

FORT BRAGG

WELCOMES YOU



An aerial photograph of a coastal area. In the center is a bay with blue water and a sandy beach. The surrounding land is green with some roads and paths. The sky is clear and blue.

Fort Bragg, CA Citizens Commission Presentation

Process Overview and Recommendations

This Commission has spent well over a year together, and our experience is a story that we think will be useful to the community.

Original Commission Appointments
August 2020

Keily Becerra Sánchez	Gabriel Quinn Maroney
Ryan Bushnell	Bernadette Rafanan
Marshall Carr Jr.	Melanie Rafanan
Nicki Caito Urbani	Ray Richards
Misty Dawn Cook	Javier Silva
Elena Gonzalez	Lucy Stanley
Tara Larson	Scott Taubold
Ed Murrell	Andy Wellspring
Christie Olson Day	Cesar Yanez

Commissioners Participating as of
November 2021

Keily Becerra Sánchez
Marshall Carr Jr.
Nicki Caito Urbani
Misty Dawn Cook
Christie Olson Day
Gabriel Quinn Maroney
Lucy Stanley
Scott Taubold
Andy Wellspring
Cesar Yanez

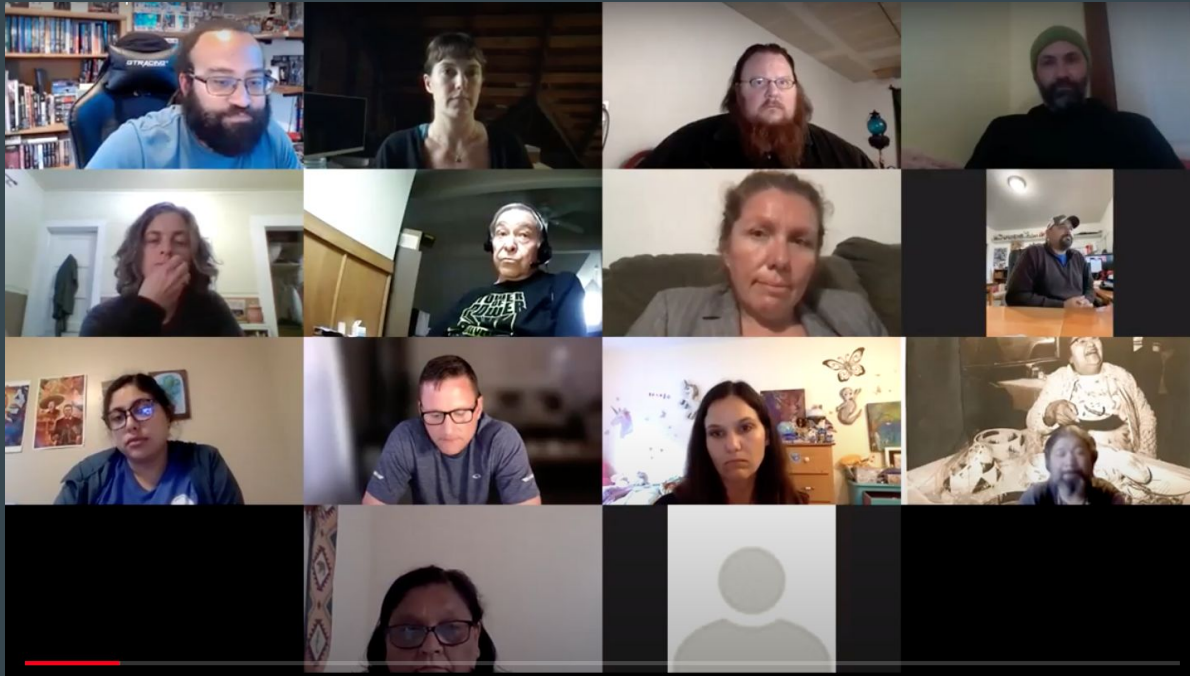
Rest in Peace Ed Murrell, you were a blessing to this community

We were brought together to represent diverse experiences and viewpoints.

Like the community, we were somewhat polarized in our views.

Early meetings were sometimes contentious.

Things changed when we began telling our stories, and our ancestors' stories, to one another.



We spent more than 60 volunteer hours together, talking and listening. During those meetings, we began to seek areas of consensus.

There were many things we disagreed about, but we also found -- and created -- ideas that brought us all together.

Ultimately, we built our recommendations out of those unifying ideas.

Purpose of the Commission

On June 22nd, 2020 Mayor Lee appointed Vice Mayor Norvell and Council-member Morsell-Haye to an ad hoc committee with direction to determine the best model for creating a Citizens Commission that would not only provide a recommendation on the best path forward for the name change matter but also address the deeper systemic issue of racism.

August 10th Ad Hoc presentation to City Council:

Goals

- Identify commissioners to represent a comprehensive range of perspectives from this community.
- Engage commission in an assessment of who we are as a community, currently and historically.
- Enable difficult, honest dialogue about race, equity and identity.
- Identify meaningful actions to address foundational inequity and disparities.
- Engage the public and begin to bridge divides through common values and increased awareness of contrasting perspectives.

18 commissioner appointments were made on August 10, 2020

This goal was addressed through 5 presentations of family histories, a History of the Fort presentation and a Braxton Bragg & Monuments presentation. Consensus on historic identity was much closer to being achieved than consensus on our current identity. Perspectives on the current state of Fort Bragg continue to be divided

Over 50+ hours of dialogue

Recommendations extend beyond the question of the name change

Addressed within final recommendations

Commission Process

Agendas: agendas were based on group direction. We held 31 meetings on zoom between September 1st, 2020 and November 22nd, 2021. This was over 50 hours of dialogue.

Histories and Perspectives: presentation on the origin of Fort Bragg, presentation on Braxton Bragg, the confederacy and monuments, and family histories of 5 commissioners presented to the group

Go-arounds: we heavily utilized timed go-arounds in shifting alphabetical order to ensure that all commissioners' voices were heard

Shared Documents: Agendas, presentations, community questionnaire responses and meeting recordings of presentations available here: [Citizens Commission Shared Drive](#)

Professional Facilitation: we used a professional facilitator for our first meeting only. All meetings thereafter were led by either the chair or commission members.

Community Feedback: community feedback was solicited through a bilingual community questionnaire distributed via water bill inserts, social media, the city website & city hall in the month of July, 2021. Residents of the 95437 zip code were invited to participate. We received 1649 online and paper responses.

Community Questionnaire

As we approached a full year of work, we wondered whether we had heard every viewpoint. We developed a community questionnaire to address this concern, and we read through every response and discussed them in our meetings. By and large, we discovered that the viewpoints of the community were well represented on the Commission.

We are not professional data gatherers, and the budget for this questionnaire was virtually zero. We know that we were unable to prevent people from participating twice, or prevent people from out of the area participating. We put this disclaimer at the top of the questionnaire:

“The answers collected will not be used to make statistical conclusions and will be archived.”

Who responded?

We received 1,649 responses.

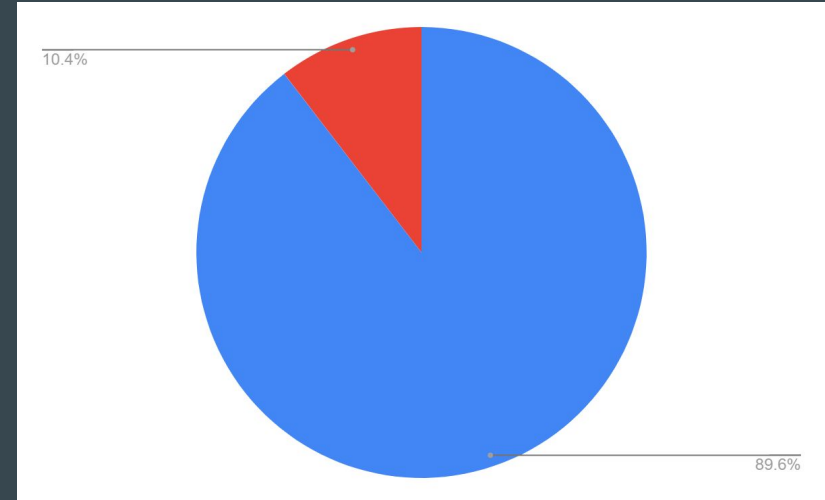
About 90% of respondents told us they live within the 95437 ZIP code.

Who did we contact directly? Folks who ...

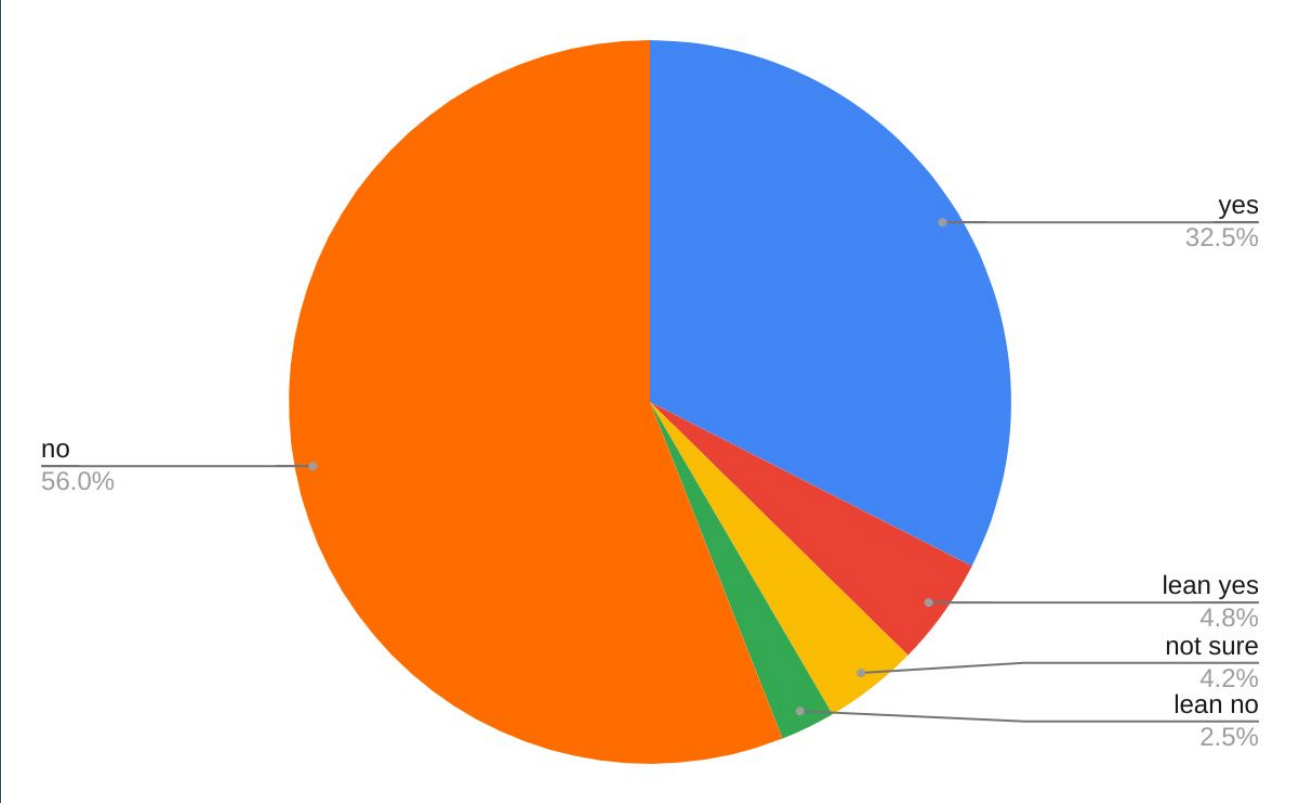
- Read the Advocate-News or City Council emails
- Receive and read paper water bills from the City
- Use facebook

Do these people
accurately represent the
community?

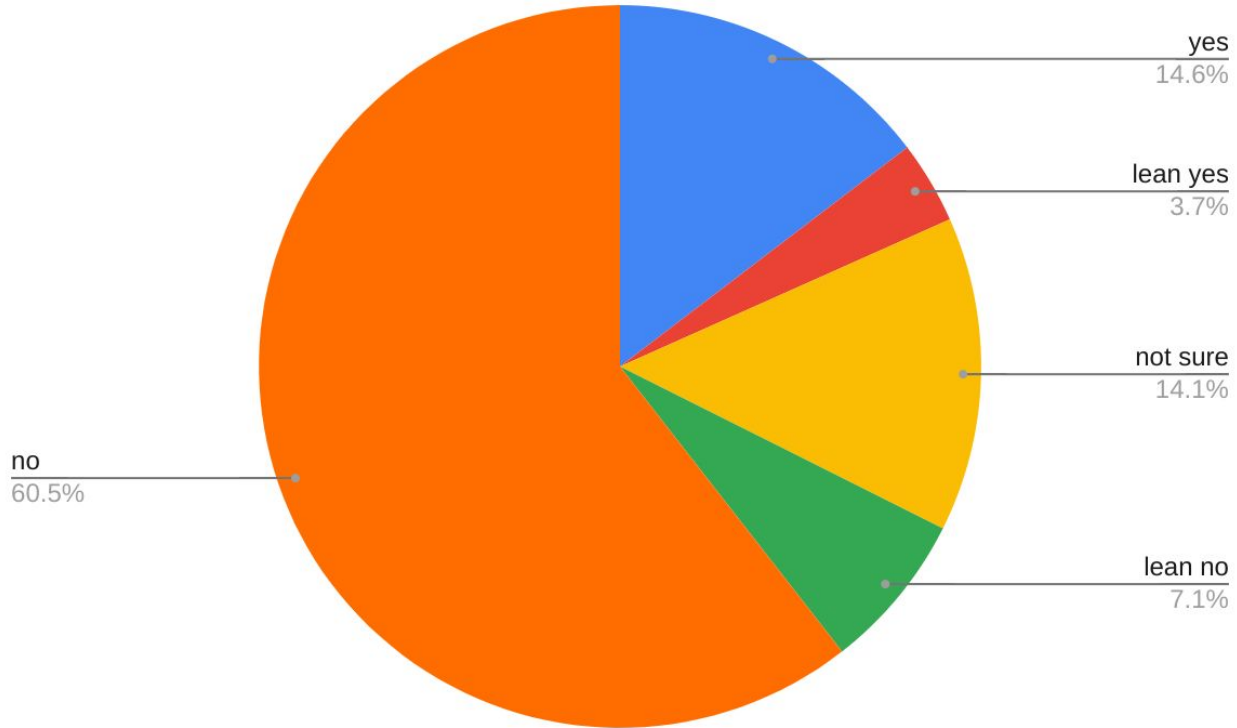
We don't know.



What did respondents think about changing the name?



What about Rededication?



Some things we can say from the questionnaire:

- The results seem to show that there may be more people who want to keep the name. However, the questionnaire also shows that there are significant numbers on both sides.
- The people who responded felt very strongly.
- We learned from opinions and viewpoints that were not already spoken within our commission.

If the City wants accurate, actionable data about what residents want, other methods will need to be used.

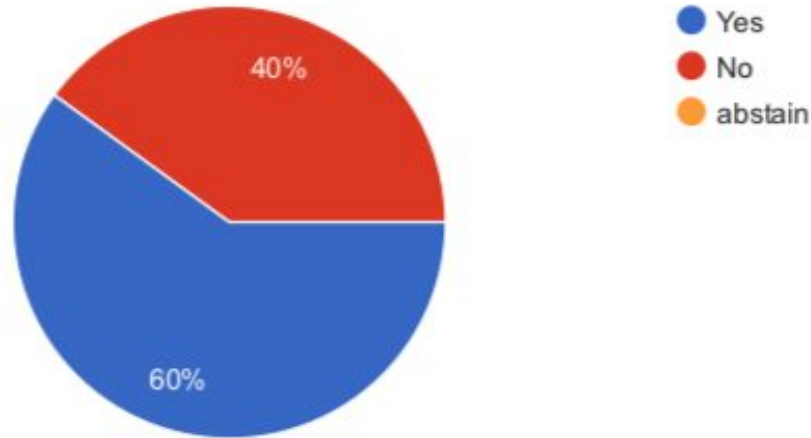
We thank everyone in the community
who took the time to submit opinions
and feedback.

*Special thanks to the students of Noyo High School, who recorded
video presentations of their opinions!*

Just like the town, this commission was divided about the name:

Do you agree with this statement? "I hope the name changes sometime in the not-too-distant future."

10 responses



This chart shows the personal opinions and hopes of the Commissioners – not our recommendations to the City.

In spite of our differences, when we delved into the issues around the name change question, we found broad support within the Commission for some basic goals:

- Demonstrate the City's commitment to being inclusive and welcoming to all people
- Increase knowledge and understanding about Indigenous culture and local history
- Clarify that we do not in any way associate ourselves with the confederate legacy
- Optimize our future as an attractive and prosperous place to live and visit

Consensus Recommendations

As we studied the name, it became apparent that the many atrocities and the attempted genocide committed against the Indigenous Peoples of this land, when the US military's Fort Bragg was established here, are fully wrapped up in the town name.

We came to unanimous agreement on the following recommendations the City Council should carry out to make amends for this tragic history, as these Tribes are resilient and continue to steward this land where we all live together.

These should be developed further WITH all local coastal Tribal people.

1. Create city policy to prioritize Land Back to local coastal tribes



2. Formalize an official agreement to work with local coastal tribes along the lines of the agreement made in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in recognition of their sovereignty and continued stewardship of this land.

“Albuquerque Becomes First City in America to Recognize Tribal Sovereignty by Establishing Government-to-Government Relations”



Main points of the new Albuquerque law:

-The City of Albuquerque acknowledges and affirms tribal sovereignty and self-determination for tribal governments.

-Local Tribes choose their own representatives to be on a Commission along with city staff that are appointed by the Mayor. The Mayor may choose to have any of the tribally-selected members serve in a dual role as one of the Mayor's appointments. (Their Commission is between 9 and 15 members).

-The City of Albuquerque established a government-to-government relationship with this Commission as a way to officially consult with Tribal people about potential impacts of city programs on Tribal communities prior to implementation.

-The Commission is also “an advocate for American Indian/Alaska Native affairs within the City of Albuquerque and the surrounding area, including, but not limited to, matters of employment, education, economy, health, environment, homelessness, government, and access to services in the City.”

(from the Albuquerque Code of Ordinances, full text available:

https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/albuquerque/latest/albuquerque_nm/0-0-0-1160#JD_2-6-6-1)

3. Support the creation of a cultural center

to demonstrate, educate, and honor the way of life that existed pre-contact/pre-Fort Bragg and also to honor the many cultures that exist today here in our town and around the globe.



Photo courtesy of Pomo elder Harriet Rhoades

Lucy Cooper and her baskets. She is survived by children and grandchildren living in our community.



4. Appoint a local history working group

- Explore turning the old fort building into a Mendocino Reservation Memorial focused on the Mendocino Reservation and the first peoples on this land
- Make inclusive local history more visible in our streets and at the Guest House Museum - increased signage and plaques teaching about local coastal tribes, Mendocino Reservation, the formation of our city and the varied communities of immigrants who made it their home.
- Coordinate community forums on history, identity and name change issues
- Coordinate multicultural events within the city



5. Appoint a City Council Ad Hoc Committee to facilitate discussion with the school district and local tribes to support the schools in presenting a more complete and inclusive history of the local area.



6. Support an outdoor event to encourage the local arts, sciences, and culture/economy, a North Coast Community Day, to showcase our diverse community and encourage a robust economy.



What About the Name?

At this time, because the citizens are so divided, this commission cannot *unanimously* recommend a simple yes or no to the question of changing the name.

In addition to the actions already proposed, in the event of a citizen ballot initiative to change the name, we unanimously recommend the City facilitate a series of moderated public gatherings in which people are able to tell their stories in a comfortable environment that encourages listening across differences -- like we did on the commission. We recommend at least 8 such events.

We also have several recommendations with majority support

All the recommendations we just made to you were unanimously agreed to by commissioners.

We consider this a huge accomplishment considering that this commission was assembled in order to contain diverse points of view.

The following recommendations received support of a majority of commissioners.

Recommendations with Majority Support

- Support the creation of a high-profile art monument to celebrate Native Coastal Tribes. (9 to 1 with no abstentions)
- Strengthen the partnership with FB Historical Society (8 to 1 with 1 abstention)
- Work with Tribal Members, local businesses, the Skunk Train, and other local partners to develop a Historic District. (8 to 1 with 1 abstention)
- Prioritize investment in Historic Resources and look into supporting (financially and otherwise) our local Historical Society and Archives. (8 to 2 with 0 abstentions)
- Organize a conference to invite institutions and citizens to take part in creating a blueprint for the future development of the City, where the name change issue can be one element of the discussion. (7 to 2 with 1 abstention)
- Open City Council meetings with acknowledgement that the City is on unceded tribal lands. (5 to 3 with 2 abstentions)
- Establish a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion commission. (5 to 4 with 1 abstention)

Individual Closing Thoughts

Commissioners have prepared personal written statements to include in the materials we have submitted to the Council. We'd like to offer very brief closing thoughts, in the form of one final go-round. Each commissioner will take up to one minute, if they want to share any part of their personal statement now.

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Misty Dawn Cook

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In Conclusion

You chose us to represent the very diverse viewpoints within the town, and we believe that our group did, in fact, capture a wide range of experiences and ideas.

We are proud that we came to unanimous agreement on six recommendations across our differences. We think it's a significant accomplishment, and we hope the Council takes all of our recommendations seriously.

It has been an honor to serve the community on this commission.

We welcome questions from the Council.