

Attendees: Harold Bailey, Jr. (Presiding), Jen Tooker (First Selectwoman), Bernicestine McLeod, Maggie Mudd, Zoe Tarrant, Rev. Alison Patton (Saugatuck Congregational Church), Elaine Daignault, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Judy Hamer, Althea Seaborn, Lee Goldstein (Westport Board of Education)

Guests: Brett Aronow, Danielle Dobin (Chairwoman, Westport Planning and Zoning Committee and the P&Z Affordable Housing Subcommittee), Kevin Christie (Westport Board of Education), Pippa Bell Ader, Jenny Nelson (Westport Playhouse), Bethany Gugliemino (Westport Playhouse), Andrea Moore (Second Selectwoman), Lynn Scully (Town of Westport), Chief Foti Koskinas (Westport Police Department), Deputy Chief Sam Arciola (Westport Police Department), Harris Falk (RTM), Danielle Teplica (Volunteer Director, Friends of TEAM Westport), Liz Falk, Faith Sweeney (Literacy Coach, Coleytown Elementary School), Patra Kanchanagom (AAPI Westport – Asian American and Pacific Islanders), Tom Foran, Trammi Nguyen (Co-Chair, Staples PTA DEI), Jonathan Steinberg (Westport State Representative), Tom Scarice (Superintendent, Westport Schools), Nancy Lewis, Alex Giannini (Westport Library), Rebecca Marsick (Literacy Coach, Staples High School), Rebecca Martin, Kristi Law, Ted Gillman, Hannah Schneewind, Sonya Jagenberg, Nancy Kail (RTM), Ngassam Ngnoumen (Co-Chair, PTA DEI), Dorie Hordon (Westport Board of Education), Melissa Kane, Tom Prince, Sal Liccione (RTM)

The meeting was called to order at 8:04am.

Welcome / Approval of Minutes – Harold Bailey, Jr.:

Maggie moved to approve the November 18, 2021, meeting minutes. Catherine O. seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Catherine O. moved to approve the December 16, 2021, meeting minutes. Judy Hamer seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Comments – Harold Bailey, Jr.:

- Harold welcomed Jen Tooker, our First Selectwoman.
- With respect to our Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration on this coming Sunday, the message should be strong and has applicability to our situation here in Westport.
- The Civilian Review Panel (CRP) has been in place with 3 of its 5 proposed members. [Harold now chairs the CRP and the 2nd and 3rd Select(wo)men occupy the other 2 seats.] The CRP has the responsibility to listen to complaints filed against the Police Department and to work with the Police Department and the Fire Department in hiring officers. Two different approaches are now being considered with respect to the CRP: whether we should maintain the Panel model or implement a Civilian Review Board (CRB) instead. Also, under consideration is how the members are selected under either model -- by the First Select(wo)man or by the RTM, etc. In the longer term, we may evolve to a CRB structure. The CRP piggybacks on the investigatory process that's already in place by the police department and takes into account the practices of the police force as well as individual privacy rules. The CRP works with the individual filing a complaint to get additional questions answered using the police report as a base and holds hearings to unearth what the complainant feels happened without violating the complainant's rights. The CRP can go into executive session and come up with a decision as to what the recommended outcome should be.

A CRB proposes separating the investigative process in an independent way so that the complaint is looked at from two points of view – from a civilian investigation in addition to the investigation carried out by the police. Tonight at 6:30p, the RTM will discuss publicly the process that has been in place since last

year (CRP). There will also be a discussion about the board (CRB) process. Tom Prince is the primary petitioner.

- Looking forward to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration this weekend, Harold recalled a picture taken of his grandson along with Dr. King's statue in Washington, DC. We need to remember that the America that existed when Dr. King was here is not that far from where we are now. A lot of what is going on now, we remember when we were growing up. We could not go to an integrated theater. We used separate fountains downtown. Schools were separate and unequal. Harold had the opportunity to integrate a high school. He remembers the vitriol. Now we say that was crazy; but racism continues to be an unsolved problem. We have the opportunity to move to a different level of understanding – something that spills over against all discrimination. The focus of this weekend will help. We'll talk about what this lack of resolution against racism has cost all of us.

First Selectwoman / Messaging Update – Jen Tooker:

Harold's opening words are great in getting us going today. We have a great event coming up on Sunday.

Superintendent / Board of Ed / Staples – Tom Scarice:

Our primary areas of involvement now are the budget and the results of the Equity Study at the end of the month.

Lee reported from the point of view of the Board of Education (BOE). The Strategic plan is being worked on and the BOE is hearing feedback. Some feedback from the public is that the emphasis on social and emotional learning (SEL) as a part of the strategic plan is a "trojan horse" to bring in equity work. We don't need a trojan horse. We are proud to talk about the work in which our faculty is engaged. Social and emotional learning has always been a part of Westport's curriculum. If you disagree with the approach, please let us know.

Tom: I had said that the Equity Study will fold into the strategic plan. Now, I am saying, it will stand on its own; however, there will be intersections with the strategic plan. Versus being integrated with the strategic plan, the Equity Study will be pulled out separately even though it does fit in. Some parts of the Equity Study will not be captured by the strategic plan; but we'll point out where there is crossover.

Harold: What is the best way to communicate to you any suggestions?

Tom: The best way to communicate any suggestions is to come to a board meeting or email the board (boe@westportps.org), copying the First Selectwoman, and copying the RTM.

Maggie: If the Equity Study is to be presented on Feb 7th, when before then will it be made public?

Tom: The 7th is a tentative date. The Friday before the meeting is the earliest it will be available.

Harold: We look forward to the draft of the Study.

Policing – Chief Foti Koskinas:

- We are looking forward to being able to meet in person.
- The Chief will attend the RTM meeting tonight.
- The State Accountability Task Force has submitted its last recommendations. A lot of information has come out. We meet and exceed every standard that appears in the memo. However, did we meet the demands of the country after the George Floyd murder? It is important for us to continue to improve, and this is what we should be looking at achieving. We're using a common-sense approach and adhering to a community view. We are doing what we are supposed to do. In 2016, we were back on 1970 standards and since then have improved greatly.

- We are moving forward on three new hires. Another officer is moving to Florida today. So, we're losing another. We have a few officers out on disability and for other reasons, but we are not in a crisis situation.

Sal: We will add two new officers, net.

Jen: A few discussions are being held by the RTM's Public Protection Committee with respect to the CRP versus a CRB as Harold mentioned earlier. The panel description and makeup have been rewritten. The current panel is comprised of a member of TEAM Westport and the Second and Third Selectwomen. The RTM will discuss the process to appoint members #4 and #5 to the Panel. There is a Press Release out inviting applicants for those two positions. We have 90 days to go through this process.

Harold: Will it take the full 90 days?

Jen: We don't think so.

Affordable Housing – Danielle Dobin:

We are working on an 830J affordability plan for the next 5 years. People have been unable to gather, but we'll meet on January 26th and hold a moderated conversation about what the State legislation requires and where we want to go – it is a community discussion on how we should locally diversify housing. We'll start with the facts and then talk about what we have versus what we need. We are glad that we have older property; but we need to stop talking about what was created in 1950. It's embarrassing. We need to talk about our own projects and not look backward. The purpose of the discussion is to have more people talking.

Also, we have an opportunity to use American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The RTM and the Board of Finance (BOF) have reached out so that we can move forward. We are hosting events by the Affordable Housing Subcommittee of the Planning and Zoning Commission to get people engaged.

- Saugatuck is going to get started with 45 affordable units.
- Some are at 1480 Post Road where 20% of 28 units are affordable.
- There are a few on Ketcham Street that the Gaults are doing = 17 units and 20%.

There is a lot of time between approval and construction. There are a number of other approved projects are around town.

Harold: What's the status of units discussed at West Parrish?

Danielle: Ballpark – the State Department of Transportation owns that land. An RFP for the creation of an affordable town home community has been issued. The Westport Housing Authority and the State Department of Housing will respond. This is not a money maker for anyone; there are fewer than 30 units. The process to transfer land is beginning. We have \$150K allocated to fund the soft costs to design drainage and to produce all of the architectural drawings. Then plans will be submitted to the P&Z for a text amendment approval. The final amount of land is 2.5 acres.

There is a process for deciding who gets the units: many applicants go through the developer. There is a lottery process since there are so many applications. 1480 Post Road was developed by SJR. They had a lot of interest. People started by calling the Westport Housing Authority. They have just added a waiting list. They can call the developer. People call Danielle as head of P&Z, but that is not the route to use. The process is to be open and is intended to provide opportunities for new people and not just to rehome people. There are micro units on Riverside for people with ability challenges. The units need to function more as a group home and people need to have more of an experience in living together.

Tom Foran: Is there anything else we can do?

Danielle: It will help for residents to come to the session with ideas for your particular neighborhood. It feels that affordable housing only occurs in some areas. Identify spots of land with Jen in the Coleytown, Long Lots, and Greens Farms districts. We are working on how to leverage Town-owned land and not build density necessarily. We rarely run into people who are concerned about affordable housing here; instead, they complain about density and traffic. New Canaan funds their affordable housing through a Development Fee that is assessed on any development. Then they direct those funds toward their Affordable Housing fund. This is a promising idea for Westport. Look around your neighborhood, what can we create from our funds versus using private funds.

Sal: Employee housing is needed, too.

Danielle: There's lots of overlap. Affordable housing in CT is really work force housing for families with incomes under \$80K/year. The State limits what we can create for housing and is not interested in work force housing.

Althea: How much affordable housing is New Canaan providing compared to Westport?

Danielle: The belief that Westport is ahead of New Canaan in providing affordable housing is not accurate. None of these communities is at an 830G level of 10%. We are consistently going onto the moratorium. New Canaan has a basket of apples. We have 1 apple. New Canaan is more diverse than Westport. 10% of their housing could be multi family. New Canaan has never had a multifamily cap. The data and the numbers show otherwise. We no longer have a cap, and we are constructing buildings.

What about Darien? They have created more affordable housing. The perception is that we have temporary housing shelters, so we have more affordable housing stock. However, our peer towns have done more in the last 1 year. In the last 4 years, P&Z has created more units than we had previously. Going back in time, 10 years ago Homes with Hope sought to create housing near McDonald's (12 or 14 units). The Town owned the land. There was a crusade to stop it. (It is the Westport Now Linksweller House). Jeff Weiser changed his thinking since he received pushback. Now I think people are more receptive. The Community has changed. This would have gone through in New Canaan and Darien. Moving forward, it will make us stronger together.

Danielle T: Thank you to Danielle D for your work. All of the missions, the way you have approached this topic with people has been great and we've never heard a bad word.

Danielle D: Praise everyone equally. I am definitely not alone on the committee. All members are in agreement. 1480 Post Rd was presented as a text amendment that was not opposed. It is a TEAM effort. Jim Marpe set a different tone as well.

TEAM Westport Parent Updates / Community / Book Clubs – Zoe Tarrant and Catherine Lewis:

Zoe: The TEAM Westport Book Club read The Sum of Us. We are glad that Heather McGhee is coming on Sunday. Since her presentation will be virtual, we are encouraging our children to attend. We find the content she discusses valuable for all ages.

We are meeting to figure out the dates for our meetings. Parents are attending BOE meetings and speaking up with their values. Our next meeting is coming soon.

Westport Playhouse – Jenny Nelson:

We are excited to be in partnership with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. event. We are continuing to work with our EDI bullet points:

- Equitable ticketing to make sure that everyone can come to the Playhouse.
- Accessibility and captioning in multiple languages.

We are hiring for 3 positions – one of which is a second person in the Education Department in Community engagement and education. Jump on the website to check out the position description.

Harold: The Playhouse is pushing forward with in-person performances for all productions hopefully beginning in April.

Jenny: We will be recording depending upon the rights associated with each production. We want to stream and record in high-quality when we do so.

Interfaith Clergy – Rev. Alison Patton:

The Interfaith Clergy association is working on the same project – the Dr. King celebration this Sunday. Thank you to the Library for hosting this year.

At Saugatuck Church, on the next three first Sundays at 10AM, we are incorporating community interviews into our services:

- Tom Scarice, Westport Schools Superintendent, on February 6th;
- Ramin Ganeshram, Executive Director of the Westport Museum for History and Culture, on March 6th;
- Peter Boyd of Sustainable Westport (Environmental justice) on April 3rd.

We are gathering in person with masks; however, we will live-stream. The concept is to invite local community leaders to reflect upon their faith and core values and the work that they are doing in the world. We are experimenting with this format.

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Westport – Patra Kanchanagom:

AAPI Westport is finalizing a Lunar New Year celebration to be held at the YMCA on February 5th, 2022, from 1-3 PM. They intend to use a Fire Pit and have a cooking demonstration inside as well as crafts, a Lion Dancer, and music. It is open to the public and is free.

Westport Library – Alex Giannini:

We are getting set for Sunday. More people are signing up. A Zoom link was sent to all who registered for in-person attendance. The link will go directly into the session on Sunday.

Harold: Is everything virtual at the Library?

Alex: Everything this week and next are virtual. We are going week to week. We are seeing 40-50% attrition on paid programs even. People are just not comfortable.

Brett: How do we pose questions for the speaker?

Alex: Put questions into Q&A. They will be retrieved and asked at the end.

Sonya: How do we register each child at the ABC House?

Alex: Each “computer” should put in the link to sign up and will attend in that manner. We’ll prepare for the 26th for the Affordable Housing 830J affordability planning session.

Elaine: We have free test kits. They were sent out to non-profits. If you need a kit, please contact us. We have volunteers to pick up and will drive all over town. Our effort is designed for people with challenges.

Catherine Onyemelukwe moved to adjourn the meeting. Rev. Alison Patton seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary