



**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 7, 2022**  
**Via Zoom**



**Attendees:** Harold Bailey, Jr. (Presiding), Jen Tooker (First Selectwoman), Bernicestine McLeod, Zoe Tarrant, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Judy Hamer, Susan Ellis, Lee Goldstein (Westport Board of Education), Catherine Lewis

**Guests:** Kevin Christie (Westport Board of Education), Andrea Moore (Second Selectwoman), Candi Savin (Third Selectwoman), Lynn Scully (Town of Westport), Deputy Chief Sam Arciola (Westport Police Department), Harris Falk (RTM), Danielle Teplica (Volunteer Director, Friends of TEAM Westport), Liz Falk, Patra Kanchanagom (AAPI Westport – Asian American and Pacific Islanders), Trammi Nguyen (Co-Chair, Staples PTA DEI), Tom Scarice (Superintendent, Westport Schools), Rebecca Martin, Joan Gillman, Olga Roberts, Sonya Jagenberg, Nancy Kail (RTM), Ngassam Ngnoumen (Co-Chair, PTA DEI), Jill Nadel, Michelle Mechanic (DTC), Liang Feng, Sal Liccione (RTM), John Schwing, Rebecca Marsick (Literacy Coordinator, Staples High School), Sue Hand, Pippa Bell Ader

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

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

Susan Ellis moved to approve our minutes from the March 17, 2022, meeting. Catherine Lewis seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Comments – Harold Bailey, Jr.:**

- The Teen Essay Contest awards ceremony was held on Monday, April 2, 2022. The essays were excellent and were written from different perspectives, but with clear viewpoints. During the ceremony, we named who the winners were and congratulated them. The essays are posted on our website where we'll post the entire ceremony. We'll distribute the link to it. Be sure to watch it if you missed the ceremony.
- Why is it so important to talk about race and religion and about understanding each other? [Slide Presentation]
- The Essay contest is and has been an example that shows WHY we should be talking about race. Also, just take a look at the values we codified at both the Town and the RTM levels as evidence of what talking about race has achieved.

**First Selectwoman / Messaging Update – Jen Tooker:**

Thank you and good morning.

Harold, you and Tom were at the essay contest awards ceremony. Obviously, I did not see all of the essays, but I acknowledge any and all of our kids who take the time and energy to talk about their thoughts on paper. It is a powerful exercise. Everyone should be congratulated. The three winners were really great. It's one thing to put words on paper. It's yet another thing to stand up to deliver those words in public. The students were all poised and very impressive.

**Tom:** We love the way the essays can amplify student voices. They engage students to have a true say and to contribute their thinking to the discourse. The essays were moving and thoughtful. Their deep sense of caring was inspiring.

**Catherine O:** Judy gave a great discussion of the role of the judges. We got a real sense of the standards to be named a finalist. Thanks, Judy.

**Jen:** We put out a press release asking for volunteers to apply to serve on any one of the five Town committees (including TEAM Westport) that have vacancies because of the complaint issued against the Town and me as Selectwoman about party representation on committees. The due date for applications is April 15<sup>th</sup>, so we have a week left. We have had responses. Andrea Moore, our Second Selectwoman, can

answer process questions. We will be working with Harold to make sure we have new members added to TEAM Westport who are in tune with the mission.

Andrea: The process: emails are coming in from the public. There is an online form to fill out; then, the applicant must send a resumé and a short letter as to why they're interested and the skills they would bring. We'll collect, interview, connect with the committee chairs. The chairs will communicate to us the type of skills they're seeking for their committee. I'll sit down and talk with the chairs.

Discussion: There was a discussion about the requirement for a 50% plus 1 person limit for majority party representation on Town boards/commissions versus the 2/3 limit stipulated in the State statute for boards/commissions/committees.

**Superintendent / Board of Ed / Staples – Tom Scarice:**

As public educators, we have over time looked at how public schools serve demographic groups of students differently. These include federal grants going back to Johnson. The "No Child Left Behind" Act under George W. Bush started to disaggregate children according to achievement.

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Education (BOE) will meet and there will be a report on the final draft of the Equity Study. Nine staff members are working on the presentation – the same group that worked on the RFP. We are working collaboratively to do a succinct presentation and the action steps will be paused as we work over the next month.

April 25<sup>th</sup> is a public meeting. We had a rationale – to assess how each student feels a sense of belonging and connection to our schools. We listened to testimonials. This is a national conversation that we need to take part in.

We are doing a climate survey again. The emotional security of our students in 2019 showed up in a climate survey. We did not hit the mark on everything, and surveys create more questions. We shall look at policies and practices and how they are "welcoming" or not in our schools. We'll look at how our students and their culture are valued. There is national attention on curriculum and practices in teaching and learning perspectives.

We have had a great opportunity with the course on African American/Puerto Rican history. It is getting great traction and high enrollment. We need to look beyond that since we have kids for 13 years. We are preparing our students for that world they'll be in in the future. We are wrapping the Equity Study report up this week to be ready for April 25<sup>th</sup> and will post it a week in advance.

Harold: It is time to put support into action by encouraging folks to come out to the presentation and visibly show support for the work being done. It is ground-breaking because of the work and the thought put into it.

Lee: We're excited about sharing the report. The FaceBook page for the BOE will carry it.

**Policing – Deputy Chief Sam Arciola:**

- We are now at a force of 62 with our new hires; however, we still have 2 vacancies. One of our new hires has been sworn in and another will be sworn in later this month.
- We are holding a Food Drive on Saturday April 23<sup>rd</sup> at Shop & Stop on Post Road East. This is an opportunity to support food pantries at Homes with Hope, the Gillespie shelter, and other human services locations. We always get tremendous support from our community.
- Any questions?

**Comments:**

- We'll be there on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with our student volunteers. Please bring food to support the drive.
- The Civilian Review Panel is meeting tomorrow for a training session and to review 2 new complaints. At this meeting we'll see how the police candidates that we interviewed are doing.

**Affordable Housing – Jen Tooker (for Danielle Dobin):**

Affordable housing successfully kicked off the 830J planning activity for the Town. We hosted the first session sponsored by the Clergy. The second session is to be at Town Hall this Tuesday and will be sponsored by all of the political parties.

At the P&Z meeting on Wednesday, April the 13<sup>th</sup> at noon, a representative from New Canaan will talk about their community fund for affordable housing.

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

Zoe: The group will meet on April 26<sup>th</sup> to discuss the book Minor Feelings – an Asian American Reckoning by Cathy Park Hong.

Catherine L.: We may meet in person next time; but we have not scheduled this yet.

**Westport Playhouse – Harold (for Jenny Nelson):**

*Next to Normal* is the current production. It is about mental health and people of color; and the director is the same one who directed *In the Heights*. It's a tremendous production. Previews are going on now. Opening night is this Saturday. The Playhouse wants to get people back into the space; so, they are offering tickets to organizations – to employees and young people. To get complimentary tickets, let Jenny know.

**Interfaith Clergy – No report:**

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

We are preparing for AAPI month (May) in Westport. The First Selectwoman's office has been helpful in planning. Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> is the kickoff.

- We have an AAPI Festival event planned on Saturday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at the Y with snacks and a food truck.
- We are working with the Library and the Organization of Chinese Americans for a follow-up session on May 4<sup>th</sup> after the rally against South Asian hate last year. Where are we now? Asian hate is on the rise. Vicki Nguyen (NBC News) and William Tong (our State Attorney General) are coming.
- May 14<sup>th</sup>, 4p-6p we're conducting a Toquet Hall workshop for middle schoolers and teens. We'll offer free meals. There is an Immigrant History Initiative to talk about fighting hate through history. They've been working with boards on Diversity Equity and Inclusion.
- Grace Lin (noted children's author and illustrator) is coming to speak at all of the schools in May.
- We're selling T-shirts through April 10. This is not a fundraiser. The shirts will be available on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

We are getting them through Nice Threads; they were designed by Rosie Jon and are beautiful.

Harold: Please give us the list of activities to get out to everyone. Sounds tremendous.

**Westport Library – Harold (for Alex Giannini):**

- Verso Fest is coming! The Library is launching its own record label on Sunday at 6PM. There will be great entertainment and people who are entertainers will be featured throughout the week. Panels will be conducted. Be sure to take a look at it.
- Thanks to everyone for supporting the Teen Essay Contest Awards ceremony. Any questions.

Danielle: The event at 6pm is ok for teens and middle schoolers.

**Westport Arts Advisory Committee – Harold (for Nancy Diamond):**

The Charles Joyner exhibit is opening at the Library.

Mr. Joyner will be in conversation with Trey Ellis during the opening celebration.

Catherine Lewis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Zoe seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20am.



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Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod  
Secretary