

City, county leaders want to rename Robert E. Lee Park

Yvonne Wenger



Robert E. Lee Park / File (Lloyd Fox / Baltimore Sun)

Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz called Monday for Robert E. Lee Park to be renamed, as a national debate over the role of Confederate symbols plays out across the country.

The 450-acre park, operated by the county but owned by the city, is named for the Confederate general during the Civil War. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake immediately agreed to work with Kamenetz on finding a new name.

The county had issued a letter to the Rawlings-Blake administration to rename the park Lake Roland Park, but needs the city's approval to do so.

"In a region as diverse as the Baltimore metropolitan area, the new name is much more sensitive to the diverse population that visits and utilizes the park," Baltimore County Administrative Officer Fred Homan wrote in a letter on behalf of Kamenetz.

Baltimore County took over operation of the park under a 2009 licensing agreement with the city. Since then, the county has invested more than \$6 million in upgrades to the park, including pavilions, playgrounds, trails, bridges and dog park

Kamenetz said he began to investigate the process for changing the name change, and learned that any change requires city approval.

"We've been talking for months about a name change that better reflects this unique amenity," Kamenetz said in a statement. "We believe Lake Roland Park is more reflective of this open space treasure, and we are confident that the city will approve our request, and I expect to make a joint announcement with the city about the name change in the very near future."

It wasn't immediately clear what the process is for renaming the park, said Howard Libit, a spokesman for Rawlings-Blake.

City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young said he's on board with finding a way to rename the park as well. He believes the first step is to file a bill before the City Council.

"We have to decide what we want to name it," Young said.

Several state lawmakers signed onto an email Tuesday to Rawlings-Blake and other city officials to voice their support for renaming the park. The lawmakers, all Baltimore Democrats, were Del. Samuel I. "Sandy" Rosenberg, Sen. Lisa Gladden, Del. Jill P. Carter and Del. Nathaniel T. Oaks.

The lawmakers support Kamenetz's idea to name the park Lake Roland Park, although city officials haven't committed to supporting that name.

"We should not honor an individual who led the forces in rebellion against the United States of America on behalf of secessionists who sought to perpetuate slavery," the email said. "When both children and adults visit this park, they should be inspired by the action we urge you to take, not the honor we once bestowed on a leader of the Confederacy."

The question of Confederate symbols in U.S. cities has resurfaced following the massacre of nine black men and women inside a [Charleston](#), S.C., church. The incident is being investigated as a hate crime.

- [Kevin Kamenetz](#)
- [Stephanie Rawlings-Blake](#)
- [Bernard C. Young](#)



Yvonne Wenger formerly wrote about poverty, social welfare and all matters that stand in the way of a thriving Maryland. She's written about veterans affairs, Baltimore politics and governance and communities working to overcome the legacy of structural racism. Wenger grew up in Lancaster, Pa. She lives in Baltimore with her husband and daughter.