



**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**October 3, 2017, 8:00 AM**  
**Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT**

**Attendees:** Susan Ellis, Judy Hamer, Karen Kleine, Zoe Tarrant, Catherine Lewis, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Elaine Daignault, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Ramin Ganeshram, Jennifer Keller, and Dolores Paoli

**Guests:** Carole Southall (Playhouse), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School), Julie Heller (Westport Public Schools), Candace Banks (PTA Council), and Sam Arciola (Deputy Police Chief, Westport)

The meeting was called to order at 8:08AM.

**Approval of Minutes:** Susan moved that the minutes from our September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting be approved. Judy seconded the motion. The affirmative vote was unanimous. The minutes will be posted.

**Programming:** Harold presented an updated version of the proposed program schedule.

1. TEAM Westport Book Club: The most recent session discussed the book Tears We Cannot Stop by Michael Eric Dyson. The next session will be at Toquet Hall on October 30<sup>th</sup> at 7 and will discuss essays by James Baldwin as well as the movie *I Am Not Your Negro*. There was a discussion about how to have as many age groups as possible attend the sessions.
2. Interfaith Clergy: We would still like to do three events as discussed – 1) a session with the first Muslim mayor in Connecticut, 2) an Interfaith Council dialog with women (Christian/Jewish/Muslim), and 3) a panel discussion with religious leaders (Christian/Jewish/Muslim). These will be scheduled.
3. Playhouse:
  - a. We have started meeting with the Interfaith Council and the Playhouse about this year's MLK Day event. We are now searching for a speaker.
  - b. Next year's season at the Playhouse should be diverse.
  - c. We would still like to schedule a panel discussion or a conversation about "race-conscious casting" that can be tied to some event such as the Academy Awards or the Tony Awards, for example.
4. Library Partnership / Coming Events:
  - a. Tony Horwitz, author of Confederates in the Attic, was at the Library on September 17<sup>th</sup>. This went well although attendance was light.
  - b. Jeffrey Marsh, a gender activist, is coming to Toquet Hall on Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. This event should appeal to an audience from middle school age through adult and it was announced at Staples.
  - c. November 5<sup>th</sup> – "WestportWRITES 2017" is a mini-conference that is focusing this year on writers of color and gender – exploring writing that celebrates an expanded world.
  - d. November 9<sup>th</sup> – The topic of our first "Community Table" discussion will be how to question media and the news. Frank Sesno will talk about his book (Ask More: The Power of Questions to Open Doors, Uncover Solutions, and Spark Change) and then we'll break into smaller groups. There will be a different topic every other month on how to talk about difficult issues and how to have conversations while keeping your bias out of the picture. Maggie has been working with Cody in putting this series together. TEAM Westport will partner and co-sponsor including providing publicity outreach.
5. Policing: On October 21<sup>st</sup> at Staples (12-2pm) the Westport Police will be conducting a session on "Distracted Driving", alcohol, and drugs. The "Dodge-a-Cop" event on November 21<sup>st</sup> will raise money. This was done in the spring with middle school kids. Chief Foti has been "touring" with Jeff Pegues in different venues discussing the topic of "black and blue". We are working on dates to have "the tour" come back to Westport.



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Also, a meeting between TEAM Westport representatives and the department leadership team is being scheduled.

**Education:**

1. Essay Contest 2018: The Committee is working to come up with a topic.
2. Strategic Planning: Zoe and Catherine are doing a workshop for teachers on Teacher Development Day (Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>). They will present again in November at Long Lots. We are invested in helping Superintendent Palmer implement her strategy within areas covered by TEAM Westport. Rebecca and Julie went to the session for educators at Columbia University on Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>. They saw representatives from “Border Crossers” at the session.
3. Staples: Students at Staples have recently read Jessica Bruder’s Nomadland about what is happening to senior citizens when they retire. A person from BuzzFeed is coming in November to speak to students.

Following up on one of our September meeting discussions, Rebecca and Julie shared information about books and diversity. A sampling of books was passed around including: Solo, All American Boys, This Side of Home, American Street, Homegoing, The Miseducation of Cameron Post, The Sun Is Also a Star, Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe, and Ghost. The students have 5 or 6 choices of books to read. They discuss them in small groups and then with the class. There’s a lot being published by diverse authors about all sorts of things. The problem is that they tend to be about “the poor black kid”, for example. It is more challenging to find books that portray children who are black or gay and not stereotypically “poor”. Simon and Schuster does have an imprint with Muslim kids. Haris Durrani’s book The Technologies of Self is being used at Yale. We can look more closely at suggested reading lists from the Westport Library and from Staples to make sure that they include more diverse books. The Westport Library seems to be on board.

Board of Ed: Karen will be attending a lecture entitled “Where Have We Gone Wrong? Why Are We Still Failing African American and Latino Male Students” on November 17<sup>th</sup> at an upcoming Boards of Education conference.

There is an academic liaison for the ABC house; however, is this true for Open Choice students? Also do we know how successful our Open Choice students are? Is there more that we can do for them and for students receiving free and reduced lunches?

**Other Business:**

1. The Black Lives Matter banner will be rededicated at the Unitarian Church since it was torn down for the second time. We’ll be notified when that will take place.
2. Ramin is spearheading a Westport historical African American exhibit in 2018 in partnership with the Westport Historical Society. The proposal needs to be completed and funding will need to be obtained. May/June would be a good time period since *Flyin’ West* will be at the Playhouse during that time.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 8AM, but may be rescheduled since that is Election Day in Westport. Harold will notify everyone in the event of a date change.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod



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Secretary