

**VERMONT BOARD OF LIBRARIES
Special Geographic Names Hearing**

**December 8, 2020
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Meeting conducted
Virtually via Microsoft
Teams**

In Attendance: Bruce Post (Chair), Deborah Granquist (Vice Chair), Tom Frank, Maxie Ewins, Linda Saarnijoki, James Saunders, Adriene Katz, Jason Broughton (Secretary)

Others Present: Cherie Yaeger (VTLIB) Janette Shaffer (VTLIB), Thomas McMurdo (VTLIB) April Shaw (VTLIB), Josh Muse (VTLIB), Jennifer Runyon (USBGN), Matthew O'Donnell (USBGN), Glen Guempel (USBGN) Peter Bergstrom, Rick Cowan, Alexander Hazzard, Olga Peters, Scott Garvin, Jesse Putnam, Evan Litwin, Rebecca Chalmers, Niels Rinehart, Steve Jackson (Townshend), Caroline Bronz (Townshend), Rebecca Chandler, Charlie Marchant, Katie Wilson, Brenda Siegel, Rachel Siegel, Ann Schroeder, Juliette, Todd Menees, Dan Dewalt, Elena Dodd, Dan Seals, Joel, Curtis Reed Jr., Jacob Deutsch, Bexx Merck, Stephanie Amyot, Jay DeGregorio, Alexandra du Bois, Deborah Lee Luskin, Lee Petty, Jolie Sherman, Linda, Izzy Snyder, Howard Weiss-Tisman, Patricia Fontaine, Peter Stebbins, Robert DuGrenier, Derek Brouwer, KHONSU X, Joel Bluming, Susan Schoenfeld, Keats Dieffenbach, Lynne Shea, Charlene Galarneau, Laura, Annie Guion, Apple Gifford, Kathleen Kemp, Heather Pembroke, Rebecca Swem, Wynne Hannan, Ned Swanberg, Rebecca Ohm, Swift Everdy, Jocelyn Peknik, Allaire Diamond, Elise Guyette

Public to be Heard: No comments from attendees.

Bruce Post then asked for introductions from each Board of Libraries member.

Geographic Naming Petitions: The Board heard two petitions for geographic naming.

- Paige Brook Petition, Bakersfield – Bakersfield Conservation Commission submitted this petition to maintain consistency with town historical records.
- Susanna Toby Brook Petition, Townshend – Main Petitioner, Evan Litwin, submitted this petition to replace the name Negro Brook with a family or individual of color who can be associated with that land to honor their history and heritage. Petitioner chose Susanna Toby, who was a resident of Townshend in the 1800's.

Paige Brook Petition:

Description of the Region: The stream in question has potential headwaters for the main stem starting north of the end of Hydes Hill Road and emptying into the Black Creek, South of Whiteland Drive, Fairfield, VT. The mouth of the stream is located at Latitude 44.781327, Longitude -72.858282, and the source of the stream is located at Latitude 44.80528, Longitude -72.802385.

Deb Granquist made a motion to open the hearing on Paige Brook located in Bakersfield. Tom Frank seconded the motion. This motion passed unanimously by the Board. Caroline Bronz, Clerk of the Bakersfield Conservation Commission, and Steve Jackson spoke on this petition and the confusion from the first hearing for this naming request, with one waterway listed on the petition but petitioners at the first meeting requested another branch be named Paige Brook. The petitioners who attended the first hearing addressing this naming request were asked to go back to the Conservation Commission and decide what section of the brook they wanted named Paige Brook. The Conservation Commission decided to keep the original petition intact and requested no changes to the petition heard at this hearing. They have submitted two other naming requests that will address the brook they were originally naming, as well as another branch of that brook.

Deb Granquist asked if the Selectboard was in support of this name request. Cherie Yaeger stated the Bakersfield Selectboard was notified of this naming request and were in support of the request. Bruce Post then asked if there were any other questions or comments. There was no response from the board members or meeting attendees. Tom Frank made a motion to adopt petition one to accept the name of Paige Brook for the designated river/stream in Bakersfield as presented. Motion seconded by James Saunders. The name Paige Brook in Bakersfield, Vermont was approved and passed unanimously.

After the vote to accept the naming request of Paige Brook, Jason Broughton brought to the attention of the board that one of the meeting attendees noted in the chat that no public comment was allowed before the vote. Tom Frank made note that Bruce Post did ask if there was any further comment on the Paige Brook petition before the vote. No further comments were noted from attendees. Bruce Post then asked the board for a motion to adjourn the Paige Brook hearing. Deb Granquist made a motion to adjourn the Paige Brook hearing. Motion was seconded by Linda Saarnijoki. Motion passed unanimously.

At the conclusion of that hearing Jason Broughton brought a comment in chat to the attention of the board. A public attendee, Rebecca Chandler, stated she had a comment in reference to Paige Brook. Tom Frank made a motion to reopen the hearing for Paige Brook to hear the comment from Rebecca Chandler. James Saunders seconded this motion. Bruce Post then asked for any public comment. Rebecca Chandler asked if there had been any other research done into other names for this stream, for example were any Abenaki tribes contacted. Cherie Yaeger mentioned the research done by the Department of Libraries (VTLIB) when a petition is received, and Jason Broughton referenced previous geographic naming petitions that did incorporate conversations with other diverse groups and how VTLIB understands the need to ensure all persons are informed of decisions being made in their communities. Bakersfield Conservation Committee members in attendance noted they did not do any research into indigenous populations in or around Bakersfield.

Based on comments from meeting attendees, and a specific request by a Rebecca Chandler to have the members of the Bakersfield Conservation Commission go back and do research into indigenous populations that could be affected by the naming of this brook, a motion was made by Tom Frank to table the petition for Paige Brook, if the petitioners wish to go back and do further research. Vote at a future meeting no sooner than April, allowing adequate notices for discussion. Deb Granquist seconded the motion. Deb Granquist said that if Bakersfield gets everything together, all three of their petitions can be addressed at a later meeting. Deb Granquist noted that the Board of Libraries cannot make the petitioners go back and do more research. The petitioners can decide on their own to conduct more research and bring back the petitions with new research and/or they can bring the petitions back with the original petitions. Bruce Post called the question of tabling the Paige Brook petition. Motion passed unanimously.

Bruce Post then asked the board for a motion to reclose the Paige Brook hearing. Tom Frank made a motion to reclose the petition for the Paige Brook hearing. Motion was seconded by James Saunders. Motion passed unanimously.

Susanna Toby Brook Petition:

Description of the Region: Flowing into the West River (mouth due south from Fair Brook), under State Forest Road (bridge over it also named Negro Brook Bridge) and into the Townshend State Forest.

Bruce Post asked for a motion to open the hearing on the name change for Negro Brook. Linda Saarnijoki made the motion to open the hearing on Negro Brook. This motion was seconded by Deb Granquist. Motion passed unanimously. Alex Hazzard and Evan Litwin, Co-Founders of Negro Brook Alliance, and Dr. Elise Guyette spoke on the history of Negro Brook and the reason for this naming petition. Alex Hazzard stated that the goal of this petition is to rename Negro Brook as the term Negro has been deemed offensive and there is a transition away from when the word negro was an accepted term. The Negro Brook Alliance chose Susanna Toby to acknowledge and honor her and her husband as early black settlers in and around Townshend, Vermont. Evan Litwin thanked the many people in and around Townshend who helped them collect signatures and support this name change, however he noted the Townshend Select Board did not take this matter up at any of their meetings. Mr. Litwin spoke on how they have learned that people care about this name change.

Maxie Ewins posed the questions if the Townshend Historical Society had weighed in on this name change. Charlie Marchant, from the Townshend Historical Society, commented on the process. Officially Mr. Marchant could not speak for the Historical Society. Mr. Marchant stated he sent a letter to the Department of Libraries as a citizen and stated that the petition was not supported by the Historical Society because they did not consider it to be historically accurate. However, they did not oppose a name change. The historical society did not want to get involved in the process due to the amount of research needed for the accuracy of naming this brook.

James Saunders posed the question if anyone knows how Negro Brook got its name. Elisa Guyette spoke on a report that was commissioned by the Vermont Legislature to research the Underground Railroad in Vermont. Other than the mention of two men in Townshend mentioned in this report there was no other mention of Underground Railroad activities within Townshend. Ms. Guyette also spoke on the history of James and Susanna Toby Huzzy during the Revolutionary War and their time in Vermont.

Linda Saarnijoki asked if, based on the decision by the board to table the Paige Brook petition, if they should consider tabling the Susanna Toby Brook petition so that the petitioners could do other research on indigenous tribes within Townshend. Bruce was willing to go a little longer on discussion of this petition to hear from Jason Broughton and other citizens in attendance. Jason asked to delay making his statement until the petitioners had a chance to go back and do research on indigenous populations in and around Townshend. Mr. Litwin said that the petitioners did discuss reaching out to indigenous populations, however due to the current name of the brook they wanted to support stories of black people within this area.

The board then took comments from other citizens in attendance in reference to the renaming of Negro Brook. Maxie Ewins then motioned to table the conversation until a later meeting, for the opportunity for more discussion. Motion seconded by Tom Frank. The board discussed the timeframe of reopening this petition for discussion. The board will look at dates available to reopen this discussion. Motion to table this petition until the board has set a new date for discussion was passed unanimously.

Tom Frank moved to close this hearing. Linda Saarnijoki seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Tom Frank moved to adjourn. Maxie Ewins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.