

STAFF REPORT

Street Renaming

June 14, 2022 Town Council Meeting



The purpose of the public hearing is to consider the facts and solicit comments in order to formulate a decision regarding the Town-initiated renaming of “Squaw Walden Lane.” According to the *Town of Apex Address Policy*, “The Town shall have the authority to rename streets within its corporate limits as needed for reasons related to public safety or inappropriateness.” An overview of the process used to inform and gather input from the community is summarized in this staff report. Based on this process, Planning and Community Development staff recommends renaming “Squaw Walden Lane” to “Squall Walden Lane.”

In 2021, certain residents of Squaw Walden Lane informed Town staff that they had been discussing a street name change for over a year. The residents deemed use of the word “Squaw” as derogatory and began initiating plans with neighbors to request a street name change for Squaw Walden Lane. On November 19, 2021, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior declared “squaw” a derogatory term as part of Secretary’s Order 3404. Under the Order, the Department of the Interior established the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force in order to find replacement names for more than 660 geographic features containing the name “squaw.” The Task Force announced replacement names on February 22, 2022, and the same residents contacted Town staff one week later to once again discuss the procedure for renaming Squaw Walden Lane. Based on the Department of the Interior’s Order, and accompanied by the citizen request, Town Administration directed Town staff to initiate the street renaming.

In order to assist with initiating the street renaming request, Town staff requested the lead proponent for the name change compile possible new names suggested by the affected property owners. The proposed name submitted to the Town was “Squall Walden Lane,” and it was selected due to its similar pronunciation and spelling as well as maintaining the Henry David Thoreau inspired *Walden* theme of the community. On March 18, 2022, both the Town of Apex Planning and Community Development Department Addressing Team and the Wake County GIS E911 Addressing Team reviewed the name “Squall Walden Lane” to ensure that no conflicts existed and no confusion would be caused. Both the Town and Wake County approved the name as a suitable replacement for Squaw Walden Lane.

In accordance with documented procedures, the Town initiated the process of renaming “Squaw Walden Lane” by notifying affected property owners and tenants of the intent to change the street name and requesting input regarding the matter. In a letter from the Planning and Community Development Department, affected property owners and tenants were asked to designate their preference regarding the proposed renaming of “Squaw Walden Lane” to “Squall Walden Lane.” Respondents were also given an opportunity to suggest alternative names and provide suggestions, comments, or concerns. Twelve (12) of the 16 affected addresses responded with the following preferences indicated.

- 4 respondents preferred the change to Squall Walden Lane;
- 8 respondents preferred no street name change; and
- 0 respondents suggested alternate street names.

Comments shared by affected residents are listed in the table below. Each row of the table represents a different property.

Table 1. Suggested Names for Squaw Walden Lane submitted prior to June 14, 2022 Public Hearing

Street Name Preference	Comments, suggestions, or concerns
Squall Walden Lane	Request for final street name change to occur after midterm elections in November due to concerns over absentee ballots.
Squall Walden Lane	Thank you! Moved many times, so address changes should not be difficult. NCDL appears to be the only expense.

Street Name Preference	Comments, suggestions, or concerns
Squall Walden Lane	Wants the name changed because keeping it perpetuates the idea that nothing is wrong with the word. Neighbors are concerned that the name change will be detrimental or expensive.
No name change	Lived here for over 20 years and do not believe a name change is needed.
No name change	Lived here for over 20 years. Historical origin of the word meant “woman” in Algonquian. Has never viewed the term as demeaning and does not view Native American women negatively. Multiple adults at residence would incur monetary expense, time, and “red tape” related to address changes. Will the Town reimburse time and expense?
No name change	Lived here for almost 20 years. Majority of people on Squaw Walden Lane do not want the change. See “squaw” as a historical term, just like the origin of other site names across the state and country. As an immigrant and naturalized citizen, the address change will be time consuming and costly—existing foreign accounts and documentation.
No name change	Has owned the house for over 20 years. Lives out of state and is concerned about effect on official records and costs.

The letter sent to owners and tenants also detailed the following effects a street renaming would have.

- Once approved, a street name change becomes effective 60 days following Town Council approval or at a later date designated by Town Council.
- The Town of Apex will replace street signs on the effective date.
- The Town of Apex will update internal records, such as Town utility accounts.
- The Town of Apex will notify emergency services (911), the United States Postal Service, Wake County Department of Revenue, Wake County Board of Elections, Wake County Public School System, Dominion Energy (PSNC), and AT&T prior to the effective date to ensure that these entities have sufficient time to update records.
- Property owners and renters will be responsible for notifying any utility provider, financial institution, or other entity that keeps the address on file.

Some owners and tenants expressed concern regarding mail forwarding and extra expenses. The Town responded that the United States Postal Service will forward mail to the new address for up to one year to allow time for all mail correspondences to be updated. A list of common mail correspondences, including ones updated by the Town, was included with the email responses. This list of contacts for address updates will also be included with the Town notification mailed to owners and tenants if the street renaming is approved. The list is provided as Attachment A.

Regarding concerns related to expenses, the Town is unaware of any fees associated with address changes other than those imposed by the North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV). Residences can update the address associated with their valid driver license or ID card either online (www.ncdot.gov/dmv/help/moving) or by visiting a local DMV office. The process can be handled online by requesting a duplicate license or ID card. NCDMV charges \$14 for each duplicate, and an additional \$3 service charge is collected for each online transaction. Address updates for valid vehicle registrations are automatically completed when someone updates their driver license information online. The new address will appear on a resident’s registration card the next time NCDMV notifies them of their annual registration and vehicle inspection. However, depending on the timing of their annual registration renewal or if the property owner lives elsewhere, duplicate registration cards can also be ordered from NCDMV for \$21.50.

According to the *Town of Apex Address Policy*, following the public hearing, the Town Council will either approve the road name change or deny the road name change by resolution. A resolution for this purpose is provided as Attachment B.

Planning and Community Development Staff Recommendation:

Planning and Community Development staff recommends renaming “Squaw Walden Lane” to “Squall Walden Lane” based on the Department of the Interior Secretary’s Order 3404 and the community input received throughout the street-renaming process. Planning and Community Development staff also recommends the designation of Monday, August 15, 2022, as the effective date, which is 61 days following the public hearing.