



SCHOOLS

Foxborough School Committee votes to change Native American mascot logo but keep 'Warrior' name

"Our mission as a public school is to be for everyone, all the time," one school committee member who voted in favor of the phase out said after the vote.



Foxborough Public Schools' have scrapped the image of a Native American as their mascot logo.
Foxborough Public Schools

October 4, 2023

After months of passionate debate, the Foxborough School Committee **voted Tuesday night** to phase out the use of Native American iconography in their district's mascot logo.

The decision was a split vote among the committee members with Richard Pearson, Brent Ruter, and Rob Canfield voting in favor, Sarah LiDonni voting against, and Michelle Thackston abstaining.

“Our mission as a public school is to be for everyone, all the time,” Ruter said during the meeting. “And while I absolutely understand [the image's] meaning, its importance to those people who hold any symbol dear, where the crux for me comes is that our mission is to ensure a safe place for everyone.”

ADVERTISEMENT:

Thackston said during the meeting that she was uncomfortable with phasing out the logo while having nothing to replace it with other than an “F” for Foxborough.

LiDonni said she felt the wording in the proposal was vague. She advised the committee to take no action on the issue and instead wait for a decision at the state level on the use of Native American mascot logos in **schools**.

But other committee members expressed concern that, were the decision to be left up to the state, the district would be forced to get rid of the Warriors name as well, as it has been associated with Native Americans.



FEATURED ON BOSTON.COM

Boston mayor apologizes to men wrongfully accused in...



On that matter, the committee was united. During the meeting, members voted unanimously to keep the Warriors name.

What the 'phase out' will mean for the district

The district will not immediately stop using sports equipment with a Native American mascot. Instead, it will simply not order new equipment or accept donations for school use with such a logo. This will allow sports equipment with the logo to be replaced without the district having to waste items that are still usable.

Before the committee voted on whether to keep the logo, Canfield tried to allay concerns about how much it would cost the district to change the logo. He clarified that a lot of sports equipment and the like gets replaced or updated frequently.

ADVERTISEMENT:

The most expensive part of the change would be replacing the image on the high school gym floor, which Canfield said is estimated to cost less than \$1,000. Overall, he said, the total price tag for changing the logo everywhere would be less than \$2,000.

One reason the cost to change the mascot logo is so low is that the district hasn't ordered new uniforms with the Native American image for a few years. As such, many committee members said they felt the decision to phase out the logo was simply continuing in the direction the district was already going.

During the meeting, the committee also voted to form a committee of students, parents, teachers, coaches, and other stakeholders to consider what should replace the image of an Indigenous person in the Warriors logo. This motion passed four to one, with only LiDonni voting against it.

The public weighs in

Video from the meeting showed that about a dozen people came to the meeting wearing clothing with the Native American mascot logo. Attendees interrupted committee members several times during the meeting, and during the vote on whether or not to keep the logo, many could be heard yelling "no."

ADVERTISEMENT:

Last week, the school committee **held a forum** to allow the public to voice their opinions on whether to keep or discard the logo. According to the town's moderator, 88 people signed up to speak that night, though far fewer actually spoke at the forum. Of those who spoke, the number of people supporting each side was about equal.

Several Foxborough High School students spoke at the forum. Cayden Hui, a junior who started **a petition to change the mascot logo** that has garnered nearly 1,000 signatures, pointed out that the Warriors logo is nearly identical to **the now-defunct Washington Redskins logo**.

“We believe that this mascot objectifies and perpetuates one-dimensional stereotypes of indigenous people,” he said. “The image is of a Blackfeet chief. The Blackfeet Nation is not located in Massachusetts or even New England. They are located in Montana. We do not have any local historical ties to this image.”



The Foxborough Warriors logo is nearly identical to that of the now-defunct Washington Redskins. – *Foxborough Public Schools and Susan Walsh/AP Photo*

Hui argued that the logo treats Indigenous tribes as interchangeable.

“To have an image of a Blackfeet chief to represent Indigenous people in Massachusetts is like taking an image of a Japanese emperor to represent the entire Asian race,” he said.

But other students said they wanted to keep the logo. One student, who said she was part of the high school girls' basketball team, said student athletes are proud of the awards they've earned that bear the logo.

"It is a way of life, not just a school mascot. It is meant as a tribute to those who came before us and a message to those who will come after us," she said. "Play hard, work hard, support one another, and be a Warrior in every sense of the word. Why would you want to erase our history and take all of that away from us?"

ADVERTISEMENT:

The student also pointed out that last spring, **more than 2,100 residents signed a petition to keep the logo.**

MORE ON MASCOTS



'Native Mascots do not bring honor to Native Americans': Mass. students, activists, and Native people want change

Town near Connecticut tribe cuts 'Indians' school mascot

Massachusetts bill would ban Native American school mascots

The bigger picture

Indigenous activist organization **United American Indians of New England** (UAIINE) opposes the depiction of Native Americans as mascots. In the last 10 years, at least two **bills to ban the practice** have been **introduced in the Massachusetts Legislature**.

UAIINE also published a list of school districts in **New England which still have a Native American mascot**, though it hasn't been updated since October 2021. At that time, 46 school districts still had Native American mascots and half of those were located in **Massachusetts**, according to the group.

Some Massachusetts school districts, such as **Hanover** and **Pentucket Regional**, have discarded their Native American mascot in the last few years. But in 2021, **Wakefield residents voted to keep theirs**.