



Office of the Mayor

Jim Paine, Mayor

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MINUTES

MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON COMMUNITIES OF COLOR **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14th 2022** **5:30 P.M. - RM 204**

The February 14th meeting of the Mayor's Commission on Communities of Color was called to order at 5:35 pm.

1. **Roll Call**
Present: Deanna Reder, Jenny Van Sickle, Ephraim Nikoi
Also Present: Becky Scherf, Claudia Fezzey
2. **Presentation from student Claudia Fezzey regarding Moccasin Mike Rd.** Ms. Fezzey explained her research regarding the name Moccasin Mike Rd. Councilor Van Sickle answered a few of the student's questions regarding the process of the possible name change.
3. **Approval of November 8th minutes**
Motion by Commissioner Nikoi, second by Commissioner Van Sickle, and passed unanimously to approve the meeting minutes.
4. **SPD ABLE Training**
Councilor Van Sickle provided an update that SPD received and completed ABLE training. Agreed to forward the news articles to commissioners and would discuss bringing in Chief Alexander if any questions after reading them.
5. **Future Meetings**
Discussed possibly changing meeting times. Decided to keep it first Monday of every month for now.
6. **Open Board Seats**
Discussed options for possible new board members. Councilor Van Sickle to reach out to a prospect. Discussed different ideas for members such as having a high school rep, a UWS rep, a rep from the Black Student Union.
7. **Any other business**
Commissioner Reder asked to look up their goals from previous minutes and bring to next meeting to review and see how they have done. Commissioner Nikoi asked for update on SPD. Commissioner Reder gave an update on SPD CRS Jen Stank. Councilor Van Sickle gave an update that 99% of city employees have finished the diversity training.
8. **Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 6:25 PM.

December 14, 2021

Claudia Fezzey
% Minden Hultstrom
Superior High School
2600 Catlin Ave
Superior, WI 54880

Mayor Jim Paine
1316 N. 14th St.
Superior, WI 54880

Dear Mayor Paine,

As residents of the City of Superior, we have grown up with Wisconsin Point nearby and have been able to enjoy the beautiful beach in the summer. We have always been cognizant of the name “Moccasin Mike Road” that leads to the beach where memories have been created, but it was not until recently that we have taken the time to process fully and think deeply about the road’s name. After extensive research into the subject matter, we have found that the name “Moccasin Mike” is associated with a long, dark history of oppression against Native Americans. That is why we propose that Moccasin Mike Road be given a different name that is representative of the Fond Du Lac Band, who previously resided on Wisconsin Point, and possess a sacred burial ground on this land.

According to Shelley Nelson of the *Superior Telegram*, the land of Wisconsin Point belonged to the Fond Du Lac Band until the Treaty of 1854 was implemented, granting the land on Wisconsin Point to the United States. The Native Americans were allowed to live on their land until the 1900s, when U.S. Steel decided they wanted to build an ore dock on the point. Consequently, the inhabitants were forced to leave, and in addition, had to move their dead to a large cemetery on the Nemadji River. Ultimately, U.S. Steel chose not to build the ore docks on

the land because it was too sandy.¹ Mike Gendron writes that the road leading out to the point is named after a supervisor of the county board who served in the 1890s called Michael S. Bright, Jr., also known as “Moccasin Mike.” The moniker originally belonged to Bright’s father, but he adopted this name to gain the support of Native Americans to get elected. Bright was not the only politician known to use this strategy, with others who called themselves names such as “Firewater,” “Wigwam,” and “Tomahawk.”² Essentially, the road was named after a white male who used the nickname to gain fame and trust by undermining the Native community. According to Dr. Chantal Norrgard, a professor of First Nations Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, this name is harmful because it is an example of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism is a concept that “focuses on the displacing and erasing Indigenous presence and replacing it with settler names, interests, and narratives.”³

Additionally, Native Americans in the Superior area have reported feeling that Native American culture is underrepresented, despite Superior’s significant Native American history. As city councilor of the Second District of Superior, Jenny Van Sickle, who is Native American herself, states, “Being a Native in Superior is a difficult experience. I feel very suffocated by the cavernous void of culture.”⁴ And the disrespect towards the sacred land of Wisconsin Point has not ended. In February of 2021, the burial ground was disturbed by people who have no connection to the site during a buried medallion hunt.⁵ Although no permanent damage was done, it is a sign of the need for further acknowledgement that the land of Wisconsin Point holds

¹ Nelson, Shelley. “Superior Launches Discussion to Rename Moccasin Mike Road.” *Superior Telegram*, 17 Mar. 2021, <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/government-and-politics/6928944-Superior-launches-discussion-to-rename-Moccasin-Mike-Road>.

² Gendron, Michael. “New Conversations Being Had around Moccasin Mike Road.” *WDIO*, 9 Mar. 2021, <https://www.wdio.com/superior-wisconsin-news/moccasin-mike-road/6036406/>.

³ Norrgard, Chantal. “Re: Interview Request.” Received by Claudia Fezzey, 2 Dec. 2021.

⁴ Van Sickle, Jenny. Phone conversation. 7 Dec. 2021.

⁵ Tanko, Steve. “Superior Councilor Aims to Rename Moccasin Mike Road.” *KOOL 101.7*, 26 Feb. 2021, <https://kool1017.com/superior-councilor-aims-to-rename-moccasin-mike-road/>.

cultural significance for the Fond Du Lac Band. However, people who have been used to the road name for their entire lives may be against a name change. People may claim that abandoning the name “Moccasin Mike Road” is trying to rewrite history. On the contrary, changing the name to something that better represents the Fond Du Lac tribe would be restoring history, as they have had a presence in the region for much longer than the white settlers have had. If people learn about the history of the Fond Du Lac tribe and the road name, they may be more open to a name change and understand what it means to the Native Americans of Superior.

Another problem with changing the name would be the Superior Landfill and the Humane Society of Douglas County on Moccasin Mike Road. They would have to get their addresses for mailing services and advertisement, and that normally costs around 100 dollars per business depending on their level of marketing.⁶ Although this is a potential drawback, the cost is small. Perhaps the city could cover the expenses for the businesses. This minor one-time investment would go a long way in beginning to build a relationship between the city and its Indigenous citizens.

Discussions surrounding changing the name “Moccasin Mike Road” have already begun in response to the disruption of the burial ground caused by the medallion hunt (Nelson). On March 8, 2021, Councilor Van Sickle addressed the Mayor’s Commission on Communities of Color. At this meeting, Councilor Van Sickle spoke about the name Moccasin Mike Road, presenting a number of sources substantiating biological information about M.S. Bright. This issue was supposed to be added to the agenda of the Wisconsin Point Committee’s meeting in May 2021.⁷ However, Councilor Van Sickle stated that she decided to withdraw the request to

⁶ Sember, Brett. “How to Change a Business Address for an LLC.” *LEGALZOOM*
<https://info.legalzoom.com/article/how-change-business-address-llc>

⁷ “Minutes of the Wisconsin Point Committee.” Wisconsin Point Committee, May 2021, Superior.

speak at the Wisconsin Point Committee's meeting, citing a need for further preparation to address questions brought forth by the community. Nevertheless, Councilor Van Sickle desires to continue pursuing the renaming of Moccasin Mike Road.⁸

In order to rename Moccasin Mike Road formally, the proposal needs to go before the Wisconsin Point committee and receive support from the committee members. Ultimately, the City of Superior's Plan Commission has the authority to change street names in the City of Superior, meaning that the proposal of changing the name would go before the commission, and once again, need support. Once the name change is finalized, the signs titled "Moccasin Mike Road" would be replaced. According to Scott Davis, an engineer at the city sign shop, the small sign on Moccasin Mike Road would cost \$67 plus labor to replace.⁹ In addition, there are four signs on U.S. 2 with the name. Matthew Reddy of WISDOT reports that to replace each sign would cost \$450 each, totaling \$1800; this cost includes the manufacturing and installation of the signs.¹⁰

The name change for Moccasin Mike road, one on which many Superior residents travel, would be beneficial to the Superior community. In life, it is necessary to look back on past mistakes and right our wrongs in order to be able to move forward and grow. It will be a sign for the Fond Du Lac tribe and other indigenous peoples in our region to know that they are seen and are an integral part of the Superior community. As Bob Miller, a seventh-generation descendant of Chief Osaugie, puts it, the intention of changing the road is not intended to "cancel culture," instead it is "bringing ours out where it used to be" (Gendron).¹¹ Without the name change, the

⁸ Van Sickle, Jenny. Phone conversation. 7 Dec. 2021.

⁹ Davis, Scott. Phone conversation. 3 Dec. 2021.

¹⁰ Reddy, Matthew. "Re: Moccasin Mike Road Sign Cost," Received by Claudia Fezzey, 6 Dec. 2021.

¹¹ Gendron, Michael. "New Conversations Being Had around Moccasin Mike Road." *WDIO*, 9 Mar. 2021, <https://www.wdio.com/superior-wisconsin-news/moccasin-mike-road/6036406/>.

community of Superior would not be able to grow to its highest potential with this continued presence of a racist history. The road's name would continue as a symbol of disrespect and a lack of consideration for the Fond Du Lac tribe and their history on Wisconsin Point. The new name could serve the purpose of uplifting the Native Americans who were oppressed, rather than continuing to recognize oppressors.

Renaming Moccasin Mike Road will not fix centuries of injustices towards Superior's Native American community. Rather, it is an action that signifies acknowledgement and respect of the land's sanctity to the Fond Du Lac Band. Because of the benefits it would serve to our community, the mayor and the Wisconsin Point committee should support this proposal of renaming Moccasin Mike Road.

Sincerely,

Claudia Fezzey, Lauren Gunderson, and Evelyn Warring