



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes Thursday, December 12, 2019 Westport Town Hall, Room 201, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Dolores Paoli, Ramin Ganeshram, Rev. Alison Patton, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Catherine Lewis, and Zoe Tarrant

Guests: Jacob Santos (Westport Playhouse)

The meeting was called to order at 8:10AM.

Welcome: Harold stated that our December meeting was rescheduled from Tuesday, December 3rd due to weather conditions on that day. He then reported that a subgroup of TEAM Westport will be giving input to the consultant involved in the search for the new superintendent of schools. Additionally, our representatives from the schools will be unable to join us today.

Approval of Minutes: Maggie moved that the minutes of our November 5, 2019, meeting be accepted with an amendment. Catherine Lewis seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention.

Schools/Strategic Planning/Staples/Board of Ed

Training conducted by Dr. Chris Petrella, Director of Engagement at American University's Antiracist Research & Policy Center, and a colleague from the Center for the top 40 administrators in our school system took place on December 11th. The feedback thus far is very positive. Half of the administrators attended in the morning and half in the afternoon. The entire group came together for another hour at 5, very similar in content to our session last year in December 2018. We want to shape an equity analysis to present to the Board of Education, the superintendent, and the consultant involved in the search for the new superintendent. We plan to meet with Dr. Anthony Buono and to organize a meeting with the new Board of Education chair, Candice Savin. We must start taking our message directly to the Board. We need their commitment as well as that of the administration. Presentation of the environment in the schools and recommendations with respect to that environment need to be brought forward. Budget line items should certainly be proposed to implement the recommendations and an analysis.

PTA Micro-Aggressions/PTA Parent Updates/TW Book Club

- 1) Zoe and Catherine met with the current PTA Council and continues to meet with parents.
- 2) Harold and Bernicestine met with the 2019-2020 President of TEAM Staples. Most encouragingly, the group is very active and continues to meet every Wednesday afternoon. The students have an opportunity to talk about and to share with each other their experiences at Staples. They are planning a program during Black History month (February) and have received the go-ahead for this. They are talking to the Library about potential speakers. Last year there had been two different student groups of color that were meeting, but this year they have combined.
- 3) They are finding that, in general, our community should understand the history of race in this country. Our students who go into college are finding out as they are faced with the world outside of Westport. Programming ideas would include having a group of students talk about their experiences once they leave Westport and/or a panel of parents with children who have gone outside of "the Westport bubble" relate their experiences and those of their children.

Westport Museum:

- 1) The current exhibit *Becoming Westport* presents history about the town with a deeper dive. It highlights the same stories about Westport we should all know. The exhibit should be up until June.
- 2) The Museum staff is working on an exhibit about the Paugussett tribe (indigenous people who were here). They are a part of the Algonquins and cousins of the Pequots. We can confirm a reservation on



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Clapboard Hill. The Town acknowledges that their land was unceded and was taken from them. The Paugussetts at one point were trying to get their land back and be the landlord.

3) An upcoming exhibit will feature Sigrid Schultz who reported on the Nazi for the *Chicago Tribune* during World War II. She was the only reporter at the Nuremberg trials. She resided in Westport after her retirement.

4) This month will feature an actor portraying Charles Dickens who will read *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens was a social justice activist – working on behalf of children and the poor. He was the first celebrity writer. His *A Christmas Carol* made him wealthy; he brought it to the US to make more money. He petitioned governments to contribute to the poor, in keeping with his sensibility.

5) The panels for the *Remembered* exhibit have not gone to Staples yet. The digital version is up, though.

MLK/Clergy

Rev. Patton reported on plans that are underway to offer Westporters an opportunity for a trip to Alabama in October 2020. Talks are in their infancy. The goal is to look at civil rights/social justice history in the context of our current work in order to get energy as we proceed to do concrete work. We hope to feature visits to Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham during that trip and to learn the history at each site. We would like to announce this in January at the MLK celebration on the 19th.

Ramin suggested that we can do the CT Freedom Trail locally, so that people who may not be able to go to Alabama can get a sense of Connecticut history with respect to race. The State historian would be happy to give the tour. One question was how to link a social justice component with the religious schools and the religious experience for youth. The Unitarian Church does it well.

Playhouse: The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration will take place on January 19th, 2020, featuring our keynote speaker, Dr. Carol Anderson. Her academic work on voter suppression is pivotal, particularly in light of discussions about suffrage (100th anniversary of the gaining of voting rights by white women) and this year's impending national and local elections. Operatic singer Helena Brown will be doing a few selections.

Westport Library:

Following up on the Library's initiative to create an Equity Lab to present programming related to equity, Harold has proposed a format which will help individuals monitor their progress on issues related to equity as they engage. We are looking at how to record progress. There is more to come. Stay tuned.

Essay Contest: We wordsmith-ed and discussed the essay contest challenge question to make it ready for announcement in January.

Announcements: On December 22nd and 23rd, a version of *The Nutcracker* will be presented here at the Playhouse. This, however, is not a Playhouse production. Clara will be played by an actress of color (Indian/Filipino). Tickets are available.

Joanna Gleason and the Moontones will perform at the Playhouse's Holiday benefit on December 14, 2019.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00AM after extended work on the Essay Contest question.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 14, 2020, in Room 309 of Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary