

**Watertown Citizens for Peace, Justice & Environment**  
**Minutes: Monthly Meeting Sept 21, 2022 via zoom**

Attending: *Sharon Bauer, Kathy Button, Rita Colafella, John Gannon, Tod Gross, Jacqui Gross, Connie Henry, Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin, Jim Hunt, Ernesta Krackiewicz, Janelle Lacy, Paul McClory, Steve Owens, Tony Palomba, Deborah Peterson, Pam Phillips, John Rimas, Eileen Ryan, Mary Skinner, Arun Sannuti, Jeanne Trubek, Jennifer Wolfrum, Tiffany York.*

Land Acknowledgement

Working Group Reports

- **The Pigsusset Initiative** is offering an Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration on Monday Oct 10, 2-5 PM at First Parish Church Watertown. Working with a Wampanoag chef, Branch Line will be offering 3 indigenous dishes between Sept 30 and Oct 10 .
- The **Friends of Bees** hosted their annual September Garden Tour last week. This year it included planted grass strips that defy the name “hell strips” . Hosts reported numerous visitors and opportunities to share their drought strategies and plants with other gardeners. FOB will be helping with plantings in the DPW's new pollinator gardens around town.
- **WCBL** reported another successful Race Reels. Their equity work with the schools feels like it is encountering hostility and recalcitrance. They are awaiting a new police chief for further work with the police. They continue to have monthly meetings, vigils, and discussions.
- **RSG** continues to work with families. Among the issues they are working on is the plight of Afghanistan refugees whose status is uncertain, with no path to citizenship; and an upcoming ballot question on driver licenses for all. They have been filming and editing for an Oct.16 online fundraiser with Yo-Yo Ma to support their family work .
- **Peace and Common Security** continues to meet monthly. They are sponsoring and promoting 3 events, Oct 2 - A Facilitated Dialog on Ukraine War and the Peace Movement to talk about differences amongst us and the peace movement on Ukraine; Oct 6 - Medea Benjamin (co-founder of Code Pink) on War in Ukraine: Making Sense of a Senseless Conflict; and Nov 16 WCPJE Monthly Meeting on “Why Supporting Palestinian Rights and Opposing Israeli Apartheid is Not Anti-Semitic.”
- **WFCC** has continued to focus on the new school construction and to identify priorities for the Climate Action Plan. They recently co-sponsored Race Reels with WCBL. They are now working hard on Fair Share Amendment.

Feature Presentation: The Fair Share Amendment

State Rep Steve Owens provided an overview of this November Ballot Question #1 and the 10-year effort that included two sessions of both houses of the State Legislature to approve a 4 % additional tax on personal incomes over \$1M, to be spent only on schools or transportation.

Paul McClory from the Mass Teachers Association noted that personal income of \$1M amounts to netting \$20,000 a week, from a group of people who can afford to contribute to generational change. Schools crucial funding needs: Improving wages for school staff, particularly for paraprofessionals who earn poverty wages; Higher teacher salaries to attract new teachers; Resources to respond to teacher/educator shortages leading to large class sizes; Higher Ed debt; Safe Buildings and infrastructure, including well ventilated buildings.

Cunniff school teacher Janelle Lacy described the schools for more resources for social and emotional services, more instructors for newcomers to English, and more resources for the economically disabled – now a third of the school population. A new Director of Equity is a good start, but more is needed. Paraprofessionals on staff do amazing work every day and earn only \$25,000/yr. John Rimas, high school Civics Teacher has been canvassing over the summer for Fair Share and finds it is well received. WHS needs more teachers – there are now math classes with 31 students, and others in the high 20's and 30's. We need more Instructional Aides, who do well with students with emotional and learning needs.

## Q&A

What about the State Surplus? Most of it is one-time COVID funds and we need ongoing support.

Can we trust the Legislature to spend it well on schools and transportation? The Amendment constitutionally restricts spending to these areas, but even without it these are already high priority for the Legislators which has passed a Student Opportunity Act that is yet unfunded and recognizes the need for more funding for the T. In addition when gas cars get replaced by electric cars, additional revenue to fix roads and bridges will be need to replace the loss in gas taxes.

Additional Tax on a house sale. After tax deductions and deductions for purchase costs and improvements, very very few house sales will trigger the tax for most ordinary incomes. This is a not a business tax. If a business is organized to create personal income, and this results in additional tax, they are free to organize differently.

*Respectfully submitted, Deborah Peterson*