

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 5, 2022
Via Zoom

Attendees: Harold Bailey, Jr. (Presiding), Jen Tooker (First Selectwoman), Susan Ellis, Maggie Mudd, Bernicestine McLeod, Zoe Tarrant, Althea Seaborn, Catherine Lewis, Rev. Alison Patton (Saugatuck Congregational Church)

Guests: Lynn Scully (Town of Westport, Operations Director), Jenny Nelson (Westport Country Playhouse), Administrative Lieutenant Dave Wolf (Westport Police Department), Kendall Driffin (Westport Country Playhouse, Education), Thomas Scarice (Superintendent, Westport Public Schools), Joan Gillman, Kevin Christie (Board of Education), Abby Gordon-Tolan, Danielle Teplica, Lauren Francese (Curriculum Coordinator, Westport Schools), Trammi Nguyen, Harris Falk (RTM), Olga Roberts, Andrea Moore (Second Selectwoman), Liz Falk, Jill Nadel, Rebecca Martin, Sonya Jagenberg, Kristi Law, Tom Foran, Rebecca Marsick, Liang Feng, Faith Sweeney (Coleytown Elementary), Catherine Onyemelukwe

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

Welcome/ Comments – Harold Bailey: We are in AAPI Heritage month. Two AAPI events have already occurred – on Monday night and last night. Last night at the Library was an event that featured an AAPI documentary and a panel discussion. The event was taped, so I encourage everyone to look at the film. There was a lot of information about the history and the movement of Asian Americans in the US plus some riveting commentary and personal stories about life as an Asian American.

-There are now three plaques in Town (at Town Hall, at 22 and ½ Main, and near Jesup Green) as part of Westport’s Historic Marker Project. For several years, we wanted to have a more historic version of the Town’s history, then 22 and ½ Main, and now a view of Westport’s values going forward. A page on the Town website (reachable by QR code) has the wording for the plaques.

Lynn Scully showed the three plaques and explained that they are part of the Sustainable CT endeavor which led us to having a high certification by that group because it emphasizes diversity – one of this year’s focus items. We need to come up with a suggestion for commemorating and celebrating these historic markers. These plaques are worth celebrating.

Alison: Maybe we should coordinate a walk between the three locations.

Harris: The General Assembly made Juneteenth an official state holiday. That would be a good time to do it.

-Heather McGhee is still scheduled to present the rescheduled Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration talk at the Library on Wednesday, May 18, 2022, at 7pm.

-The NAACP President for the State of Connecticut was here in Westport at Christ and Holy Trinity to announce the “Million Jobs” program. Connecticut is a pilot area. The program is sponsored by CVS and Yale New Haven among others. The program begins 18 months before a person’s incarceration ends with the intent to provide a job. It retrains people who have not been incarcerated, as well. The program offers coaching and interviewing and provides clothing at the end of the training. the commitment is to have jobs waiting for the trainee

Superintendent – Tom Scarice: Thank you for coming out to the recent Board of Education (BOE) meeting to show support for the schools. I hope it made a difference. My comments may be anticlimactic now since everything led up to that meeting. Thank you. I want to recognize the work of the Educational Team who presented the report. We meet 4 times every week and have held other meetings debating and understanding the recommendations from the Equity study and what they meant. It helped to be public with unscripted questions. The responses were direct, respectful, and insightful. We are proud of the process and the results.

I will say only one thing that is repetitive as I said in a podcast I did with Dan Woog last Friday. The idea of looking at kids in different categories has always been employed by the government for funding. We can go back to LBJ and No Child Left Behind (under George W. Bush). We are held accountable by federal and state law to look at academic performance by subgroup and to close achievement gaps between subgroups. Magnet schools exist to close gaps and to reduce differences. What we are looking at is not just differences in performance. There was a discussion about the performance of students and the availability of courses at the AP level; we have expanded the AP program to meet the demand and to enhance the student experience.

In May 2020, it was a discussion about the overall student experience in our schools that triggered us to do the Equity study. The metaphor of the pie came up – we do not slice the existing pie; we make a bigger pie to accommodate the need. Special Education and AP programming were treated accordingly. We did not reduce our staffing even though our enrollment decreased. Two AP courses and special ed teachers were added. We have tried to emphasize those two factors. We will reconvene the educators and develop action plans around the areas identified by the Equity Study. The baton gets handed over and we'll decide where we want to allocate and concentrate on other priorities. We are incorporating Social and Emotional Learning principles in this effort and not launching two separate efforts. Action plans will kick off for those efforts.

On May 11-12, there will be an exhibit at the Staples Library consisting of displays of student works related to the State mandated course on African American Latino/a history.

Lauren: An AAPI course is being developed for roll out – now being done in Illinois and New Jersey. Connecticut is the only state with funding for curriculum development and professional development and support. We are looking at the Westport curriculum and working on state standards writing for all areas including Social Studies. There is a lot happening.

-Social Studies has been with challenges because the world hands us curriculum. Lots of work has been done by the whole team. We did it together and we are proud of the presentation and the work.

Rebecca: As for the exhibit Tom mentioned, students from the class picked individual areas/people that they wanted to have more detail about. They are using interactive tools to allow comments. The students' standalone projects are in the Library. The class will be running again next year. It is NOT a mandatory course.

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First Selectwoman – Jen Tooker: Lynn covered the plaques around Town. We'll celebrate this summer. Applications for the Town Committees --

Andrea: We have received several resumes for these committees. We have reached out to 10 people for this committee (TEAM Westport) and have scheduled time over the next few weeks to meet with them in order to gauge interest, backgrounds, and how they can be of value to TEAM.

- It was a pleasure to launch the AAPI Celebration. This has provided all-around education and awareness. It is a fabulous month for Westport. Thanks to Serin, Patra, and Rosie for their leadership.

Policing-- Lieutenant David Wolf: The biggest issue right now is hiring. We are down two officers and are still looking for candidates. We did have a lateral transfer from Fairfield. Are we still working the list of candidates that were interviewed? We do tremendous background checks and will keep going to get the people we are looking for.

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

-A Small group will meet a day after the BOE meeting to discuss Minor Feelings by Cathy Park Hong. We have not settled our summer schedule.

-A planning/brainstorming session will be held next Monday morning at the Library at 9am. We want to reach out to the wider community such as having a speaker series on Town organizations as they present what they are doing relative to TEAM. People are welcome to join. Cutting edge work has been happening and we want to roll what's going on out to the public.

- On June 1st, we are presenting to the PTA Council – “Talking to our kids about race”. This is different from years ago. Now we have a DEI structure. The PTA DEI representatives from the middle schools met on Monday. They did a Walking Tour of Westport with Ramin. It was wonderful.

Danielle Teplica: TEAM and Staples DEI are very intertwined. Over the past two years of DEI in the schools, so many of the people on the school DEI committees are involved with TEAM and would not be where they are without the presence of TEAM.

Westport Library – Harold for the Library: Heather McGhee will be here in person at the Library on May 18, 2022. She will also sign books. It will be one heck of an event. It's free. It's hybrid. Please register. We are not sure the registrations got carried over from the postponed session scheduled for last January. Folks are welcome from everywhere. This is an event put together by the Playhouse, the Library, Interfaith Clergy/Council, and TEAM Westport.

On May 24th at the Library, Steve Parrish will interview Carlotta Walls Lanier (the youngest of the Little Rock 9). She will appear via Zoom. We can send out the link for registration and will post on FaceBook.

AAPI Westport – Harold for Patra Kanchanagom:

There are other events planned for May for AAPI:

Festival at the Y on Saturday, May 7 (2-4) with performances for the kids and a food truck;

Tuesday, May 10 – Allies Happy Hour at MoCA

Saturday, May 14 – AAPI History with Immigrant History at 4-6 for Middle and High School Students

Everything Everywhere All at Once – May 19th with the Remarkable Theater

Go to AAPIWestport.com

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Westport Playhouse – Jenny Nelson: Kendall Driffin is now on staff at the Playhouse in the area of Education, and Community Engagement. She's been here two weeks and is an amazing educator committed to social justice. We are thrilled.

-We are in the process of searching for an EDI director. We came to this through our board. We are still accepting applications. If you know of anyone, please go to our website.

- We are happy to say we are offering passes. We are glad to be back. You can get up to 4 \$5 tickets. Also, at the Bridgeport Library. We want folks to feel welcome without price being a barrier.

-We are still looking for middle school campers. There is a sliding scale of tuition available.

-Our next play is *Straight White Men*. It is meant to be polarizing (white fragility through satire). Young Jean Lee is the playwright. Please come to get a seat at the Playhouse.

Harold: Is there a good place to get an idea of what this is all about?

Jenny: Give a shout out to the marketing team. Our website has a page for each show so that you can learn about it. Also, how they picked each production is out there.

Zoe: We like going to the shows. Have we thought about a TEAM Westport production? They are very thought provoking. We need a point person to organize. We can just choose a night.

Jenny: talk with the marketing team, pick a night, and get it out to the group.

Interfaith Clergy – Rev. Alison Patton:

-Saugatuck Congregational Church is welcoming in June a theologian in environmental issues.

-On Thursday, June 9, Sustainable Westport and Wakeman farms will meet.

-From June 1 – August 31st, Alison will be on sabbatical.

-A Youth group at UUW was in Alaska. We want them to come share. We're still hoping to have a community-wide lecture in the fall or spring particularly around regional collaboration with respect to climate justice.

-Natalie Owens Pike – a Yale Divinity Student – will be here. She will be interested in TEAM.

-Jeremy Wiederhorn is the leader for the Interfaith Clergy.

Catherine Onyemelukwe: There is a Celebrate Westport meeting tomorrow morning, and we need information from TEAM Westport to contribute. We need someone to attend the meeting.

Danielle Teplica: Students have been volunteering in many areas and have helped at the Playhouse. They are in exam period now and don't have the time; however, let us know if you need help.

Catherine Lewis moved that we adjourn. Alison seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:23a.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary