



HARDING ELEMENTARY RENAME

School History – Ferncliff School

1. Ferncliff School existed on the site of Harding Elementary until January 1925.
2. Ferncliff school was comprised of four small portable wooden buildings.
3. Supported 176 students in grades 1-4, mostly in the local community but also from neighboring areas.
4. Some folks wanted to fix/upgrade the existing school, although others wanted to think big for the future.
5. With expected growth in the Frontier, Kahkwa, and nearby areas, the school board voted to approve the construction of a large brick school on the same site that could accommodate 400 students in grades 1-6.

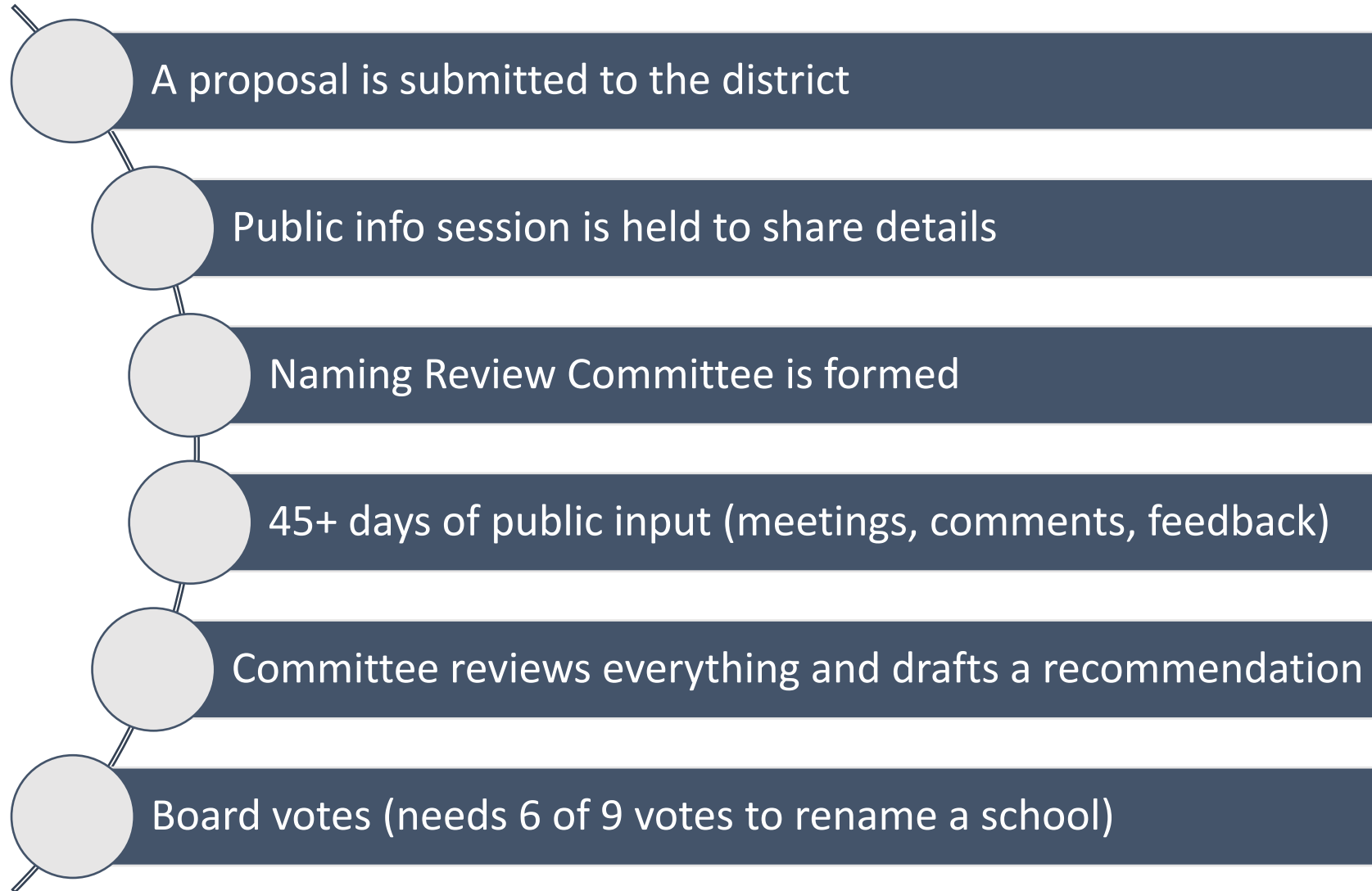
School History – Harding School

1. The school board approved a permanent school in October 1923.
2. It was completed December 31, 1924 and opened on January 5, 1925.
3. The Ferncliff portables were immediately removed and moved to create additional space at other schools.
4. The name Harding was selected to honor President Warren G. Harding who unexpectedly died in office on August 9, 1923 – this was common practice for public buildings at the time.
5. It was not until after his death that various scandals associated with the Harding presidency became known.
6. Harding Elementary celebrated it's centennial in September 2024

School History – Harding School Rename 2005

1. School Board member, John Harkins, submitted a resolution to rename Harding Elementary in honor of COL John Boyd on October 12, 2005
 1. Board received several letters and a petition signed by 69 people opposed to the name change in October 2005
 2. Rev Brock letter to editor in Erie Times on Nov 5, 2005 opposed to military figures
 3. Students voted and conducted an opinion poll as reported in Erie Times News on Nov 9, 2005
2. School Board approved a resolution, 5-3, to name the library of Harding Elementary in honor of COL John Boyd on November 12, 2005
 1. Although approved, this was never finalized with a plaque or other recognition
 2. This action is considered defunct after 21 years

WHAT THE PROCESS LOOKS LIKE: *BOARD POLICY 701.1 – NAMING OF FACILITIES*



Community Information Session – Dec 4, 2025

1. Proposal submitted to EPS by: Mark Squeglia and Brian Lasher to rename Harding Elementary in honor of John Boyd.
2. Boyd is an alumni of both Harding and Strong Vincent.
3. Recognized world-wide for his military and intelligence service contributions.
4. Presque Isle lifeguard, swam from Frontier across the bay to PI to work.
5. Helped to desegregate Las Vegas in 1957; refused to hold military group conference there unless hotels accepted black soldiers.
6. Core Values: Integrity, Courage, Persistence, A Passion for Excellence.

District Renaming Requirements

1. HISTORIC OR LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

- A historic event, place, neighborhood, or geographic area connected to the school community.

2. AN INDIVIDUAL WITH EXCEPTIONAL MERIT

- If named after a person, they must:
- Have made **substantial contributions** to society, the district, or their field
- Ideally have a **meaningful connection** to the school or Erie community
- Be of **strong character**, with a life story that offers educational or motivational value for students
- Have a legacy **free from harm or discrimination**

3. NO CONFUSION OR CONFLICTS

- Proposed names should **not duplicate** other schools in the region.

4. NO PAID NAMING RIGHTS

- The district does **not** sell naming rights; donations do not guarantee naming.



Survey 1 – Public Survey

- Available to all students, staff, community members, parents, etc.
- The survey and all associated information was published on the district website, and the district and Harding Facebook pages – Posted November 14 – December 31, 2025
- Questions:
 - Name, Phone, Address
 - Please share any thoughts or concerns regarding the possible renaming of Harding Elementary School. No decision has been made.
 - Would you like to serve as a member of the committee that will study the proposal? If so, you will be contacted at the phone number above.
- 71 Responses
 - 69 No – don't change name
 - 1 Yes – change name
 - 1 Maybe

Community Input – Information Session and Survey 1

1. Agree that John Boyd meets the naming requirements
2. Recognize that President Harding was not a great man
3. Harding Elementary does not represent the person but the school and the community for 100+ years
4. Students, staff, community and alumni have strong ties to the school
5. A lot has been done by school staff and others to build school pride and a sense of belonging
6. Changing the name may be disruptive and traumatizing to students who already have so much to deal with

Community Input – Information Session and Survey 1

7. If there was to be a name change - prefer a person who is more representative of the current student body.
8. May not want to name school after military person.
9. There are other ways to recognize John Boyd in the school and the community.
10. Why spend money to do this when the money can be spent in better ways to help the students?

Survey 2 – Harding Elementary Survey

- This survey was distributed in an attempt to get more student and parent feedback
- The survey and was distributed through a Harding’s Parent Square post, paper copies with a QR code was also provided – Posted February 24-27, 2026
- Questions:
 - **Section 1: About You**
 - Student - Grade
 - Parent or Guardian of a Student at Harding – Student Grade(s)
 - **Section 2: What Does The Name "Harding" Mean to You? (Please write)**
 - **Section 3: About John Boyd** - write up of accomplishments provided in survey
 - Have you heard of John Boyd before? (Choose)
 - **Section 4: Honoring John Boyd**
 - How should we honor John Boyd? (Choose all that apply)
 - Rename our school after John Boyd
 - Name our auditorium after John Boyd
 - Name our library after John Boyd
 - Something else (please explain)

Survey 2 – Harding Elementary Survey

- Questions (cont.)
 - **Section 5: School Name Preference**
 - Which school names do you like the most? (Choose all that apply)
 - Keep "Harding Elementary" and honor John Boyd in different ways
 - Rename our school to "Boyd Elementary"
 - Rename our school to "Harding-Boyd Elementary"
 - I don't know
 - Something else (please explain)
 - **Section 6: Additional Thoughts**
 - Would you like to learn more about other students who did great things in their lives? (Choose)
 - Yes
 - No
 - Is there anything else you would like to say about our school's name, honoring John Boyd, or honoring other former students? (Please write)

Survey 2 – Participation

- **Enrollment – 665 Students**

Grade	No. of Students
PKF	17
K	103
1	111
2	114
3	105
4	125
5	90
Total	665

- 64% minorities, many do not live in surrounding neighborhood.
- The survey received:
 - 174 student responses (approximately 26% of enrollment)
 - 35 parent/guardian responses
 - 31 staff/other responses

Survey 2 – Participation (cont.)

- While the survey was explicitly directed to students and parents, it appears that about half of Harding's employees also chose to respond. Those responses were analyzed separately to preserve clarity of student and parent voice.
- The principal shared the survey with teachers from Grades 3, 4, and 5. Parents were engaged through ParentSquare.
- Participation was strongest among grades 3 and 4.
- Level of student participation—roughly one in four—provides meaningful insight into current student perspectives.

Survey 2 – Student Insights

- One of the most striking findings was how students define “Harding.”
- Students overwhelmingly described Harding not as a president or a historical figure, but as:
 - Dragons
 - Friends
 - Home
 - A place of belonging
- For many students, “Harding” is not a person. It is an identity tied to school spirit and peer community.
- At the same time, students showed strong interest in learning about past Harding students who achieved significant accomplishments. Third and fourth graders in particular expressed high levels of curiosity about alumni stories.
 - This tells us something important: students are not resistant to history. They are interested in it, especially when it feels connected to real people who once walked their halls.
- Students who had already heard of John Boyd were somewhat more open to renaming than those who had not, but even within that group, many preferred honoring him in visible ways without fully changing the school’s name. Students showed nuance, not rigidity.

Survey 2 – Parent Insights

- Parents' responses reflected a balance between attachment and practicality. Many parents expressed emotional ties to the Harding name through:
 - Family history
 - Neighborhood identity
 - Stability
- However, a significant number indicated openness to honoring John Boyd in meaningful ways, even if they preferred keeping the existing name. Parents' comments often centered on:
 - Avoiding division
 - Preserving community cohesion
 - Honoring local achievement
- Unlike students, parents were more likely to reference tradition and continuity explicitly. But they also frequently expressed willingness to recognize Boyd's accomplishments in other forms.
- Parents demonstrated pragmatic compromise thinking more often than absolute positions.

Survey 2 – Staff Insights

- Although staff responses were not the intended target of the survey, their participation reveals institutional perspective. Staff responses differed in notable ways:
 - Lower interest in learning more about former students than the current students that responded
 - Stronger anchoring in existing institutional identity
 - Greater emphasis on stability and continuity

Naming Cost

Harding Name Locations	Cost
Exterior	
Marguee	\$2,384.01
Lincoln Avenue Entrance Lettering	\$3,712.08
Original Masonry Sign	\$25,000.00
Interior	
Gym Floor Logo	\$9,000.00
Grand Total	\$40,096.09
Other	
Library Plaque	\$2,500.00
Playground Sign	\$2,500.00

COL John Boyd Recognition in Erie

1. COL John Boyd Day – January 23
2. Portrait hangs at Erie International Airport
3. COL John Boyd Day in Erie's Public Schools – January 23

Name Review Committee

1. **School Director Chair** - Linda Graff, blgraff2@gmail.com
2. **Student** – Terry McLaughlin, 5th grader Harding Elementary
3. **Parent** – Dr. Tiggy McLaughlin, tiggy.mclaughlin@gmail.com
4. **Staff/Teacher** - Jennifer Bonam, jbonam@eriesd.org
5. **Community Member** - Liz Allen, lizallenerie@gmail.com
6. **Community Member** – Candace Battles, candybattles@aol.com
7. **Ex- officio** (non-voting) District Representative – Jeff Yonkers, jyonkers@eriesd.org