

## Public voices speak on fate of Atchison mascots



Members of the Atchison community listen as comments are offered on the future of the city's public school mascots/Credit:Brian Hagen/MSC News

**(KAIR)--Around 40 members of the public were in attendance Tuesday evening, as the Board of Education for the Atchison Public Schools hosted a forum to hear public voices regarding the future of the school district's Native-American themed mascots.**

**The forum follows the work of a committee which collected the pros and cons of keeping the Redmen mascot, at the high school and the Braves mascot, at the middle school.**

**It was the high school mascot that gained the focus of those who spoke in opposition of making a change.**

**Of the 11 voices heard during the forum, three were in favor of doing away with the mascots, while one voiced no allegiance, instead presenting an online survey**

**she independently conducted through Facebook.**

**The first to speak in opposition of the change was longtime high school football coach Jim Smith. “I talked to three friends of mine that are Native-Americans, and my thought was, if anyone of them say...get rid of it, I would have said ok. All three were in favor of keeping [the mascot]. One of them in particular made the comment, I sent my kids to Atchison High because I want them to be Redmen.”**

**Smith also said concerns that the current mascot reflects negatively on the district's league membership has been the opposite in his experience.**

**Among the minority speaking in favor of changing the mascot was Brown County Attorney Kevin Hill.**

**Citing his past observations of a similar mascot change at the Hiawatha schools, the Atchison County resident asked the school board to make the same decision as USD 415. “The term Redmen, like Redskins, and a lot of other Native-American mascot names, is offensive in nature, and origin, to a lot of people. We're here as a community and school for the children, and for their future, and a mascot that's offensive to any segment of our student population really shouldn't have a place in our educational system.”**

**The forum, which was moderated by Brian Jordan, of the Kansas Association of School Boards, served as a special meeting of Atchison's USD 409 Board of Education.**

**The School Board made no immediate decision, with that to happen at some yet unstated point in the future.**

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