



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2018, 8:00 AM
Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Alison Patton, Zoe Tarrant, Catherine Lewis, Judy Hamer, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Ramin Ganeshram, Althea Seaborn, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Jim Marpe (First Selectman)

Guests: Josiah Tarrant (Student), Michael Barker (Westport Playhouse), Foti Koskinas (Westport Police Chief), Sam Arciola (Deputy Chief, Westport Police), Lauren Francese (Westport Public Schools), Julie Heller (Westport Public Schools), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School)

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

Introductions. All attendees introduced themselves. We offered congratulations to Josiah for his work on TEAM Westport—Staples and for his receiving a Scholar Athlete award this year. Josiah was also our second-place winner in our 2017 Essay Contest.

Approval of Minutes: Judy moved that the minutes of our May 1st meeting be approved. Catherine Lewis seconded. The motion passed. The minutes will be posted accordingly.

PROGRAMMING:

1. **TEAM Westport Book Club:** Waking Up White, by Debby Irving, was our last book discussed on May 21st. It's about structural racism and is written by a white woman growing up in a location in Massachusetts with demographics like those of Westport.

Our next discussion (TBD) will take place on July 9th at the Westport Historical Society at 7PM.

2. **Policing:**

- First Selectman Marpe and Chief Koskinas related the incident at Staples during the Staples/Fairfield Prep Lacrosse game on May 30th during which anti-Semitic comments were made by Fairfield Prep fans (called the Bomb Squad) as well as other acts of "breach of peace". Students at Staples had apparently posted hostile comments about Fairfield Prep on FaceBook before the championship game. While these acts were taking place on the field and at Staples, apparently no one intervened to try to stop them including the administrators, coaches, parents, or referees who were present.
Net: School administrators (and the Board of Education) in Westport, administrators at Fairfield Prep/Fairfield University, the Town of Westport, and the ADL are now talking to review what happened and what should be done to prevent future incidents during competition and within the school community in general. Safety issues have arisen recently especially over the past year and a half. Such actions are unacceptable behavior and they do not adhere to our values as set forth by our Superintendent of Schools.
- Chief Koskinas is planning to put together videos of some incidents in the media (including the Starbucks encounter and police arrest of two black men in Philadelphia) with the intent for us to discuss how we might react in the situations shown and how to turn confrontational situations into positive experiences for the police force and the public.
- Althea is rescheduling a meeting with Ken Barone re: racial profiling stats specific to Westport. Body cams are benefiting law enforcement.
- The department is constantly working with Harold and Althea.
- There are vacancies at the police department. If you have recommendations, please let the chief know. Currently 25% of the force is female and 25% of the force's supervisory positions is female. The suggestion is that the department reach out to NOBLE (black officers) to find candidates.



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3. **Westport Historical Society:** The exhibit, *Remembered: The History of African Americans in Westport*, opened on May 11th. This is a great exhibit displaying that African Americans were here and built the town. Also highlighted are the legal challenges to remove the disenfranchisement of African-Americans by the initial version of the Constitution of the State of Connecticut. Included is a micro exhibit on the 1818 Connecticut state constitution (200th anniversary). Other programming includes: a film screening this coming Sunday (re: William Grimes) and a talk back at the Playhouse on Wednesday after the matinee performance of *Flyin' West*. There will also be a screening of a film re: Josiah Henson (the inspiration for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on June 15. The Historical Society has a campaign to immortalize the names of more than 200 enslaved residents of Westport in the brick walk outside of the Historical Society. Half of the bricks have been sold. On June 17th, Ramin will appear on a segment of *Our Lives* (Channel 12). The exhibit has received some publicity, but we are working to get additional coverage. WHS wants school kids to come in. Private tours are available. All ages are welcome and encouraged to view this educational exhibit until October.
4. **Playhouse:** Michael Barker related that *Flyin' West* is a very special and important production because of the history of African Americans and the #METOO movement. It closes on June 16th. The cast is fabulous. It is a play that tells, bottom line, American history; however, a lot of the would-be audience think of it as being ethnic and therefore that the content does not apply to them. A big question is how to overcome that perception when all human stories educate us and can emphasize our commonalities.
Thousand Pines later in the season can provide more programming opportunities. Also, *Man of La Mancha* provides an opportunity for color-conscious casting. In December, *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* (about the Kindertransport during World War II) will return from a few years ago.
5. **Library Partnership/Coming Events:** The Library is planning to conduct another Community Table discussion in October. The topic "Taking a Knee" was to be discussed in April and still seems to be alive and well. The Library is in the middle of its Transformation project, so events are more limited.
6. **MLK Planning Committee/Anti-Racism Training:** There was a meeting yesterday. We are now putting together a list of possible speakers and planning the program. If you have input, please send suggestions. The next meeting will be in July. Tomorrow, we'll have the first anti-racism training planning meeting with Prof. Kendi's team.
7. **Conversations:** We are building upon what CONECT has done and moving forward to conduct ongoing discussion groups. Alison is working with various groups – including CONECT, our Book Club, and our Conversations group – to formulate a structure.
8. **Interfaith Clergy/Interfaith Council:** The Interfaith Council has contributed \$800 to our Anti-racism Training effort in honor of Ed Horne's retirement.
9. **Restaurant Fundraising Opportunity:** We have an opportunity to raise funds based on a percentage of the receipts on a Thursday evening in September at a local restaurant.

EDUCATION:

1. **Strategic Planning:** Zoe and Catherine Lewis presented to the Westport School system's administrators on May 3.
2. **Staples:** Lauren has 8 students working with her now; they want to form a club to focus on diversity (TEAM Westport – Staples) and will need an additional 7 for a total of 15.
3. **Board of Education:** The Board has approved a Task Force on Diversity chaired by Lauren and Harold. Over the next year, subcommittees will be formed as well. Students will be involved as well.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 AM.

The next meeting will be held at 8AM on Tuesday, July 10, 2018 in Room 201 of the Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary