



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2018 8:00 AM
Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Catherine Onyemelukwe, Judy Hamer, Ramin Ganeshram, Zoe Tarrant, Maggie Mudd, Susan Ellis, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Elaine Daignault, and Althea Seaborn

Guests: Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School), Rev. Alison Patton (Saugatuck Congregational Church), and Julie Heller (Westport Public Schools)

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

Approval of Minutes: Maggie moved that the minutes from our February 6th meeting be approved. Judy seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with one correction and will be posted accordingly.

Programming:

1. **Essay Contest Planning:** Because of events at Staples High School and storms, the essay submission deadline was extended from February 27th to March 13th. The media has the information about the extension. The awards presentation date at the Library has been moved to April 23rd at 6:30 instead of April 2nd. Entrants who submitted their essays by the original deadline were notified of the change and that they had until March 13 to resubmit any revisions.

2. **Policing (Althea Seaborn):**

- a. Althea is working with members of the Westport Police force to discuss diversity and conflict resolution.
- b. As we hear more and more about the escalation of force by law enforcement officers around the country, it is important to schedule a community conversation about the potential of having incidents in Westport. No community is immune.
- c. Ken Barone at CCSU in the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy is working on the Connecticut Racial Profiling Prohibition Project focused on racial profiling. His work may help our community realize that there is not necessarily more crime among black people as well as the impact of profiling on policing, policy, and practices.

Action: Althea will coordinate with Chief Koskinas to move toward a potential conversation including Mr. Barone.

[NOTE: Representatives from the Police Department were absent from this meeting due to the scheduling conflict with the town-wide session on gun violence being held this morning.]

3. **Conversations:**

- a. Plans are still underway for a conversation on “Who Belongs in Westport”? Questions were asked about how best to frame the topic in order to have a community conversation with impact. “Teaching Tolerance” (Southern Poverty Law Center) has put together a curriculum that may be helpful. We can reexamine finance and economic issues historically to see how class and race, for example, may have created differences over time. Also, we should differentiate between “belonging” and “fitting in”. Social scientist Brené Brown explores how to cultivate belonging in her book Braving the Wilderness.
- b. Dialog – Harold will follow up with the Muslim/Jewish Women’s Dialog out of Hamden. They have been together 5 years and were suggested in reaction to flyers that were distributed in town last May. We have yet to frame with them what their discussion would be.



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- c. **CONNECT** – Two members from the Temple Israel CONNECT group met with Harold and Bernicestine. They want to extend their discussion group and have broader conversations on a town-wide basis. They have a discussion guide with social justice components. There are groups that meet in other places of worship; so is it possible to coordinate with all these groups and have all of these discussions on diversity as part of a town initiative?
Action: We'll work toward that end.
4. **TEAM Westport Book Club:** The book, Citizen (about micro aggressions) by Claudia Rankine, will be discussed on Monday, March 26 from 7-8:30. Ms. Rankine currently teaches at Yale.
5. **Library Partnership/Coming Events:** Ibi Zoboi, the author of American Street and Pride will be speaking on March 15th at the Library and at Staples.
6. **Playhouse:** The ADL event co-sponsored by TEAM Westport on "Fighting Extremism and Hate in the 'New Normal': A Conversation with Oren Segal" held on February 13th was very well attended and of particular current interest.
7. **Westport Historical Society:** Ramin requested names of members for an Advisory Board to help with the plans for the exhibit on African Americans in Westport which starts on May 6th; the Advisory Board will check sensitivity, programming, and the physical structure of the exhibit. She has already identified original material and participants for the programming during the exhibit. Judy, Bernicestine, and Harold will join the Advisory Board. In partnership, we would ask the Library to display books relating to the exhibit and Juneteenth. Ramin is still seeking funding for the exhibit.
8. **MLK Planning Committee:** The committee will continue to meet to plan anti-racist training. Harold also communicated with Professor Kendi. His center at American University is planning to launch anti-racism training initiatives later this year. Current versions in planning include 1) one week in DC, webinars, or instructors from the center providing customized local onsite training. The MLK Planning Committee will discuss and pursue options. Professor Kendi is also working with Jason Reynolds who will participate in the Saugatuck Festival at the Library this Fall.

Education

Strategic Planning: Zoe and Catherine Lewis are scheduled to present to the administrators of the Westport Schools in June.

Other

Several members recommended watching the documentary *Divided States* on A&E. This is an in-depth look at how racial tensions and hate crimes are impacting communities in the United States and Europe, and how community members are confronting the problem and fighting back.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:33AM.

The next meeting will be held at 8AM on Tuesday, April 3, 2018, in Room 201 of Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary