

Sept. 30, 2019

Dear Public Works Committee Members:

I was a member of the Unity Coalition Advisory Committee, charged with making a recommendation about naming a street in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the slain civil rights leader who wanted justice for all people regardless of race, creed, religion, class, gender, politics, education, financial status and more.

I am out of town and cannot attend your meeting this week but I wanted you to know how I feel about the street naming.

I was and still am a strong supporter of naming a Jonesboro street in King's honor.

Meanwhile, several times during the advisory committee meetings, it was brought up that there was a resolution against "renaming" streets. But each time it was correctly stated that a "resolution" is not an "ordinance." A resolution is not a law but a suggestion. An ordinance is law. Therefore, not renaming streets in Jonesboro is not the law of the land but a suggestion.

Several other times during the meetings, opponents to naming a street after the Nobel Peace Prize winner said there had been a promise to name the next new street in Jonesboro after King. Ironically, it was brought out that the last new street in Jonesboro was Windover and that was maybe 20 years ago. Should we have to wait another 20 years to possibly see if there's a new street in the city that could be named after the man who has a U.S. postage stamp in his honor?

I've lived, worked and voted in Jonesboro for 11 years but I'm not willing to wait 20 more years to drive on a street named after King.

Initially, I supported renaming Johnson Avenue for King but there was so much hostility, hatred, bigotry, name calling, racism, and threats of a recall election by an anonymous few who made a lot of riotous noise, that I succumbed to the pressure of going in another direction.

Now, I support naming all of Aggie Road in honor of the Baptist pastor/preacher.

I am realistic enough to realize that any street naming will come with opposition. But that's not reason enough to lie down and give up. Reasonable people will listen and often agree when the facts are presented. I've heard that "alumni" of AState will oppose renaming Aggie Road. Do they live on Aggie Road? When was the last time they sent a check to AState using the Aggie Road address? Actually, the university could keep the Aggie Road name on its private property.

Some opponents, who have been spoon-fed false information, say the mail will be stopped and those with businesses on the street will suffer financially because of the name change. Well, the U.S. Post Office will continue to deliver the mail even if Johnson Avenue, Aggie Road or Commerce Road names are changed to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. street, boulevard, avenue, way, drive or road.

Nevertheless, by naming a street after the slain civil rights leader, Jonesboro joins hundreds of cities in about 41 states with streets named after the man with a national holiday in his honor.

In Arkansas, there are streets named after the non-violence advocate in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Forest City and West Memphis because he has support from people from all walks of life.

For example, in March 2017, Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed a bill that moved the Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee holiday to October from the same day as the King holiday, the third Monday in January. And the Jonesboro mayor reportedly has been recorded saying that naming a street after Dr. King was a good move for the city.

Hopefully, the Public Works Committee and the Jonesboro City Council will agree that there should be a main street named after this nonviolent advocate, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra L. Combs

Sandra L. Combs
Jonesboro, AR. 72405
248-496-7680 (cell phone)
samlc2006@aol.com