

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
Minutes
Annual Retreat September 21, 2021
Zoom

Present: Daman Irby, Amanda Folsom, Nana Ghartey, Michael Grinnell, Dave Norris, Stella Mattioli, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward
Non-members present: Maxicelia Robinson

Retreat opened at 4:34 pm Daman Irby presided A quorum was present

Opening activity: each commissioner shared a memorable experience or unique talent

Approval of August minutes

Daman made a motion to adopt minutes as written. Minutes approved unanimously.

Review of Bylaws

Noted: city residency is not a requirement for membership

Noted: Bylaws allow for 10 members plus city reps (max of 13 at present)

Noted: Bylaws specify an “annual organizational meeting” where officers are elected;
this has typically occurred at the annual retreat in past years, per D.Norris

Noted: the Commission is allowed to fund raise

Noted: Amanda requested that we clarify whose role it is to be checking the commission gmail inbox regularly and responding to general inquiries

Recruitment of new members

We now have five (5) positions vacant, following the resignations of Neeley Minton and Joan Clarke. City boards and commissions positions are advertised 90 days prior to the quarterly appointment meetings. The next of these will take place in December; applications should be submitted to the City by 12/10/21. Applications are typically reviewed by our City liaison (Kyna Thomas) and the current Commission Chair

There was agreement that we need to more proactively identify and recruit applicants ourselves and to communicate our preferences for candidate consideration to Council. Although these procedures are not specified in our bylaws, they need to be included in an as-yet undeveloped commissioner handbook.

Action items:

- **Michael** will draft and share some ideas for what should be included in a commissioner handbook
- **Adrienne** volunteered to draft a document which outlines the process for member recruitment and describes City Council's process for accepting/reviewing applications and appointing new members

Review of Strategic Plan

Adrienne noted that, while many items on the current plan are in a state of suspension due to the pandemic, the “Improved Web Presence” section is one area where we can increase activity. We can collectively achieve this goal by regularly updating the info on each sister city on our website, highlighting success stories, and becoming more active on our social media sites.

Daman suggested that an intern might like the job of compiling news reports on each of our Sister Cities and creating a sister city newsletter.

Action items:

- **Elizabeth** committed to feed Besancon updates and news to the Outreach Committee more routinely and challenged the other sister city reps to do the same
- Explore recruiting an Intern to assist in developing a Sister City newsletter

Updating Sister Cities Contact Lists

All current lists are in need of updating.

Nana mentioned that the Chief of the Winneba area is looking into establishing a Sister City liaison there with a long term appointment, which would bridge the turnover in political leadership that occurs every 4 years.

Action Items:

- **City Reps** pledge to have current contact lists drafted by the October meeting
- **Elizabeth** will update the CSCC contact list by the October meeting. She asked all commissioners to submit any corrections or changes in their contact info to her prior to 10/18/21. The updated list will include the term of office info for all current commissioners.

Review Goals/Achievements for 2020-21

Grants committee - Amanda

Goal 1 - completed

Goal 2 - completed

Adrienne suggested that we follow up with grantees and report on their progress more frequently. In response Amanda pointed us to the “Grants Dashboard” that she has created to monitor the progress of each grant. In addition, she proposed assigning a commission liaison to each grant project to monitor progress and has drafted a proposed description:

Goal 3 - still in progress (original completion timeline of April 2021).

Item is on the agenda for discussion tonight.

Communications/Outreach committee- Michael and Adrienne

Goal 1 - completed

Goal 2 - in progress, needs improvement; commission directed to earlier discussions about sharing contact and news

Goal 3 - in progress, but there is no final plan

Goal 4 - in progress; Adrienne has tentatively volunteered to be the secondary person to manage the CSCC website

Nana asked where we are in the process of creating a "Sister City Week" that he had previously recommended. Michael created a list of outreach ideas following that initial conversation, but the CSCC has not moved this project along to date.

More discussion followed regarding: the role of the Outreach Committee (should it be proposing ideas and implementing outreach ideas?); what would be involved in pulling together an idea like this; whether we would need to create an ad hoc committee to implement; the amount of energy and work with community partners that would be required.

Education committee - Daman and Elizabeth

Goals 1 & 2 - have been put on hold due to pandemic restrictions as well as the loss of two committee members

Goal 3 - ongoing; two local students submitted entries to the YAAS 2021 contest in partial fulfillment of this goal, which will be carried over

Action item:

- **Daman** will forward Elias Alonzo's contact info with **Michael**, who will reach out to see if we can find a way to partner with the Ixtatan Foundation in marking Hispanic Heritage Month

Friendship City: Huehuetenango - Daman

Elizabeth represented the Commission at the Ixtatan Foundation's 20th Anniversary celebration on August 28. She reported that the new friendship city contacts in Huehue are struggling with setting up their commission; SCI has resources for this that might be shared with them. Daman noted that there are other sister cities in Guatemala that might be able to advise.

Action item:

- **Daman** will contact SCI about their resource materials and see if it's possible for us as a member organization to share those with our new friendship city contacts in Huehue

Sister City: Winneba - Nana

Nana reported that during the most recent visit, the delegation tried to meet

With all the civic and political departments in Winneba to assist in establishing direct lines of communication with the comparable departments in Charlottesville City government.

Sister City: Besancon - Elizabeth

Goals 1,2,3, 4 (2020) - completed

Goals 2,3,4 (2021) - ongoing but in process; there will be no student exchanges in 2021, not yet clear if they will resume in Spring 2022 or Fall 2022

Elizabeth asked when we should begin working on 2022 goals

Nana would like to encourage City Council members to attend our meetings and to visit our Sister Cities when trips are planned

Action items:

- **All committees/City Reps** will submit drafts of our 2022 goals at the November monthly meeting
- **Daman** will look into scheduling quarterly subcommittee meetings in October if possible

Sister City: Poggio - Stella

Goal 1 (Filippo Mazzei film) is still in process; Stella has the DVD and will work on organizing a film screening when she return to the US

Goals 2 & 3 - ongoing

Goal 4 - contacts in Poggio have indicated they prefer in-person exchanges and are not as interested in a virtual exchange

Discussion of Travel Assistance Standards

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to schedule a longer discussion in an upcoming monthly meeting.

Adrienne suggested the following for consideration: deciding on frequency of awards per calendar year; tying the scholarship award cycle to delegation trips that are in the works. She asked for clarification of what an "individual opportunity" means.

Examples offered: a grantee might include travel in a grant application; travel to support a joint business venture benefiting both cities.

Additional questions were raised:

Do we want to sequester separate funding streams for someone who might want to travel to a sister city to explore connections of mutual interest to both cities, as well as someone who wants to participate in a delegation visit?

Is this something we can support, both financially and administratively?

Are these scholarships available to Commission members?

Do we need to revisit the amount a City Rep can request every two years for expenses related to travel to the Sister City? Michael suggested we might review this when we return to this topic at our monthly meeting.

Action item:

- **Daman** will set aside a significant portion of the October meeting for more in-depth discussion of this topic

Review of Commission Membership

- Elizabeth has agreed to continue as Secretary
- Michael has agreed to continue as Treasurer
- Daman would like to have a Co-Chair, especially to assist with ongoing communications with city officials.
- Dave pointed out that the Bylaws envision a Vice-Chair position as a kind of “heir apparent” position for someone who can take a year or so to share in leadership tasks and subsequently be ready to step into the Chair position.
- Acknowledging that there are no nominees at present, Daman has graciously agreed to continue as Chair.

Action item:

- **All Commissioners** are asked to help recruit new members to fill the vacant positions

Meeting adjourned at 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley,
Secretary and Besancon Rep