

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

March 7, 2023

CitySpace Large Conference Room

Present: Alicen Brown, Claire Denton-Spalding, Kimberly Hayes, Edward Herring, Daman Irby, Stella Mattioli, Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward, Vivien Wong

Absent: Nana Gharthey, Michael Grinnell

Non-voting Members Present: Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council

Meeting opened at 4:31 pm Daman Irby presided A quorum was present

I. Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Motion (Edward Herring) to accept the minutes, as amended in today's meeting

Motion Seconded (Alicen Brown) **Motion passed**

II. Secretary's Report (Elizabeth Smiley)

It was noted that three commissioners will be in Besançon during our scheduled meeting date in April. Since several other commissioners will also be absent due to local schools' Spring Break, Daman will work with Max to set an alternative meeting date.

III. Chair's Report (Daman Irby)

a. Discussion on Public Comment During February 2023 Meeting and Future Public Communication to Commission

Daman read a prepared statement as a follow up to the February meeting (copy of statement attached).

IV. Email Communications Report (Adrienne Ward)

- We have received email from a couple of grant recipients who did not receive funding this year, asking for more information about the Commission's decisions in relation to their grant proposals
- Follow-up on last month's citizen inquiry about how the Commission is funded: Max submitted the citizen's email and the Commission's budget report to the City's FOIA officer, who then provided the community member with the requested information
- Adrienne suggested that it would be useful for the Commission to have whatever information was sent to the citizen.
- Clarification requested: Is it necessary to submit a FOIA request to receive this type of information? According to Max, all document requests for information that isn't publicly released are considered FOIA requests. Further, FOIA requests are standard procedure and not burdensome for city staff to process.

V. Committee Updates

a. Grants (Adrienne Ward)

i. Discussion: Travel Scholarship Policy

Adrienne distributed a handout to guide TSP discussion (copy attached), then reviewed the history, objectives and awards-to-date of this program. The handout offers scenarios for altering/expanding this program given that it was instituted a bit on-the-fly last year; it therefore needs refining to determine its long- term structure.

Comments and discussion:

- Alicen Brown endorsed the 2-cycle proposal (twice a year) to better accommodate the public school's typical schedule for planning and funding student trips; she suggested we should decide how to respond if in any given year there is a higher need for funding on a trip(s) to one Sister City, while funds allocated for use on trip to the other cities remain unspent; she suggested developing a one-pager outlining the TSP for distribution to trip coordinators who help organize the ongoing trips and exchanges; asked if there is a promotion plan for alerting the community about funds?
- Claire Denton-Spalding suggested we create an outreach campaign twice a year with 1-2 months lead time to inform the community when the application process is open; she asked how the financial needs of applicants are typically determined;
- Adrienne Ward clarified that while we ask applicants to articulate their reasons for requesting aid, we do not currently ask for specific financial information since we do not yet have an adequate mode for objectively evaluating financial need, and out of discretion as it would be considered public information;
- Viven Wong asked if the TSP will place the general public and local schools in competition with each other for the same source of funding; she suggested we consider how school groups can request travel funding without conforming to this format and timeline;
- Daman Irby noted that this model seems to work well for individual travelers, but does not seem to fit as well when we get funding requests from larger groups (such as the CHS student group); he reminded us that these scholarships are designed to assist people who might not otherwise be able to afford participating in a delegation trip or traveling to one of our Sister Cities on their own;
- Claire Denton-Spalding asked if the TSP could "cannibalize" our Grant application process;
- Adrienne Ward responded that it should not, since we stipulate that someone who has won grant funding is ineligible to also apply for a travel scholarship; since it appeared there would not be enough time to decide

on the long-term structure of the program, she asked that we decide whether or not to approve the proposed temporary schedule and the amounts to be allocated for travel scholarships to each city. We have received several inquiries about it and it has been significantly delayed so there is pressure to get it off the ground.

Motions (Alicen Brown): to approve the proposed temporary TSP schedule with \$2000 dedicated to scholarships for travel to each city; in the absence of applicants, unallocated funds for any city can be used to fund scholarships for travel to other cities; individuals who qualify can receive a scholarship up to a maximum of \$1000.

Motion Seconded (Edward Herring)

Motion passed

b. Outreach (Claire Denton-Spalding)

- Results of Outreach meeting last month: looked at an overall strategy for 2023; identified three “leads”: social media (Kimberly Hayes), partnerships (Sylvia New Strawn), and media (Stella Mattioli).
- Branding: discussed developing a new Commission logo and a branding campaign. Max asked the committee to defer this until the City has hired a new Communications Director; Council is planning to discuss the City logo and ours may be pulled into that discussion.
- Materials Development: would like to develop flyers and a poster for distribution in the community. CDS has researched printing and design costs and would like to request funding to pay for designing a pull-banner on a stand that we would carry to events, as well as a pamphlet or a one-pager

Motion (Claire Denton-Spalding) to approve funding in the amount of \$600 to pay for pull-banner and brochure/poster

Motion Seconded: (Edward Herring)

Motion passed

- Promoting Grant awards: CDS would like to meet with the grantees and/or their Commission liaisons to develop plans for publicizing their grant projects. Adrienne will send her info about each approved grant and the assigned Commission liaison
- Travel Scholarship Program– Claire will follow up with Adrienne one-on-one about plans for promoting this program

c. Education (Alicen Brown) no report

d. Budget & Finance (Max, for Michael Grinnell)

The current balance is \$38,839.78. This figure does not reflect outstanding travel reimbursements related to Edward Herring’s February trip to Huehuetenango and Elizabeth Smiley’s upcoming trip to Besançon.

VI. City Rep Updates

a. Besançon (Elizabeth Smiley)

i. Funding Request: Business dinner in Besançon

Elizabeth gave a brief report on plans for the upcoming City Rep trip to Besançon; she requested funding to host a dinner for several municipal officials and school partners during the visit; requested \$850 to cover the costs for 20 guests, based upon a quote received for a fixed-price menu

Motion (Alicen Brown) to approve \$850, with city clerk approval, to be spend on a dinner (no alcohol) for up to 20 guests in Besançon

Motion Seconded: (Sylvia New Strawn)

Motion passed

b. Huehuetenango (Edward Herring)

i. Report on recent trip to Guatemala/Huehuetenango

Edward distributed a written report on his recent visit to Guatemala. He highlighted several points: while there, he was always accompanied by city officials and guides; he participated in a 2-hour talk radio show answering questions in Spanish; while there is no real infrastructure for tourism in Huehuetenango, there was discussion about the feasibility of setting up a satellite shop in Charlottesville to showcase and sell items from Guatemala (*See Herring Trip Report March 2023 in the Huehuetenango Materials folder, CSCC shared google drive*)

Edward proposed that we have further Commission discussion about how to move forward in this Friendship City relationship; he will provide a recommendation based on his understanding of expectations on both sides.

City officials in Huehue would like to travel to Cville in October 2023; this would require an invitation from Mayor Snook and significant planning including obtaining travel visas

c. Poggio a Caiano (Stella Mattioli)

Charlottesville High School is sending a choral group to Poggio in June 2023; CHS choral director Will Cooke has reached out to Stella for her assistance as he begins to coordinate the logistics for this planned trip.

d. Winneba (Nana Ghartey) no report

Meeting adjourned at 5:52 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley, Secretary & Besançon Representative

Next Scheduled Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, April 4, 4:30-6:00 pm, CitySpace Large Conference Room

(Attachment to March 7, 2023 CSCC Minutes)

Chair's Comments Regarding Public Statement

Adrienne Ward as Chair of the Grants Committee, Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas, Deputy Clerk of Council Maxicelia Robinson and I met with Charlottesville's Deputy City Attorney Allyson Davies to discuss the rules surrounding public comment generally and more specifically the public comments made during last month's meeting. The Commission will look to formalize a future policy and process that allows members of the public an opportunity to communicate with our Commission.

Regarding the statement that was made during the last meeting: As the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission was not a partner on the Charlottesville-Winneba Foundation's trip and was not responsible for activities or individuals selected by the CWF to participate or lead the trip, the Commission is not in a position to advise the organization on how to manage its staffing or programming. The Commission's only role was providing two travel scholarships to individuals who applied to the Commission for funding to participate in the CWF sponsored trip. The member of the public who addressed the Commission during last month's meeting did not receive one of these scholarships from the Commission.

In response to the comments provided last month to the Commission, our organization provided a copy of the statement to the leadership of the CWF to view and respond to directly, given the absence of the Commission's authority or responsibility for the trip referenced in the statement.

Regarding Commission policy on public comment during official meetings: The CSCC only has 1 hour and 30 minutes per month to meet. Communication when CSCC business is being discussed that includes more than two members, is not allowed outside of official meetings. Given these parameters, it must be determined by this Commission through a more formal policy and process, whether to set time aside for public comment and how to do so fairly and consistently in the future. The Commission will be determining whether to dedicate an allotment of the 1.5 hours for public comment or to direct members of the public to send their communications to the Commission's email address at cvcillesistercities@gmail.com.

As was included in the Commission's publicly released agenda, today's meeting will not have a time for public comment to assure the business of the Commission is conducted in the time allotted. A Commission discussion may occur during a future meeting to consider future policy on this matter.

(Attachment to March 2023 CSCC Minutes)

**HANDOUT FOR TSP DISCUSSION
March 7, 2023 CSCC meeting**

History

- TSP not as regular, structured as Grants Program, semi-formalized in early 2022
- Objectives: CSCC seeks to support travel by our citizens to our Sister and Friendship cities, again in service to the CSCC mission; application also notes the aim of helping those who might otherwise have difficulty covering the travel costs;
- this paragraph heads current **Travel Scholarships Program** application form:

Program Objectives: The Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission seeks to ensure the diversity and inclusivity of participation in Sister Cities travel opportunities. The Travel Scholarships program is a new Sister Cities initiative launched in 2022 to offset the costs of travel for individuals who face financial barriers to participation. The program responds to an identified need in the Charlottesville community, based on past requests for financial assistance for planned trips of Charlottesville High School students to Besançon, France and Pleven, Bulgaria, and for organized trips to Winneba, Ghana. The program aims to make travel to any of Charlottesville's Sister and Friendship Cities more financially accessible, subject to the availability of scholarship funding and interest among applicants.

- Inaugurating the TSP in 2022 the Commission voted to allocate \$4000 annually, in individual awards of max. \$1000 apiece

Last year – instituting TSP 2022

- awarded TSP funds to two persons traveling to Winneba on May 2022 trip, sponsored by the Charlottesville Winneba Foundation; (\$2000 from FY 2022 CSCC budget)

Now

- need to decide **key policy and procedure questions:**
 - How many cycles and when?
 - How to allocate / distribute funding?

POLICY/PROCEDURES FOR CSCC Travel Scholarship Program

	PROPOSAL 1 – one annual cycle	PROPOSAL 2 - 2 cycles per year
HOW MANY CYCLES?	● application window: ○ month of Dec/Jan? (for travel over whole calendar yr) ● deliberation in Jan/Feb ● awards made by mid-Feb, or Mar 1	● application windows: ○ Dec (for spring travel) ○ April (for summer, fall travel) ● deliberation in Jan and late April ● awards made by mid-Feb, mid-May
FUNDS: ALLOCATION & DISTRIB.	APPLIES TO EITHER PLAN: 1-CYCLE/YR OR 2-CYCLE/YR ● Double the amount dedicated to TSP, from \$4000 to \$8000 ● every fiscal year (July 1-June 30) each city has \$2000 in its TSP bucket – ie, to award to TSP applicants) ● awards are \$500 min.-\$1000 max, depending on # of qualified applicants ● each city’s unused TSP\$ is rolled over into next year’s/cycle’s pot; if unused for 3 yrs /cycles running, falls into general pot, to be divided among 4	
HOW TO FUND RIGHT NOW: ● we haven’t distributed fiscal year 2023 TSP allocation (\$4000 / June 2022-July 1, 2023) ● vote: add another \$4000 to it from present CSCC balance, thus increase to \$8000? YES ● dedicate \$2000 to each city YES ● \$ awarded on rolling basis—first come, first served, via official application, application period according to cycle YES ● We did not determine what to do if no applicants for a city’s 2K allocation – i.e., how to handle unrequested \$; whether that \$ can be used for excess applications for a given city; whether/how to roll over to same city’s pot for next cycle ● We can replenish TSP funds - 8K/annually- July 1, 2023; (assuming adequate fiscal year 2024 city allocation to CSCC); ● we would promote TSP with new official parameters as soon as appropriate DID THIS		
● TEMPORARY SCHEDULE (spring 2023 only – then start “regular programming,” i.e., one of above proposals) ○ Application period March (2 weeks) ○ Deliberation when, and by who? ○ Recommendations approved at April 4, 2023 meeting; ○ awards communicated immediately after		

Additional resources:

- TSP application form, also TSP Principles & Process document (draft), both on Gdrive:
Grants Materials/Travel Scholarships
- Section on TSP in Orientation Handbook