
President's Advisory Panel on University Namings and Recognitions

May 4, 2018

FSU/Training Center – Stadium Place, Room 205, 1300 Jackson Bluff Rd

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Members

Renisha Gibbs- Chair

Robyn Jackson

Miguel Hernandez

Maxine Jones

Walter Moore

Norman Anderson

Janet Stoner

Lane Forsman

Kyle Hill

Chris Pinango

Allisson Yu [via phone conference]

Kyle Doney [via phone conference]

Support Staff

Danni Staats

Elizabeth Hirst

The meeting started at 9:03am

1. Welcome

Renisha Gibbs, Panel Chair, called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone in attendance, and noted that it was an exciting time of year, being that it was graduation weekend.

2. Public Comments

Ms. Gibbs proceeded to open the floor for public comment and asked the first speaker, Kitt Comellas, to come-up to the microphone. She reminded everyone that the public comments were limited to three minutes, per speaker, and asked that all speakers keep an eye on Elizabeth Hirst, who would be providing periodic notice with regards to their time.

[Comment #1]

Kitt Comellas indicated that she would be brief, and that her comments would be similar to the ones she had made at the previous meeting. She began by asserting that the fact that everyone was there, that it had to come to this, and the fact that the [Eppes] statue was ever erected in the first place, said a lot about the University, more specifically, about what the University seemed to think about diversity and integration. Ms. Comellas added that while she knew these things had been discussed at the last meeting, she felt they were worth repeating. She stated that another thing she'd like to mention was the fact that these meetings had seemed to be scheduled at

inaccessible times and places, noting that it was finals week, as well as graduation weekend, and that she knew students who would have been there if they hadn't been busy with exams and graduation stuff. She concluded by expressing her hope that the panel had had more than enough information from both sides to make a clear and moral decision, and thanking the panel for their time.

[Comment #2]

Maddie Hendrick introduced herself as a rising senior studying Spanish at Florida State University [FSU] and as an organizer with Students for a Democratic Society [SDS], noting that as such, the panel would have seen her a lot at previous meetings. She went on to summarize her belief that throughout the course of their meetings, the panel had been provided, and in turn also provided the public, with a lot of important information, which reinforced things that SDS had been saying for the past two year. Ms. Hendrick asserted that the information emphasized that there was a big dispute about whether or not Francis Eppes could be considered the founder of the University, highlighted his role in upholding slavery, which extended far and beyond what other Mayors and Justices of the Peace were doing at the time, and lastly, underscored that [the recognition of Eppes] had to do with some kind of connection he had to Thomas Jefferson, as opposed to him having any sort of real connection to the University other than a kind of vague and arbitrary one. Ms. Hendrick stated that given the information in front of them, she trusted the panel to make a good decision, but wanted to briefly reiterate that there were a lot of students on campus, specifically a lot of black students, who were very uncomfortable with Francis Eppes and B.K. Roberts, a fact she thought the panel must be aware of by now. She concluded by thanking the panel for their time and for listening to [SDS's] comments every [meeting].

Ms. Gibbs thanked Ms. Hendrick for her engagement in this process.

[Comment #3]

Katherine Draken introduced herself as a senior at FSU, majoring in Psychology, and stated that [members of SDS] had spoken previously about how Francis Eppes was a slave-owner, about how he brutalized black people, and about how he was a terrible person, even in the time in which he lived. She asserted that Eppes had actively fought for the institution of slavery and repressed abolitionist literature, making him somebody that FSU shouldn't be honoring, given the University's stated values and hopefully our morality. Ms. Draken acknowledged that there was a good possibility the panel had already heard everything she was saying before, and indicated that all she really wanted to say was that today was the day the panel needed to decide what side of history FSU was going to be on, and how they were going to be remembered. She opined that if the [Eppes] statue was still there in the future, people were going to continue to wonder why, and wonder who had decided that it was a good idea to honor a slave-holder at FSU. Ms. Draken concluded by reiterating that the panel needed to decide what side of history they wanted to be on.

Ms. Gibbs thanked the speakers for their comments and took a moment to identify the panel members on the conference phone line [*Allisson Yu and Kyle Doney*] before moving on to the next agenda item.

3. Action Recommendations

Ms. Gibbs stated that she wanted to speak briefly about the plan for how this portion of the meeting would be handled, indicating that she felt the panel had spent a lot of time reviewing the principles, and that at this point, they were ready to move forward in determining what recommendations they would be providing to President Thrasher with regards to B.K. Roberts Hall, Francis Eppes Hall, and the Francis Eppes Statue. Ms. Gibbs, henceforth referred to as the “Panel Chair”, explained that she would be opening the floor for each of the aforementioned landmarks on an individual basis, and would entertain motions for specific recommendations put forward by any member of the panel.

- B.K. Roberts Hall

The Panel Chair proceeded to open the floor for motions regarding B.K. Roberts Hall, recognizing Miguel Hernandez.

Mr. Hernandez moved for the panel to recommend that “B.K. Roberts’ name be removed from the Law School building.” Lane Forsman seconded the motion.

Robyn Jackson put forward an appeal for a friendly amendment, noting that neither the President nor the University would have the authority to remove B.K. Roberts’ name from the Law School building, as the building had been named through an act of legislation.

The Panel Chair made a point of clarification that if the motion on the floor was carried out, the recommendation would be “that the University administration seek legislative action to legally remove B. K. Roberts’s name from the Law School Building.”

Kyle Hill moved to amend the recommendation by adding at the end “...and also provide some form of contextualized recognition of B.K. Roberts somewhere in the Law School.” Norman Anderson seconded the motion.

After amendment and further debate, the Panel Chair took a vote viva voce [by the voice], and the recommendation was adopted as follows: “The panel recommends, that the University administration seek legislative action to legally remove B. K. Roberts’s name from the Law School Building, and also provide some form of contextualized recognition of B.K. Roberts somewhere in the Law School.”

- Francis Eppes Hall

The Panel Chair opened the floor for motions regarding Francis Eppes Hall, recognizing Maxine Jones.

Dr. Jones moved for the panel to recommend “that Francis Eppes’s name be removed from the [College of Criminology] building.” Mr. Hernandez seconded the motion.

Janet Stoner moved to make a friendly amendment, by inserting on the end “...and somewhere on campus, provide an educational/historical record of the building having

previously been named for Eppes, which would also include an outline of the panel's process for reviewing the recognition, and the reasoning for their recommendation that Eppes's name be removed." Dr. Anderson seconded the motion, and after debate, the amendment was adopted, per a unanimous vote.

Chris Pinango moved to make a second amendment by inserting "that Francis Eppes's name not be removed from the [College of Criminology] building, and a second name be added onto the building, along with Eppes, and that an educational and-historically accurate record of Eppes's contributions to the city, including his part in the founding of the University, ~~historical record of the building having previously been named for Eppes,~~ be provided somewhere on campus, ~~which would include an outline of the panel's process for reviewing the recognition, and the reasoning for their recommendation that Eppes's name be removed.~~" Mr. Hill seconded the motion, but the vote, taken viva voce, came back negative, and the amendment was discarded.

The Panel Chair took a viva voce vote on the previously amended recommendation, which was adopted as follows: "The panel recommends, that Francis Eppes's name be removed from the [College of Criminology] building, and that an educational/historical record of the building having previously been named for Eppes, be provided somewhere on campus, which would include an outline of the panel's process for reviewing the recognition, and the reasoning for their recommendation that Eppes's name be removed."

- Francis Eppes Statue

The Panel Chair opened the floor for motions regarding the Francis Eppes Statue, recognizing Mr. Hill.

Mr. Hill moved for the panel to recommend "that the statue be kept and that historically accurate context be added with regards to Eppes's role in the founding of the University." The motion was seconded by Mr. Pinango.

Ms. Stoner moved to make a friendly amendment, by adding to the end "... , in addition to broader information about the role that slavery played in the University's history." Mr. Hill seconded the motion.

After debate, the amendment was adopted, per a vote taken viva voce, however, with a roll-call vote of 8 nays and 3 yeas from the panel members in attendance or participating via the conference phone-line, the amended motion was ultimately discarded as follows: "The panel recommends, that the statue be kept and that historically accurate context be added with regards to Eppes's role in the founding of the University, in addition to broader information about the role that slavery played in the University's history."

Dr. Anderson moved for the panel to recommend "that the Eppes Statue be removed and replaced with an appropriate recognition of; the University's founders; the participation of slavery in the construction of the University; and the Seminole Tribe or other First Nation

people. The motion was seconded by Ms. Jackson, and after debate, the recommendation was adopted by a unanimous vote, taken vive voce.

Mr. Forsman moved for the panel to recommend “that the Eppes statue be curated in a historically accurate manner.” Mr. Pinango seconded the motion, and after debate, the recommendation was adopted by a unanimous vote, taken vive voce.

The Panel Chair confirmed that there were no additional motions with regards to the panel’s recommendations for B.K. Roberts Hall, Francis Eppes Hall, and the Francis Eppes Statue, before moving to the next agenda item.

4. Next Steps

Carolyn Egan, University General Council, proposed that the panel entertain a motion to delegate to the Panel Chair, the task of writing up the report and recommendations to the President in a manner consistent with the discussions and the votes from today’s meeting.

Mr. Hernandez made the aforementioned motion, Dr. Moore seconded, and by a unanimous vote taken viva voce, the motion was carried.

The Panel Chair confirmed that she would immediately begin working to draft the report, and would do her best to capture the panel’s robust discussions, with the intent of showing how they arrived at those particular recommendations. She acknowledged that this was just the first, small part of the panel’s work, and indicated that she thought her next step would be to sit down with the President to talk about how this advisory body and their work would look going forward. She also stated that she would like to continue some of the work during the summer, if possible, and that she would keep everyone in the loop. She concluded by thanking the panel for their active participation, recognizing that they were all very busy people doing important work, and specifically expressed her appreciation to Mr. Hill for being at the panel meeting on his graduate day, indicating on behalf of the panel, that they wished him all the best.

Ms. Stoner inquired as to whether the report being drafted by the Panel Chair would be circulated to the panel members before being submitted to President Thrasher.

The Panel Chair responded that she would be sure to provide the panel an opportunity to review the report and provide their feedback before a final draft was submitted.

5. Other Business

No additional business.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:39a.m.