



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2018, 8:00 AM
Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Catherine Lewis, Judy Hamer, Alison Patton, Zoe Tarrant, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Ramin Ganeshram, Catherine Onyemelukwe, and Elaine Daignault

Guests: Lauren Francese (Westport Schools), Julie Heller (Staples High School), Foti Koskinas (Westport Police Chief), Sam Arciola (Westport Deputy Police Chief), Michael Barker (Westport Country Playhouse), Candace Banks (PTA Council)

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM.

Harold welcomed everyone to the first meeting after summer.

Approval of Minutes: Maggie moved that the minutes from our July 10th meeting be approved. Judy seconded the motion. The motion was voted upon and passed unanimously. The minutes will be posted accordingly.

What's Up?

Harold reported on his and Bernicestine's southern tour in August which included visits to the following sites: 1) the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC 2) the Harriet Tubman Museum and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park in Eastern Shore Maryland 3) the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, AL. Our memorial and museum visits in Montgomery were hosted by Elizabeth Woodson (from Westport) who now works at the Equal Justice Initiative (headed by Bryan Stevenson) that created the memorial and the museum. The message is about peace and reconciliation. The museum does examine the progression from slavery, to Jim Crow, to lynching, to incarceration. It shows that we take 2 steps forward and then 1 step backwards and that this is still going on.

Programming

1. **TW Book Club:** Zoe and Catherine reported that the group will reconvene to set dates and books. They have a moving list. They may do essays instead of longer pieces. Several suggestions were given. Catherine can post a quest for suggestions. The Hate U Give (one of the books read earlier this year) is coming out as a movie.
2. **Policing:** Chief Koskinas attended an update session in DC for police chiefs conducted by the ADL.
3. **Westport Historical Society:** Ramin mentioned an exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art that displays photographs of unknown African Americans from the '40s and '50s. Attendees are asked to identify anyone in the photos if they recognize them. This exhibit will run through November 6th.
 - Our exhibit (*Remembered: The History of African Americans in Westport*) has been getting good attention and will be extended through June 2019. We are anticipating that Westport students in AP History as well as the 10th and 8th grades will view the exhibit.
 - Based upon invitation and coordination from Bernicestine, Congressman Jim Himes viewed the exhibit recently and spent double the time he had originally targeted. According to Ramin, the Congressman was very impressed with the exhibit and found several elements to be revelatory.
 - The Connecticut Historical Society has the Amistad archives and will work with the Westport Historical Society.
 - Another grant was just received for programming. Ramin and her staff are thinking of other ways to get funding through grants from, for example, CT Humanities.
 - **Programming:** this Friday at 6PM, Judy Hamer will present 'her life'. On Saturday, the 8th at 2PM representatives from Traces of the Trade will come down from Boston to present.
 - An audio tour of the exhibit will be created.



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4. Westport Country Playhouse:
 - CT Humanities gave a \$20K grant to do programming around *A Thousand Pines* in its world premiere. Programming will include someone to talk about the 2nd amendment.
 - *Man of La Mancha* will start September 25th with a predominately Latinx cast (16 out of 18). This will be a more complex production because the topic of prison/incarceration can be expanded upon. It is the educational initiative play for the year, so will involve more extensive programming. Can anyone identify speakers or any issues around incarceration to be discussed in greater detail? Staples students will be attending 3 of the performances.
 - *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* is returning in December. It is hoped that Staples students will attend this as well.
 - The Playhouse is concluding its strategic planning. The board will vote on an equity/diversity/ and inclusion plan to deconstruct systemic racism.
5. Library Partnership/Coming Events: The Saugatuck Story Fest for (October 12-14) has Jason Reynolds, recent Newbery Honor recipient, on Saturday delivering the keynote address. Sunday's keynote will be given by National Book Award nominee Ibi Zoboi. Students are involved in the planning and implementation. Judy is moderating a panel and Ken Davis, author of *In the Shadow of Liberty* is one of the panelists.
6. MLK Planning Committee/Anti-Racism Training: The next meeting for MLK Day planning will be on September 12th. The date is Sunday, January 20th, 2019. We are working with Dr. Kendi's staff to define the Anti-Racism training sessions (time, length, who).
7. Essay Contest: Susan will report at our next meeting.
8. Conversations: There are none planned currently.

Education:

1. Strategic Planning: We should know more at next month's meeting. The new school year just started.
2. Staples: Students have started a club TEAM Westport Staples. They can send a student representative to our meetings or we can possibly meet there. What do they need help doing? Now they need to support each other and think about issues within Staples re: equity, diversity, inclusion, and how to make things better.

An Innovation Grant for Teaching Ambassadors between the Westport Historical Society and the Westport Arts Center will provide teaching centers in the schools with regard to outside exhibits.

3. PTA: Candace is now the past president of the PTA Council; Carolyn Caney and Elena Caggiano are the current co-presidents. To get communications out, the PTA Council community bulletin board is maintained by the council presidents. Events communicated via the bulletin board must be hosted by non-profit organizations, be child-centered, and be based in Westport.

Marketing:

Web: Our website needs updating. We can add our community partners who meet with us monthly and eliminate old material. Catherine will contact IT in Town Hall. We should determine how our FaceBook page and our website relate. There are students who are members of the Social Studies Honor Society (Rho Kappa) who can work with us. Harold should send an email requesting their help.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 AM.

The next meeting will be held at 8AM on Tuesday, October 2, 2018, in Room 201, Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary