

CHANGING REBELS

Mascot Search Kicks Off

PARAMETERS SET FOR SHS PANEL AT FIRST MEETING

By Chad Hunter
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A new Southside High School mascot committee was handed its marching orders Monday to begin thinking of a Rebel replacement "that reflects the traditions, the spirit and the history of our school."

"Certainly we want to get a mascot that's at least not well used by other schools," Principal Wayne Haver said, "and certainly none that are in our conference."

The Southside High School Mascot Selection Committee's first meeting included introductions and a history lesson from Haver on "how we got here."

In July, the Fort Smith School Board voted unanimously to phase out the Rebel, Southside's mascot since opening in 1963. The School Board also voted to retire the school's fight song, "Dixie," which has been replaced with American folk song "Wabash Cannonball."

The changes, according to a June statement from the school district, came after "giving great consideration to the continuing

impact of perceived symbols of racism on the community, state and nation."

The newly assembled mascot committee met Monday night at the Southside cafeteria.

"At the next meeting, I would like for us to start making some suggestions as to the mascots you think are viable," Haver said. "We'll end up with a short list, hopefully four or five."

The committee set its next meeting dates as Oct. 5, 12 and 26. All will begin at 7 p.m. at the Southside High School cafeteria.

Haver said he wanted to avoid common Arkansas mascots like tigers, eagles, bulldogs, panthers, lions, wildcats and pirates. Southside students, he said, turned in 148 suggestions representing 64 different mascots.

"All sorts of names have been suggested, many of them good names," Haver said, noting that Rebel-related names garnered the most votes. "Rebel is not an option. Mavericks was second with 16. Marshals was third with 14, Patriots with 13. Spartans had nine."

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Haver also noted a spate of "blue" monikers.

"Suspiciously those look like the same writing except for maybe two," Haver said. "None of them are bad. They're just all blue."

Haver said he removed eight suggestions that included "obscene" names and a student's girlfriend.

"One of them was just

blank," Haver said.

Including Haver, the committee has 29 members.

"This committee is comprised of those people that represent our school and represent our community," Haver said. "We're now at this stage of selecting a mascot. We want to get one that will reflect the traditions, the spirit and the history of our school."