergreens mascot.
- On April 1, after much consideration, the Ida B. Wells High School renaming committee decided to move in another direction. The renaming committee followed the ranked-choice voting protocol to identify the next most favored mascot choice: **Guardians**. Subsequently, the renaming committee in collaboration with the Office of Strategic Partnerships and Engagement designed an extended community engagement process to surface community feedback on the next mascot option.
- On April 5, Dan Duster, Grandson to Ida B. Wells-Barnett, shared his support for the Guardians mascot.

## **Ida B. Wells High School Brand Identity Extended Engagement -- April 9 - April 22**

- On April 7, the Ida B. Wells renaming committee met with MKT BOX, a creative agency to produce concept drafts of the Guardians mascot.
- On April 8, Principal Hristić answered questions at the Ida B. Wells PTA and explained why the Committee moved away from using Evergreens as the mascot.
- From April 12 - April 16, the Ida B. Wells renaming committee met with student affinity, leadership, and athletic groups to discuss the Guardians mascot.
- On April 22nd, Ida B. Wells High School renaming committee met with Black community leaders to discuss the shift from Evergreens to Guardians and the alignment of this mascot choice with Ida B. Wells-Barnett's legacy.

## **Ida B. Wells-Barnett HS Naming Committee**

- Ayesha Freeman - Vice Principal
- Ellen Whatmore - Teacher
- HuiHui Hutchinson - Student
- Jonel Mondero - Student
- Katisyn Sweeney - Student
- Liliana McClain - Student
- Mia Sedory - Student
- Aslan Newson, - Student
- Norma Hamilton - PPS Paraprofessional
- Noreena McCleave - Alumni
- Nura Salah - Student
- Principal Filip Hristic

## **EXTENDED TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION / EVALUATION**

- **April 7:** The IBWHS renaming committee met with MKT BOX to produce the concept drafts of the Guardians mascot.
- **April 28:** MKT Box will meet with IBWHS renaming committee to identify branding deliverables.
- **April 28 - May 5:** MKT BOX will collaborate with the IBWHS renaming committee to refine the graphic elements.
- **April 30:** MKT BOX will produce athletic uniform deliverables.
- **May 6 - May 13:** MKT BOX will design the additional IBW graphic elements.
- **May 14 - May 21:** MKT BOX will collaborate with the IBWS renaming committee to refine the final design choices.
- **May 24:** MKT Box will produce the final branding package.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

PPS staff and the local school community are grateful for the support of the board, and we also recognize that our education system has a responsibility to refine and streamline the process for other schools to follow. We ask that you honor the time and effort of our student activists while we also lean into our values of PPS ReImagined and build equity-aligned systems and structures.

Staff recommend that the Board approves the Ida B. Wells mascot name change from the Trojans to the **Guardians**. With the shift from Woodrow Wilson High School to Ida B. Wells High School, it is also appropriate to redefine the symbol of the school community. The school has identified the **Guardians** as their preferred mascot. Proponents of this name have described **Guardians** in the following way:

*“Guardians give us the sense of strength, power, and willingness to keep us together by watching over us. That is precisely what Ida B. Wells did in Memphis, Tennessee, by reporting on racial segregation, injustice, and inequities in the Memphis Free Speech and Headlight newspaper.”*

*As a member of the PPS Executive Leadership Team, I have reviewed this staff report.*

\_\_\_\_\_ (Initials)

ATTACHMENTS

A.