TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors
FROM: Jane Christenson, Interim CDRA Director
BY: Ben Bardakjian, Deputy County Surveyor
SUBJECT: Public Road Name Changes: “Squaw” Named Public Roads in the Olympic Valley Area

DATE: February 22, 2022

ACTIONS REQUESTED
1. Conduct a public hearing to approve the renaming of “Squaw Valley Road” to “Olympic Valley Road,” “Squaw Peak Road” to “Shirley Canyon Road,” and “Squaw Peak Way” to “Marmot Way” in the community of Olympic Valley.
2. Make a finding of exemption pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3).
3. Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Deputy Director of Engineering and Surveying to assign the road names “Olympic Valley Road,” “Shirley Canyon Road,” and “Marmot Way.”

BACKGROUND
In November of 2021, the Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, declared the word “squaw” a derogatory term, and ordered the removal of this term from Federal lands. The Board on Geographic Names (BGN), which is the Federal body established in 1947 tasked with naming geographic places and maintaining uniform geographic name usage, shows more than 650 Federal land units that currently use the word. The Secretary of the Interior said in a statement, “Our nation’s lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage – not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression.” Two orders were signed by the Secretary of the Interior on November 19, 2021. Order No. 3404 formally identifies “squaw” as derogatory and creates a Federal task force to find replacement names for geographic features on Federal lands using the word. Consultation with tribes and consideration of public feedback is required as part of the task force’s review of proposed name changes. The second order, Order No. 3405, creates a Federal advisory committee to solicit and review changes to other derogatory geographic and Federal land unit names.

The Washoe Tribe had been in discussions with Placer County staff on a request to rename county assets and conversations were advanced following the public announcement in September 2021 by the ski resort to rename Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows to Palisades Tahoe. County staff began the process of identifying all public assets containing the word, “squaw,” within the County’s jurisdiction such as roads, parks, trails, and community groups. The tribe also asked the County to consider taking an active role in supporting the name changes of Federal geographic features including Squaw Peak and Squaw Creek. County staff reached out to the BGN in October 2021 and learned that Mr. Darrel Cruz, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Washoe Tribe, submitted a proposal to the BGN to change the name of “Squaw Peak” to “Washeshu Peak,” and the BGN was proceeding with steps towards review and approval of this replacement name. The BGN has stated that while “Squaw Valley” is the official name for Federal use, they also record “Olympic Valley” as a variant or unofficial name. In January 2022, County staff learned from the BGN that all pending proposals from Mr. Cruz to rename features, including Squaw Valley to Olympic Valley, Squaw Peak to Washeshu Peak, and Squaw Creek to Washeshu Creek, have been transferred to the Federal task force for further review and outreach.
The task force is expected to select one replacement name for each “squaw” named feature in the nation; this is expected to happen in late summer/early fall.

The post office changed its name from Squaw Village to Olympic Valley back in August of 1960. The public services district that includes the local fire department changed its name in October 2020 to the Olympic Valley Public Service District. In December 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the renaming of the Squaw Valley Municipal Advisory Committee (MAC) to the Olympic Valley MAC.

The Placer County Road Naming Policy allows the County to rename a road when it is deemed in the public interest to do so. Item D under VI. General Provisions of the Placer County Road Naming Policy (Resolution 86-125) states: “Nothing contained herein prevents the County from naming, renaming, or renumbering addresses on a road, public or private, when it is deemed in the public interest to do so.” Additionally, the standards for road names are defined in Section VII. and item D. states, “Inappropriate or offensive names will not be permitted.”

The use of the word “squaw” is now more broadly understood to be offensive to indigenous North American women. It has been used as a derogatory slur against Native American women since the 1800’s and the word has been called both a misogynist and racist term. The Squaw Valley Alpine Meadows ski resort changed its name to Palisades Tahoe in September 2021, stating publicly that they could not in good conscience continue to use the old name and wanted to find a new name that would do justice to the place and its legacy. Local tribes had been working for years towards this resort renaming and the ski corporation involved the Washoe Tribe as part of the name change process.

Due to the offensive connotations of the word “squaw,” the County desires to change the public roads as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Squaw Valley Road</td>
<td>Olympic Valley Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squaw Peak Road</td>
<td>Shirley Canyon Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squaw Peak Way</td>
<td>Marmot Way</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Squaw Valley Road (2.37 miles), Squaw Peak Road (0.42 miles) and Squaw Peak Way (0.18 miles) are located in Olympic Valley on the west side of Highway 89 approximately 12 miles south of Interstate 80. All three roads are maintained by Placer County. The name “Palisades” was considered as a potential replacement name; however, there is a Palisades Circle already in use for the Palisades development in Olympic Valley. This is considered a duplicate road name even though the suffix is different. Comments were received in support of using “Olympic Valley” as the replacement name for Squaw Valley Road to be consistent with the post office, the renamed local agencies, and to provide a cohesive name for the local community. “Washoe” and “Washeshu” were considered as potential replacement road names; however, Washoe Drive is currently in use in Olympic Valley and Washoe Way already exists in Tahoe City. The spelling and pronunciation of Washeshu (technically the correct spelling is Wa She Shu) was determined to potentially be a challenge and cause confusion for the public and first responders, as well as be too similar sounding to Washoe. Therefore, alternative road names were proposed to attempt to identify with the local environment and features.

There are three private roads with road names that contain the word, “squaw.” These are Squaw Creek Road, Squaw Loop, and Squaw Summit Road. The County is phasing the approach to road
name changes by first changing road names for the County maintained roadways and then as a second phase bringing forward recommended road name changes for these private roads.

It should be noted that trademark concerns of using the word “Olympic” were investigated and it was concluded that the term can be used for any noncommercial purpose, including street names. The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) should be consulted in cases where the use of the term may be viewed as infringing on their intellectual property, but there is no commercial benefit to using the term “Olympic” within a road name.

In accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s direction, Order No. 3404 and 3405, the County conducted a public survey, which was available December 9, 2021 through December 17, 2021, to gauge the public’s interest and receive public comment regarding the effort to rename the aforementioned public roads in the Olympic Valley area. The survey was emailed out to Placer County’s North Tahoe email distribution list, Olympic Valley Public Service District’s email list, Squaw Valley Property Owners’ Association email list, Board members of Squaw Alpine Transit Company, shared on-screen at Supervisor Gustafson’s virtual Eastern Placer County Town Hall, and posted on NextDoor for Olympic Valley.

Of the survey respondents that said they own property on Squaw Valley Road, 76% were in favor of renaming Squaw Valley Road to Olympic Valley Road and 24% indicated they wanted the road name to remain unchanged. This closely reflected the results of all survey respondents who supported the change to Olympic Valley Road at 79%. Of the survey respondents who said they own property on Squaw Peak Road, approximately 41% were in favor of renaming Squaw Peak Road to Shirley Canyon Road, while about 42% commented that they prefer the road name to remain as is. For all survey respondents, Shirley Canyon Road was supported at 60%. There are currently no parcels addressed off Squaw Peak Way; however, of those responding 33% were in favor of Marmot Way and approximately 26% of respondents indicated they did not support a road name change. An alternative road name selection of “Tram Face Way” was provided in the poll; however, some write-in comments strongly discouraged the use of this road name, so Marmot Way was selected as having roughly equal support, not being controversial, and having no effect on any current addresses. The County is not providing an option to keep these public road names unchanged due to the Secretary of the Interior declaration and the negative connotation of the word “squaw.” However, the write-in responses gathered as part of the poll did provide feedback from the residents who stated they lived off the affected roads to gauge those in favor versus those who prefer no change to the current road names.

This effort to rename the aforementioned public roads was presented at the Tahoe Town Hall on November 15, 2021. Pursuant to the County’s Road Naming Policy, staff mailed notification letters on December 23, 2021 to property owners whose property fronts and is addressed off Squaw Valley Road, Squaw Peak Road, and Squaw Peak Way. The proposed road name changes were also provided as an update at the January 6, 2022 Tahoe Town Hall.

This item was presented at the Planning Commission on January 27, 2022. Public notices were mailed to property owners of record within 300 feet of the roadway and posted within the right-of-way along the affected public roads. A public hearing notice was published in the Sacramento Bee and Sierra Sun. Staff consulted with Placer County Department of Public Works, Olympic Valley Fire, the Post Office and emergency response (911). All agencies and departments had no objection to the proposed road name changes. Letters of support in favor of the road name changes were received from both the Olympic Valley Public Service District and the Truckee River Watershed.
Council. Darrel Cruz with the Washoe Tribe also submitted support of the County's effort to change the road names. Two members of the public spoke at the hearing, one in opposition to the proposed name changes due to the historic connection to the 1960 Squaw Valley Olympics, and one offering the road name of “Snow Valley Road” instead of “Squaw Valley Road.” The Planning Commission asked questions about the current geographic names of this area, if property owners whose addresses were affected by the road name changes had been polled specifically for their feedback on changing the road names, if there was a trademark concern with using “Olympic” in the new road name, and if the additional information provided verbally at the hearing could be provided to the Board. Staff answered questions accordingly and additional information has been incorporated into this staff report. After discussion, the Commission took action with a 4 to 1 vote in favor of a recommendation to the Board for approval.

Pursuant to Placer County’s Road Naming Policy, the proposed renaming of a County maintained road requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission to consider this request and a recommendation by the Planning Commission to the Board. The Board has final decision-making authority on the renaming of County maintained roads.

USPS mail delivery in the Olympic Valley area is by Post Office box, so there is no change to routine mail operations for property owners affected by the road name change. However, parcel delivery to doorsteps will require updated addresses in the system of the designated carriers. If the road name changes are approved, staff will ensure that all delivery services are contacted as part of the implementation of the road name changes into the official County records, which also includes formal notification to fire responders such as Fire, Emergency, Sheriff, Police, and 911. A formal letter is provided of notification of the road name change approval and effective date (30 days) to each affected resident that can be used to update their personal records and service providers.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
The requested action is exempt from environmental review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines section 15061(b)(3). It can be concluded with certainty that the requested action to change the name of an existing road will have no possibility of a significant effect on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT
The fiscal impact to the County for the road name change is approximately $28,000 total (including labor and materials) for processing these public road name changes and new road signs. The fully burdened overhead rate for staff time for administrative processing, attending public meetings, and implementing the changes into the County official records, as well as postage and advertising expenses, totals approximately $19,000 from the General Fund. The estimated cost of 27 road signs replaced within the County right-of-way by DPW Roads from the Road Maintenance operating budget is about $9,000. Highway 89 road sign replacement costs are not included in this estimate since Caltrans is responsible for these expenses.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment A: Vicinity Map
Attachment B: Resolution
Attachment C: Public Comment
In the matter of: A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE RENAMING OF “SQUAW VALLEY ROAD” TO “OLYMPIC VALLEY ROAD,” “SQUAW PEAK ROAD” TO “SHIRLEY CANYON ROAD,” AND “SQUAW PEAK WAY” TO “MARMOT WAY” IN THE OLYMPIC VALLEY AREA

The following Resolution was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held on February 22, 2022, by the following vote:

Ayes:
Noes:
Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

_______________________________
Chair, Board of Supervisors

Attest:

_______________________________
Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, this Resolution to rename the public roads containing the word, “squaw,” was initiated by Placer County; and

WHEREAS, at the January 27, 2022 Planning Commission hearing, the Commission recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the proposed road name changes and recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the finding of exemption to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b) (3); and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors finds that the proposed road name assignments of “Olympic Valley Road,” “Shirley Canyon Road,” and “Marmot Way” are in conformance with the Placer County “Road Naming Policy” adopted by Board Resolution 86-125; and
WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors authorizes the Deputy Director of the Engineering and Surveying Division of the Community Development Resource Agency to assign these road names and make the necessary revisions to the Placer County official records;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF PLACER that, the Board hereby approves the road name assignments of “OLYMPIC VALLEY ROAD,” “SHIRLEY CANYON ROAD,” and “MARMOT WAY” along their entire lengths, and discontinue the use of the road names “Squaw Valley Road,” “Squaw Peak Road,” and “Squaw Peak Way,” respectively, as shown on the attached “Exhibit A”.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution shall take full force and effect immediately.

Exhibit A
January 19, 2022

Placer County Planning Services Division
Placer County Board of Supervisors
Attn: Lindsay Derobertis, Ben Bardakjian
3091 County Center Drive
Auburn, CA 95603
Also sent via email: BBardakj@placer.ca.gov; LDerober@placer.ca.gov

RE: Public Road Name Change; “Squaw” Named Public Roads in the Olympic Valley Area

To Whom It May Concern,

The Olympic Valley Public Service District supports the proposed road name change from Squaw Valley Road to Olympic Valley Road and the proposed park name change from Squaw Valley Park to Olympic Valley Park.

The District, which provides drinking water, wastewater collection, solid waste, bike trail snow removal, fire protection, and emergency medical services to the Valley, changed the name of the agency from “Squaw Valley Public Service District,” to “Olympic Valley Public Service District” effective October 2020 due to the derogatory nature of the word ‘Squaw’ and supports the name being removed from Placer County assets.

The District encourages the names change to “Olympic Valley” to support the community’s sense of identity – consistent naming helps to support removal of the word “Squaw” from common use and makes the new name, “Olympic Valley”, more familiar by putting into more day-to-day use.

Sincerely,

Michael Geary, P.E.
General Manager
January 21, 2021

Placer County Planning Commission
Se Colbert, Planning Commission Clerk
Sue Via email: scolbert@placer.ca.gov

Re: Agenda Item 1: Public Roads Name Change

We strongly support the staff recommendations that the Planning Commission:

1. Provide a recommendation of approval to the Board of Supervisors for the public road name changes from Squaw Valley Road to Olympic Valley Road, Squaw Peak Road to Shirley Canyon Road, and Squaw Peak Way to Marmot Way.

2. Recommend a finding of exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3).

The County’s re-naming initiative follows the excellent work of the Olympic Valley Public Service District (OVPSD) and Palisades Tahoe and we hope the County, while being respectful and thoughtful, can quickly implement these name changes.

We further hope Placer County will implement, as quickly as possible, the name changes to the three private roads listed in the staff report of January 27, 2022: Squaw Creek Road, Squaw Loop, and Squaw Summit Road.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Lisa Wallace
Executive Director

CC: Darrel Cruz, Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California

Additional Information:

We support re-naming so that the term “squaw” is eliminated. We support the change for many reasons. Here are a few:
1. **The term is derogatory and offensive.** We hear this directly from members of Washoe Tribe Nevada and California. We have been working with the Washoe Tribe on several restoration projects since 2014. They are our partners, members of the community, and the historic occupants of the Tahoe/Truckee region, including Olympic Valley. Tribal members have shared with us, the public, the County, and many others, their firm desire for the word to be eliminated from use due to its history as a racist slur.

2. **There is national precedence for not using the word.** Here are just three examples:
   - Minnesota: https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/pwi/name_changes.html

3. **There is local precedence for changing derogatory names.** Beyond the previously mentioned work from OVPSPD and Palisades, in Nevada County, the place name “Negro Canyon” is formally changed to “Johnson Canyon” as outlined in the attached letter. The name informally changed in 2011 at the direction of the landowner, the Truckee Donner Land Trust.

4. **Other names will align with leadership and culture of Placer County.** Supervisor Gustafson rightfully promotes inclusive and welcoming leadership and community culture in Placer County. This is a continual theme in her public remarks and her newsletters. Renaming the roads and park in Olympic Valley aligns the public place names with the leadership and culture of Placer County.

For these reasons, and many others, we applaud the County’s renaming initiative and urge you to make this a higher priority.
Dear Ms. Derobertis:

My family has owned Condominium # 6 at 460 Squaw Peak Road since the building was put up in 1976. (We now own it by way of DLRSSD LLC.) We received your December 22, 2021, letter indicating that Placer County is proposing new names for all “squaw” named public roads.

We object to this change in the strongest possible terms. The word “squaw” is not inherently derogatory—I question your statement that the word “is now more broadly understood to be offensive to indigenous North American women”—and note that, even if this were true in the abstract, the name “Squaw Valley” has an illustrious past and an honorable connotation. When people say “I ski Squaw,” they certainly don’t intend it (nor do listeners hear it) as an ethnic slur.

Renaming the streets of Squaw Valley is a misuse of taxpayer dollars, a sop to political correctness and woke culture, and imposes an additional and unnecessary burden on each and every affected property-owner. It is foolish and wasteful. Indeed, there’s a good argument that, if Placer County goes down this benighted path, it should be required to compensate the property-owners whose addresses are being debased.

We do not want Squaw Peak Road renamed, and we will continue to refer to the building as Squaw Valley Tram Condominiums. We urge the Planning Commission to reject these proposed changes. Thank you.

Yours very truly,

David Bloch, M.P.H., J.D.
Admitted in California and the District of Columbia
Shareholder
Greenberg Traurig, LLP
4 Embarcadero Ctr, Ste. 3000 | San Francisco, CA 94111-5983
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If you are not an intended recipient of confidential and privileged information in this email, please delete it, notify us immediately at postmaster@gtlaw.com, and do not use or disseminate the information.
Placer County Planning Services Division  
3091 County Center Drive  
Auburn, CA 95603  

24 January 2022

RE: Renaming current Squaw Peak Road

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I agree that the current name of Squaw Peak Road in Olympic valley needs to be renamed, but I find the proposed ‘Shirley Canyon Road’ name inappropriate. One is unable to drive on the future ‘Shirley Canyon Road’ to the bottom of Shirtley Canyon, and the canyon itself is visible from only to a small number of properties along the road.

One land feature visible to all properties along the road is the granite face below the ski area tram line. It is the land feature that too many people, local as well as visitors, visually represents the ski area, Olympic Valley, and their history. I suggest the ‘Granite Face Road’ or ‘Granite Peak Road’ would be more appropriate names for renaming this road.

Thank you for it is considering one of these two names I’m proposing.

Respectfully yours,

Vladimir Bazjanac  
201 Squaw Peak Road  
Unit 218  
Olympic Valley, CA 96146
January 24, 2022

Placer County Planning Commission
Sue Colbert, Planning Commission Clerk
Via email: scolbert@placer.ca.gov

Re: Agenda Item 1: Public Roads Name Change

Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC) has been providing programming to youth in Placer County since 2004. We would like that our community and its place/road names are reflective of our values as a community and are inclusive and inoffensive. We would like to express our strong support for the recommendations of the Planning Commission:

1. Provide a recommendation of approval to the Board of Supervisors for the public road name changes from Squaw Valley Road to Olympic Valley Road, Squaw Peak Road to Shirley Canyon Road, and Squaw Peak Way to Marmot Way.

2. Recommend a finding of exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15061(b)(3).

The US Interior Secretary, Deb Haaland, the US’s first Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary, declared the word “squaw” to be derogatory in November 2021 and has ordered the word to be scrubbed from 650 geographic names throughout the country. Our County should not lag behind in changing these street names now!

We further hope Placer County will implement, as quickly as possible, the name changes to the three private roads listed in the staff report of January 27, 2022: Squaw Creek Road, Squaw Loop, and Squaw Summit Road.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment.

Will Fassett  
ARC Co-Director

Kaela Frank  
Program Coordinator

Cristina Cruz Navarro  
Program Coordinator

Sarah Ottley  
ARC Co-Director