



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2018, 8:00 AM
Room 309, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Judy Hamer, Catherine Lewis, Zoe Tarrant, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Susan Ellis, Stephane Kirven, Bernicestine McLeod, Ramin Ganeshram, Candace Banks, and Karen Kleine

Guests: Len Morris (Norwalk), Alison Patton (Pastor, Saugatuck Church), Foti Koskinas (Westport Police Chief), Julie Heller (Westport Public Schools), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School)

Approval of Minutes: Susan moved that the minutes of our December 5th, 2017 meeting be approved. Maggie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the minutes will be posted.

Programming:

1. **MLK celebration:** The organizations that are partnering to put on this event are the Westport/Weston Interfaith Council/Interfaith Clergy, the Playhouse, the Library, and TEAM Westport. Plans are final for this coming Sunday, January 14th:

- American University Professor Ibram X. Kendi, author of Stamped from the Beginning, is our keynote speaker. His book is a great body of work which Harold stated has transformed the way he looks at things including the distinction between anti-racism and assimilation. This point alone should make for a great discussion.
- The program will include Chris Coogan with the Good News Gospel Choir, the Weston High School Jazz Band, and a dance troupe from the Regional Center for the Arts.
- Free-will contributions will be solicited to create a fund for training in anti-racism. The bottom line is to put into action what we will have heard. The MLK planning group (composed of representatives from the four sponsors) will remain in place and will decide how the money might be allocated. The Town will be our fiscal agent and donations will be given to TEAM Westport – Anti-Racism Training. Catherine Onyemelukwe, Maggie, Susan (and Byron) will hold the “buckets” to collect donations.
- Members of the Youth Commission will be ushers and will handle the mikes during Q and A.
- We identified additional publicity outlets including *Inklings*. A press release is available.

2. **Essay contest Planning:** The revised poster has come back from the designer and we now have 50 copies. Posters will be taken to the high school and the topic will be announced as soon as possible including at the MLK event on Sunday.

3. **Conversations:** On January 29th, Stamped from the Beginning will be the topic of discussion during the Community Table at the Library (held every other month). TEAM Westport members have been serving as facilitators. The topic is used to kick-off discussion by small groups during which time participants can practice tools for effective communication.

Maggie and Althea are planning a TEAM Westport conversation for the spring: “Who Belongs in Westport?”.

4. **Interfaith Clergy/Interfaith Council:** We are still on track to conduct the three sessions proposed last year including the Muslim mayor from South Windsor, the women’s group from different faiths, and three religious congregation leaders.

5. **Policing:** Chief Koskinas reported the following:

- He is working with Jeff Pegues to set up a second discussion on “Black and Blue” first held last June. They have no dates yet for here, but have appeared in Bridgeport, Fairfield, and Redding, and also at Fordham.
- Althea is now a state-certified a police instructor covering Ethics, racial relations, and legal issues.
- The department met with representatives from the Norwalk NAACP involving a traffic stop in Westport. After talking and viewing body cams, misunderstandings were cleared up satisfactorily.



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- The department investigated another matter involving an African American family (non-Westport residents) that was handled professionally and solicited a gracious “thank you”.
 - Leadership Councils with TEAM Westport will continue and should eventually lead to greater transparency and communication with the department.
 - Westport is still recording statistics on car stops and is one of the top reporting communities.
6. Playhouse: April’s production is *Flyin’ West* (about African American women who go to Kansas in the 1800s to homestead). In tandem, our “*Blacks in Westport*” exhibit is scheduled to be at the Westport Historical Society. More programming will appear around the production. Still in the plans is a discussion on race-conscious casting – hopefully this summer.
 7. Library Partnership/Coming Events: Thanks to the Library for getting Professor Kendi for our MLK program and for partnering on the conversations.
 8. TW Book Club: Stamped from the Beginning will be discussed at our next session at 7pm on Monday, February 5th. The book was picked before we knew Professor Kendi was speaking here.
 9. Westport Historical Society: Congratulations to Ramin who has been named the new Executive Director of the Westport Historical Society. The goal is to have a more diverse approach and to collaborate with the schools and other non-profits. We are seeking funding for the “*Blacks in Westport*” exhibit and would welcome private contributions.

Education:

1. Strategic Planning: We’re ready to move forward to teach school leadership teams and are looking at the best way to do so.
2. Staples: Thanks to Julie for arranging a meeting with the Staples administration next week. She has a request from teachers at Staples for a member of TEAM Westport to evaluate some class panels including: January 19th – Contemporary American Lit (8a-10a) and January 22nd – Caribbean Lit (10:50a-12:50p). Judy will do the 19th. If anyone can cover the 22nd, please let Julie know. Last weekend Staples students worked with Vassar in a Haitian Art Sale. Rebecca is working with Cody on a Literary festival featuring Jason Reynolds and Nick Stone – the Saugatuck Story Festival (October 12, 13, 14) – as a result of an Innovation Grant. It is a Writers Festival to attract teens from Westport and Bridgeport. The goal is to bring in diverse Young Adult authors.
3. PTA: The PTA will plan the next PTA session for Zoe and Catherine to present. Notice about the essay contest can be distributed in PTA materials.
4. Board of Education: The Board has approved their strategic plan including statements for retention and hiring of diverse faculty and to eliminate achievement gaps. Are on her radar. Still approaching Open Choice. Teacher training from Zoe and Catherine. Is there board support? Yes, 3rd quarter.

Other Business: On January 16th at the Ferguson Library in Stamford, there will be a session entitled “*Civility in America: Reckoning with Race – America’s Failure*”.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26AM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 6, 2018 in Room 201 of Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine E. McLeod
Secretary