



AGENCY: City Council
MEETING DATE: June 22, 2020
DEPARTMENT: Administration
PRESENTED BY: J. Lemos/T. Miller
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AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

TITLE:

Conduct City Council Discussion and Provide Direction to Staff Regarding Submitting to the Voters a Local Ballot Measure Changing the Name of the City of Fort Bragg

ISSUE:

Should a ballot measure be submitted to the city's voters regarding changing the name of the City of Fort Bragg?

ANALYSIS:

Amid growing protests regarding racial inequality following the death of George Floyd at the hands of a few Minneapolis police, and as the nation and US military begin to question the naming of military bases for Confederate army generals such as Braxton Bragg, Robert E. Lee, and Henry L. Benning, staff and Councilmembers have recently received calls from residents of Fort Bragg, the outlying coastal areas, and throughout the state to change the name of the city.

The subject of a name change for Fort Bragg has been discussed before by City Council, most recently in July of 2015 when the City received a letter from Senator Steven Glazer urging the Council to rename the City. The Council discussed the matter then and ultimately decided not to change the City's name.

The City Council can adopt an ordinance by a four-fifths vote to change the name of the city, or it can bring forward a measure at the next general election to put the question to the voters. The relevant law is set forth at Government Code Section 34500 *et seq.* Section 34502 provides:

§ 34502. Change of name. The legislative body may, by ordinance adopted by a four-fifths vote of its members, change the name of the city. In the same manner, the legislative body may eliminate the word "city" from the corporate name and substitute the word "town" or eliminate the word "town" and substitute the word "city."

The City Council may sponsor an initiative measure to submit to the voters the question of whether to adopt an ordinance changing the city's name. Of course, putting this question to the voters would be incomplete without seeking voter approval of an alternative name or at least approving a process of selecting a new name. If the measure includes an alternative name that is approved by the voters, the new name would become effective on December 3, 2020, thirty days after passage. If the measure fails, a name change could not be considered for two years thereafter.

§ 34504. Limitation on further proceedings following unfavorable vote. If an ordinance proposed pursuant to Section 34502 fails passage by the legislative body or if the voters fail to confirm the ordinance, no ordinance changing the name of the city shall be considered for two years from the date of the vote of the legislative body or from the date of the election.

Because the City Council is authorized to sponsor an initiative measure under Elections Code section 9222, it can craft the measure or measures any way it likes. For example, the Council can propose a single measure that would change the City's name to another identified name. Alternatively, the Council can propose a measure that would ask the voters if they wanted to change the City's name to an as-yet-undetermined name to be decided by a future vote. A third option could be to conduct community outreach first to identify several potential new names for the City, then submit these names as a companion measure to be voted on at the same time as the measure that would approve the name change in the first place. For example, Measure A could be worded, "Shall the ordinance to change the name of the City of Fort Bragg be adopted?" Measure B could be worded, "If Measure A is approved by voters, shall the city be named X, Y, or Z?" One way to solicit new names for the city is through an online survey via Survey Monkey. A press release asking for suggested city names to be submitted to the City Clerk could be issued as well.

The voters of the City of Fort Bragg may also bring forward a ballot initiative by filing a petition containing the signatures of ten percent of the voters from the last general election, but the deadline to present a petition for a voter initiative was May 15, 2020 for the matter to be heard at the November 3, 2020 general election; therefore, if a measure is to be placed on the upcoming ballot, the City Council will need to sponsor an initiative measure by passing the necessary resolutions to put the question in the voters' hands.

As an alternative to a ballot measure, the City Council could consider a rededication of the city to another historical figure named Bragg, including:

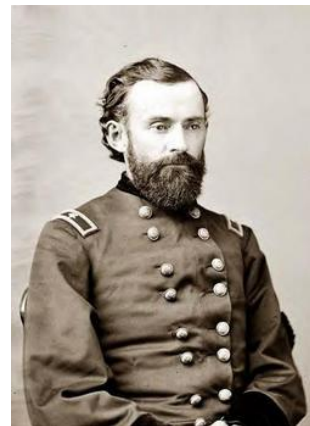
Edward Stuyvesant Bragg

Civil War Union Brigadier General

US Congressman

1827 – 1912

Known for leading a heroic advance at FitzHugh's crossing where his troops captured the Confederate works under enemy fire. Bragg was elected as a Democrat to the Forty-ninth Congress, serving until 1887. He was a Minister Plenipotentiary to Mexico, a consul general at Havana, Cuba, and consul general to Hong Kong.

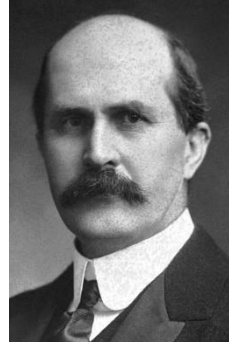


Edward Stuyvesant Bragg

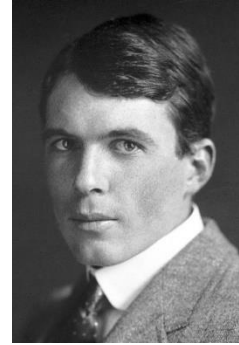
Sir William Henry Bragg & William Lawrence Bragg

Joint winners of the 1915 Nobel Prize in Physics

This father-son team won the Nobel Prize for their breakthrough discoveries regarding crystals and x-rays that led to the new science of X-ray crystallography, making it possible to determine molecular structures from the crystal form of a compound. William Lawrence was 25 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize and remains the youngest ever Nobel Laureate to this day.



Sir William Henry Bragg



William Lawrence Bragg

The above are just two examples, but there may be more appropriate Braggs throughout history. If a rededication is desired, a thorough vetting for historical significance should be required.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff offers no recommendation at this time. After discussion and receiving public input, the City Council may provide direction to staff to:

1. Pursue a ballot measure to change the name of the city, or
2. Prepare an ordinance changing the name of the city, or
3. Not pursue changing the city name, or
4. Establish a citizen commission to evaluate the best way forward, or
5. Table the matter, or
6. Consider the matter at a later meeting.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

See above.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost of changing the name of Fort Bragg is difficult to calculate, but would cost the City many thousands of dollars. Following are a few items associated with the change and an approximate cost:

Item	Est. Cost
Cost to place measure on ballot, voter pamphlet, attorney fees for measure language and impartial analysis	\$2,500
Welcome to Fort Bragg sign	20,000
Wayfinding signage, street signs, banners, City buildings and parks signage, vehicles	75,000
City letterhead, business cards, logos, city seal, PD badges, patches, etc., City Municipal Code	50,000
City website and social media staff time to update	15,000

Item	Est. Cost
"Visit Fort Bragg" promotional campaign and website change (includes costs of a Public Relations/Marketing firm to help with messaging to tie the old Fort Bragg to the new city, replace banners, walking map, etc.)	90,000
Reformat City's Financial and Crime Reporting Software	5,000
City brochures, forms, plaques, pins, etc.	4,000
Process name change with local, state and federal government agencies, on outstanding contracts and on banks and financial accounts, etc.	10,000
Total	\$271,500

In addition to the expenses incurred by the City, other local governments, businesses and residents will incur expenses to transition to a new name.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACT:

There will be some increase in GHG emissions from the equipment and vehicles required to replace all the signage around town.

CONSISTENCY:

Any change in name will need to be consistent with Government Code Sections 34500 *et seq.*

IMPLEMENTATION/TIMEFRAMES:

The deadline for Council to place a measure on the November 3rd ballot is August 7, 2020. Council would need to adopt a resolution and provide ballot measure language to the County of Mendocino by August 7 for the November 3 election. The last regular City Council meeting prior to that date is July 27, 2020.

If the measure passes, the ordinance will take effect thirty days after its passage, or by December 3, 2020. The City Clerk must file a copy of the ordinance with the Secretary of State, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors, and the Mendocino County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) within ten days after the effective date, or by December 13, 2020, at which time the name change will be complete.

If the measure fails, no ordinance to change the name of Fort Bragg can be considered for two years from the date of the election, or until November 3, 2022.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.

NOTIFICATION:

None.