



Youth Council Meeting Minutes - March 2, 2023

Item 1 | Call to Order

- Vanessa Westlake called the meeting into order at 5:04 p.m.

Item 2 | Attendance

- Ahmed Othman, Ali Atoui, Alla Othman, Juliana Spaulding, Madeline Naper, Maya Palic, Sadie Lominac, Thomas Berinato

Item 3 | Public Comment

- State Senator Jason Lewis gave a presentation to the members of the Youth Council about the survey responses his office received about what issues young people (aged 17 and under) are interested in in the 5th Middlesex District. Some of the issues highlighted as important by young people were supporting immigrant rights, making public higher education more affordable and reducing student debt, strengthening gun safety laws, improving mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery, etc. Senator Lewis explained how he has filed and cosponsored many bills advancing these issues.
- Vanessa Westlake asked about the top issues for other age groups, to which Senator Lewis responded by saying improving mental health, healthcare affordability, supporting public schooling, protecting environmental and open spaces.
- Ali Atoui noted that protecting the environment and open spaces scored high on the survey, and correlated this to the Youth Council's recent presentation from OSRP. Thus, he asked about some bills in the current session addressing this, to which Senator Lewis said that a major public land protection and environmental law was passed in the last session, and that funding for environmental agencies is an important task for the current session.
- Ahmed Othman asked about the civic engagement bills Senator Lewis has filed or cosponsored, to which Senator Lewis responded by saying that a civic learning project was mandated by law during a past session, and that he has specifically filed bills making official meetings still have a hybrid option post-pandemic, and having local cable access TV stations receive alternative funding aside from just cable.
- Vanessa Westlake asked about how the Youth Council could work with Senator Lewis's office further, to which he responded by saying to stay engaged in issues affecting youth, potentially coordinating with his office a time to visit the State House, and to stay in contact about any opportunities.

Item 4 | Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 11, 2023 and February 8, 2023



- Clerk Ali Atoui gave a brief summary on both the January 11 and February 8 Youth Council meetings, due to him being absent during the preceding meeting. Ahmed Othman motioned, with Madeline Naper seconding, to approve the minutes; they were both approved unanimously.

Item 5 | Liaison Spotlight: Town Council

- Vanessa Westlake gave a presentation to the Town Council since Madeline Naper (the liaison) was sick at the time, and informed the body about what the Youth Council has done over the past term.
- Town Councilor Jonathan Chines gave an update on what the Town Council has been doing, specifically with the town budget, renewing the contract with the town administrator, and the new high school project.

Item 6 | Liaison Updates

Item 7 | Wakefield Human Rights Commission: International Women's Day Event

- Vanessa Westlake presented the event taking place, and that the WHRC has asked for volunteers to assist in the event. Alla Othman, Maya Palic, and Madeline Naper stated their interest and availability in volunteering. Catherine Dhingra also noted that Youth Council members present could wear their Youth Council sweatshirts. It was decided that the sweatshirts would be made available in the guidance department for the high school members, and in another location for the middle school members.

Item 8 | Communications Sub Committee Update

- Ali Atoui announced that the subcommittee is moving forward with the Instagram Reels to highlight the current state of the high school, in advance of the Special Election.
- Ali Atoui also noted efforts to increase voter registration amongst seniors at the high school.
- Ali Atoui presented the in-progress Youth Interest Survey to display what questions students of the WMHS would answer about what they'd like to see the Youth Council take on. He subsequently opened it up to the general council to see what additional topics could be asked about. Catherine Dhingra suggested everyone give a potential topic that relates to their liaison positions to expand the topic importance section. Vanessa Westlake suggested announcing the survey over the morning announcements to increase awareness.

Item 9 | Announcements

Item 10 | Determine Next Meeting Date

- Vanessa Westlake stated that the next meeting would be held on March 15, in person due to it being a half-day. Ahmed Othman and Ali Atoui stated that the WMHS Student Council is running its Warrior Give Back Day program at that time, and would be unable to attend.

Item 11 | Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated

Item 12 | Adjournment

- Alla Othman motioned to adjourn, and Ahmed Othman seconded. The meeting was adjourned unanimously.