

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

Meeting May 2, 2023

CitySpace Large Conference Room

Secretary's Note: These minutes were updated by me on June 14, 2023 with the addition of two (2) documents that Edward Herring distributed at our May meeting. Those documents can be found at the end of these minutes, as Addendum 1 and Addendum 2.

Present: Alicen Brown (via Zoom, see statement below), Claire Denton-Spalding, Michael Grinnell, Kimberly Hayes, Edward Herring, Daman Irby, Stella Mattioli, Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward, Vivien Wong

Absent: Nana Gharthey

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

Meeting opened at 4:40 pm Daman Irby presided A quorum was present

Opening Statement from Chair Daman Irby:

“K-12 Representative, Alicen Brown, has requested to participate remotely from Charlottesville High School. She has referenced Criteria number 4 which indicates personal matters as her reasoning for remote participation. Each representative may participate remotely up to three times per year when using Criteria 4 as the reason.”

I. Approval of March Meeting Minutes

Motion (Edward Herring) to approve as revised

Motion Seconded (Kimberly Hayes)

Motion passed unanimously

Approval of Travel Scholarship Meeting Minutes on April 17

Motion (Adrienne Ward) to approve as written

Motion Seconded (Claire Denton-Spalding)

Motion passed with abstentions from those not present at the meeting (Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley, Vivien Wong)

II. Secretary's Report (Elizabeth Smiley)

No new business

III. Chair's Report (Daman Irby)

a) Review of city council resolution restoring meetings to in-person

Daman asked for input on preferences for our ongoing meeting location. Edward and Claire both stated a preference for the current location. There was consensus that we will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of each month at the current location, CitySpace Large Conference Room.

b) CSCC Applications Updates

Four terms are expiring on June 30: Higher Ed Rep, Besancon Rep, Poggio-a-Caiano Rep, At-Large Member. Applications for these positions are now open on the City website; the deadline to apply is June 9.

Action item: Daman requested that commissioners with expiring terms email him by May 16 indicating whether or not they intend to apply for another term.

Action item: any Commissioner planning to re-apply must either complete the city's online application or print a pdf version and submit it to the Clerk of Council's office.

- Daman signaled his intention not to reapply for another term as Higher Ed Rep.
- Vivien pointed out that while her term does not expire until 2025, she will be leaving for college in the fall. In order for her unexpired term to be filled in September, she will need to send an email to the Chair with a copy to Max by June 20 indicating her intention to resign, and Max will post the vacancy on the city website for the next application period.
- Edward has expressed an interest in the position of Commission Chair. He has agreed to serve as Chair for our June meeting, as Daman will be away at a conference and unable to attend.

IV. Email Communications Report (Adrienne Ward)

We have received a notice from the WIX company of an impending deadline for reviewing their new pricing structure and deciding if we will continue to subscribe to their platform. (See additional discussion on this topic during Communications committee report, below) Vivien has been working on our website and reported that the WIX platform is no longer a good option for us; there was brief discussion about whether or not to re-subscribe on a short term basis or for another year; Max suggested we hold off on making any substantial changes pending possible upgrades and changes to the City's website which are currently under consideration. More research on options is needed as well, and the Commission will need to vote on adopting a new website platform.

V. City Rep Updates

a) Besançon (Elizabeth Smiley)

Report on recent City Rep trip to Besançon (April 2-5)

- Guest report: Will Keener, a CHS junior who traveled with the student group to Besançon, gave a brief but enthusiastic report on his experience.
- Elizabeth distributed a first draft of her written report and gave an overview of the packed schedule of activities and events during the City Rep visit. Kimberly set out a display of brochures and promotional materials from Besancon for commissioners to browse. *Link to report here:* [Besancon Trip Report 2023.docx](#)
- Kimberly and Edward contributed comments and observations regarding highlights of the visit
- Max suggested we offer a brief presentation on the trip to City Council at its work session in July prior to its regular Council meeting; Elizabeth will follow up.

b) Huehuetenango (Edward Herring)

- Edward distributed handouts (*attached*) to accompany his brief review/status update on our Friendship City process and to present two specific recommendations for next steps.

Proposal for Memorandum of Understanding

Following a consultation with Sister Cities International, Edward proposed that we establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Charlottesville and Huehuetenango. This type of document would outline the nature of the relationship and the expectations of both cities and allow either city to dissolve the Friendship City status if, after further discovery and exchange, it is determined that the relationship is not beneficial to both cities.

Proposal for Potential Huehue Official Delegation Visit

A next step in the process of sister city development would be for the city of Charlottesville to invite and host an official delegation of visitors from Huehuetenango. Edward has proposed an October 2023 delegation visit, modeled on the 2018 visit by the Mayor and city officials from Besançon. He estimates that the Commission would need to budget \$6,000-10,000 to organize and host a weeklong Huehue delegation visit. **Action item:** Michael was asked to provide information on the costs associated with the 2018 Besançon delegation visit, as a benchmark for planning and preparing a budget for a Huehue visit. Pending Commission approval, Edward will move forward on the process for a delegation visit with City Council and other stakeholders.

Motion (Sylvia New Strawn) for the Commission to recommend that City Council issue an official invitation, from Mayor Snook to Mayor Cano (Huehuetenango), to form a delegation for the purpose of visiting Charlottesville in October 2023.

Motion seconded (Stella Mattioli)

Motion passed unanimously

- Edward hopes to schedule time during City Council's work session on July 17 to give a brief Friendship City status update, to include the proposed October delegation visit and any related planning in the works. **Action item:** Commissioners were asked to review both handouts and provide Edward with any feedback prior to his anticipated Friendship City report to City Council on July 17.
- Adrienne expressed her appreciation to Edward for taking the lead on further developing our relationship with Huehuetenango and serving as a de facto Huehue/Friendship City representative.

c) Poggio a Caiano (Stella Mattioli)

Elections will be taking place in May, she will report on whether a new mayor is installed

d) Winneba - no report

VI. Committee Updates

a) Grants (Kimberly Hayes)

Update on Travel Scholarship Program

Three travel scholarship winners were notified on April 21 that they were awarded scholarships. All 3 awardees have submitted their paperwork in order to receive funding for their planned travel.

b) Education (Alicen Brown)

YAAS 2023 update

The competition was well publicized inside CHS. Vivien and Alicen reached out directly to teachers, both in fine arts and in the English departments. However, this year there are no students submitting applications this cycle.

Vivien: this competes with many other activities and events occurring in the Spring. Next year, they might anticipate the competition earlier; for example, meeting with teachers in the fall to start planning with them to embed the competition into their curriculum.

Student Rep position

Daman also asked Alicen and Vivien to work together on identifying possible CHS student candidates for Vivien's unexpired term.

c) Communications (Claire Denton-Spalding)

- Claire has implemented a tracker function in the CSCC website so that we can determine how frequently it's being visited
- She has met with a graphic designer about a new CSCC flyer; she will send a design for our review later in the month
- Following up re: WIX– Claire suggested we move over to a website platform that is more user-friendly and that, given the price increase, this would be a good time to consider making that switch. Vivien reiterated that WIX is not a long term option; she recommends we continue to use it month-to-month for now so that the website stays live, until a new website platform is chosen. There was discussion of the pricing options (month-to-month vs. paying for another year at a reduced rate).

Motion (Claire Denton-Spalding) to approve paying for WIX month-to-month until a new website platform is chosen and our website is built on that platform

Motion seconded (Vivien Wong)

Motion passed unanimously

Action item: Claire will research quotes from possible new vendors to present at next month's meeting

On a related note, Max reported that she had forwarded the notification of the WIX price increase to Kyna, who suggested that Claire meet with a member of the City's IT department to see what they suggest about developing the type of website our Commission needs while keeping it connected to the city's website.

d) Outreach (Claire Denton-Spalding)

No new business

e) Budget & Finance (Michael Grinnell)

- The current balance is \$35,991.
- Outstanding unpaid commitments are as follows:
 - \$6000 in grant awards not yet disbursed;
 - \$4000 for the travel scholarships just awarded;
 - \$4000 for the CHS sponsorship approved at our Feb meeting;
 - Besançon Rep travel expenses not yet reimbursed (up to \$4000);
 - Expenses not yet reimbursed for dinner in Besançon hosted by the Commissioners (up to \$850)
- We are under budget for this fiscal year as a result of awarding fewer Grants than anticipated in the most recent cycle

VII. Other Business:

- Sylvia is hosting a dinner for all commissioners at her house this Friday, May 5 at 6 pm. All commissioners and their spouses/partners/ significant others are invited to attend. This is a strictly social event and no CSCC business can be discussed or conducted. Edward shared Sylvia's address and phone number for reference.
- Daman thanked Adrienne for her leadership as Grants committee chair; Kimberly has agreed to serve as our new Grants chair. As this will be Daman's last meeting (he will be absent for the June meeting), he said his goodbyes and thanked others for their service. Commissioners also thanked Daman for his service and wished him well.

Meeting adjourned at 6:25 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley

Secretary and Besançon Representative

Addendum 1- added on 6/14/23

May 2, 2023

UPDATE: Status of Friendship between Huehuetenango and Charlottesville

The cities of Charlottesville Virginia - a member city of Sister Cities International - and Huehuetenango, Guatemala began an informal process of Friendship in 2021 with the exchange of letters of intent between the cities.

A Friendship period of three years was informally launched as the first benchmark in our relationship which was expected to lead to a full Sister Cities partnership between the cities.

The friendship stage is a normal and essential phase in the development of sister city relationships. This is where we learn about each other; Where we evaluate our relationship; Where we learn about what we have to offer each other and what are the advantages and benefits of building this relationship. Unfortunately, we have barely begun these essential activities in this phase.

The informal process towards Friendship was begun in 2021 with the issuance of joint letters of intent from each city.

1. Letter from the Charlottesville City Manager, Chip Boyles, inviting Huehuetenango to form a partnership with Charlottesville as set forth by the Sister Cities International beginning as "Friendship Cities" and moving to draft a formal Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by both our governments - Dated Friday, 19 February, 2021
2. Letter from Huehuetenango mayor, Senor Gustavo Cano, accepting the invitation to form a partnership with Charlottesville - Dated 23 May 2021

The world wide pandemic, beginning in 2020, imposed restrictions throughout 2021 creating barriers, obstacles and other limitations to standard friendship opportunities.

We were only able to effectively begin the mutual learning process this past October when we began collaborating, with the help of Ixtatan Foundation, to plan an initial visit to Huehuetenango by a member of the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission.

This visit took place in February 2023 and provided the first person to person contact between the cities. Needless to say, we have not progressed as far as would have been desirable in understanding our mutual expectations and wishes surrounding a friendship relationship.

Recommendations:

- (1) That the City of Charlottesville extend an invitation to the City of Huehuetenango to send an exploratory delegation here in the fall of 2023.

The preparation process for hosting a delegation in Charlottesville will require intense and lengthy communications and close cooperation between our designated Huehue committee and the entire commission together with the commission of Huehuetenango.

This is critical to identify our mutual objectives and expectations, not just for this visit, but also for our relationship.

- (2) **That we write The Formal Memorandum Understanding to be available (for review and approval) by August 01, 2023.**

We are not presently prepared to prepare a detailed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Charlottesville and Huehuetenango. We feel that more time is needed and that the mutual understanding, expectations and details necessary to create our MOU will be generated as a result of close and intense collaboration preparing for the Delegation's visit.

A signing ceremony for the MOU could be the highlight of the October visit.

- (3) No later than the Spring of 2024, three years after our initial invitation, we expect to be in a position to continue, advance or even end our partnership with Huehuetenango.

Additional Background:

None of the current city council was present during the initial decision to form friendship cities and none of the specifics were identified. Therefore the proposed MOU not only formalizes our relationship but also relaunches our intentions to get to learn about each other and work together.

The membership department of the Sister Cities International has agreed to officially inscribe Huehuetenango as our Friendship city.

When it has been formalized, we will submit the MOU to Sister Cities International. Our information with SCI was out of date and they are publishing the first new directory since 2019 which will include Charlottesville and Huehuetenango.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Herring
Chairman, Huehuetenango Committee

Addendum 2 - added on 6/14/23

May 02, 2023

**To: The Charlottesville City Council
The Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission**

Recommendation: Extend an invitation to the city of Huehuetenango to form an Official Delegation to visit the city of Charlottesville in order to continue and advance the Friendship Cities Process.

As a follow up to my investigatory trip to Huehuetenango in February, 2023, the next step in the discovery process is to receive a delegation from Huehue to Charlottesville in October, 2023. If desired, I am prepared to provide a more detailed briefing of my visit to the Charlottesville City Council.

My visit to Huehue was given a lot of local attention and I was able to meet most of the key players including the Mayor, the Sister Cities Commissioners, members of the city council and key players from the education, commerce and social communities.

The commission of Huehue has expressed a desire to visit us this calendar year. Due to the general elections in Guatemala being held this year as well as other activities here in Charlottesville as we approach the end of the year, we could best receive their delegation in **October 2023**.

This visit is a critical next step in moving the relationship forward as well as a critical step in the decision process. The mayor and (sister city) commissioners of Huehue have expressed their desire to move forward with this decision as soon as possible.

We have now notified the Sister Cities International (SCI) of our intention to form a Friendship Partnership with Huehuetenango. Our association will be listed in the new edition of the SCI directory.

Next Steps:

For us, the next step is to organize an official event here in Charlottesville and invite the city of Huehue to select and send a delegation here.

Upon approval by the commission, the Mayor and City Council to move forward, we will provide draft letters of Invitation to the Mayor of Huehuetenango in both English and Spanish.

Benefitting from the preparatory work planning the delegation's visit, we will also be able to complete a Formal Memorandum of Understanding, also in English and Spanish. The signing of the Formal MOU will be one of the highlights of the Planned Visit.

A delegation visit from Huehue!

There is still extensive work to be done between our Huehue committee and the Huehue commission in establishing goals, objectives and expectations of the Friendship Program as well as in preparation for this visit.

Here is a preliminary look at some of the events that could take place. (Delegation members and interested local citizens will be guided to selected events based upon their predetermined interests).

1. Official Public Reception with the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commissioners, members of the community and guests - Greetings, words of welcome, exchange of gifts between the cities.
2. **Official reception and presentation to the Mayor and City Council, with an exchange of official gifts and signing of the Formal Memorandum of Understanding.**
3. **One-on-one / small group** meetings between the Mayors.
4. Meeting with the Charlottesville / Albemarle Chamber of Commerce.
5. Tour of Monticello (Home of Jefferson)
6. Meeting / luncheon with the Charlottesville City Schools - Providing an overview of the school system.
7. **One-on-one / small group** meeting between the top school administrators.
8. Meeting with small entrepreneurs groups.
9. Meetings with special interest and social groups
10. Event hosted by Huehue with invited guests and featuring products of Guatemala (Music, Culture, Coffee, etc.)
11. Tours of Charlottesville High School, Buford Middle and select Elementary schools.
12. Tour of CATEC
13. Tour of UVA
14. Select meetings at the University of Virginia - TBD
15. Community Based Meetings - Ixtatan, Casa Bolivar, others TBD
16. Dinner hosted by Ixtatan - TBD
17. Dinner hosted by members of the community
18. Major event at the Jefferson - Madison Regional Library.
19. Wrap up - discussion of next steps
20. Day trip to Washington DC and tour of the Capitol - prior to departure.

Logistics:

1. It is expected that the delegation from Huehuetenango will have 5 - 8 official members plus some family members accompanying them.
2. The visit is expected to last 5 - 7 days
3. We will seek to house delegation members with Charlottesville Community members when possible and/or special rates at a local hotel.
4. We will seek Patrons/Benefactors for as many of the events as possible.
5. There will be time built in for shopping, sightseeing and general amusement.
6. We may seek a charter bus to facilitate transportation.

Critical Steps:

1. Agreement by the Mayor, City Council and the CSCC to extend an invitation to Huehuetenango to visit Charlottesville. (This step helps facilitate the issuance of VISAs required for their citizens to travel to the USA.)
2. Confirmation of Dates and participants: To be agreed upon and confirmed no later than May 30 2023
3. Detailed recommended lists of activities
4. Identification of **Budget and Fundraising Goals.**
5. Organize housing, transportation, translation services, venue locations, volunteers, etc.
6. **Due to delays caused by the worldwide Pandemic, the goal of Creation of the MOU before the end of 2021 was not feasible, this goal is expected to be realized no later than August 1, 2023 and signed during the visit in October 2023.**
7. Submission of the MOU to form a Friendship Relationship to the Sister Cities International Organization after it has been formalized and signed.

This event closely follows the model of the 2018 visit by the Mayor of Besancon and his delegation to Charlottesville.

About 10 - 12 weeks of planning went into making the 2018 event happen successfully.

The intensive planning, coordination and scheduling required to create a final plan is time consuming and labor intensive. The planning part of the process will start after the City approves the draft and issues an invitation.

As a first step, input will be gathered from all the Charlottesville stakeholders, including the members of the Sister Cities Commission as well as solicitation of additional input from the Huehue Sister Cities Commission.

Thank you,

Edward Herring
Charlottesville Sister Cities Commissioner
Huehuetenango Committee - Chairperson