

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

Meeting August 1, 2023

CitySpace Large Conference Room

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Kimberly Hayes via zoom, Edward Herring, Stella Mattioli via Zoom, Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley, Vivien Wong

Absent: Alicen Brown, Nana Gharney, Michael Grinnell

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

The Commissioners participating remotely cited the following allowable reasons, per [*FOIA Va. Code Sec. 2.2-3708 \(Effective Sept 1, 2022\)*](#):

- Kimberly Hayes *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to work obligation out of town and participating remotely from New York*
- Stella Mattioli *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to personal travel and participating remotely from Poggio a Caiano, Italy*

Meeting opened at 4:40 pm Interim Chair Edward Herring presided A quorum was present

I. Approval of Minutes

a. July Commission Meeting

Motion (Sylvia New Strawn) to approve minutes as written

Motion Seconded (Claire Denton-Spalding)

Motion passed with one abstention (Vivien Wong)

b. Education & Besançon Committee Meeting

Motion (Elizabeth Smiley) to approve minutes with edits (change language from “sub-committee” to “committee” throughout)

Motion Seconded (Edward Herring)

Motion passed unanimously by a quorum of those present at that meeting

II. Chairman’s Report (Edward Herring)

Edward reported on his presentation to City Council on July 17. Mayor Snook indicated his interest in traveling to Besançon at a future point. Support was expressed for exploring the concept of a “Sister City Week” event at a future point. Max was present at that meeting and noted that Edward was well received by the City Councilors. Claire inquired as to next steps for developing a “Sister City Week”. Edward responded that he intends to include this in an events planning discussion, to be on the Agenda for our September 11 Annual Retreat.

III. Secretary’s Report (Elizabeth Smiley)

At Edward’s request, Elizabeth reminded commissioners the procedure for requesting remote participation at meetings. Elizabeth reported that Fred Blanton, SCI-Va has requested an opportunity to attend one of our upcoming meetings in order to meet us, to share information

about what's going on with other sister city orgs in Virginia, and to learn how he might be able to serve as a resource to us (see discussion under item VI, during which it was decided to invite him to our October meeting if he is available).

IV. Other Updates - none

V. Feedback on Winneba Delegation visit (Edward Herring)

Three current Commissioners attended the Welcome Reception last Tuesday; three current Commissioners attended the Af-Am Cultural Arts Festival last Saturday. Photos from these events have been posted on the CSCC Facebook page. Claire's press release was sent out to the Daily Progress and to NBC29. Sylvia asked Edward if he perceived that the delegates had a wholly positive experience while in Charlottesville. Edward responded in the affirmative.

VI. Huehuetenango Discussion (Edward Herring)

Edward reviewed several of the points on the document he sent to us prior to the meeting (attached). He also reviewed the issues that previously prevented the CSCC from issuing a formal invitation for a delegation to visit Charlottesville.

Sylvia stated that she sees this relationship as distinct from our other sister city relationships and remarked that it is a disappointment to learn that student/scholastic exchanges will not be feasible. She signalled her support for having a delegation come to visit and for continuing our commitment to the Friendship City relationship.

Vivien added that although student travel exchanges are important, they are not the only way for students to learn about one another. She wondered if we might consider developing virtual exchanges.

Edward reiterated that we need to explore moving forward without making any promises regarding the future of this partnership. If a delegation comes to Charlottesville in October as hoped, it will be an exploratory visit that includes conversations about what is feasible and whether there is or is not concurrence on expectations for the future of the relationship.

Max emphasized that the CSCC must conduct a thorough vetting of a sister city relationship with Huehue before submitting a recommendation to Council that we officially become Sister Cities.

Elizabeth suggested we reach out to Fred Blanton as a resource to help us as we decide how/whether to move forward in our relationship with Huehue. Edward suggested we invite him to attend our October meeting. Elizabeth suggested we Commissioners generate a list of questions to forward to him in advance of that meeting so that he can be prepared to share information and guidance. [Action item](#): EBS will follow up with the invitation to Fred.

VII. Retroactive Vote to extend an official offer of Friendship to Huehuetenango, Guatemala effective July 1, 2021.

Motion (Elizabeth Smiley) to formalize the understanding and intent of the cities of Charlottesville, Virginia and Huehuetenango, Guatemala, to form a Friendship City relationship, which they have been engaged in since July 1, 2021, and which they intend to continue.

Motion seconded (Claire Denton-Spalding)

Motion passed unanimously

Edward will make another presentation to City Council on August 21 during the regular City Council Meeting, to request that Council extend an official invitation to Huehuetenango's commission to form a delegation for purposes of a visit to Charlottesville in October 2023.

Action item: Max will follow up with the City Attorney's office to draft a Resolution in support of extending such an invitation.

VIII. Open Issues (New Business)

No new business

Meeting adjourned at 5:32 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley
Secretary & Besançon Rep

Next Meeting: Annual Retreat, Monday September 11, 5-8 pm, JMRL (Central Branch), Swanson Case Room, 3rd floor

(attachment: Poggio Report)

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
Poggio a Caiano Report
August 2023

- On June 15th, the choir “Voices of Virginia”, formed by students from Charlottesville High School, Albemarle High School and St. Anne’s Belfield High School, went to Poggio a Caiano as part of their Italian tour (other concerts were in Venice and Rome).
They arrived the same day and visited the Villa Medicea accompanied by members of the new city council. Before the concert, a dinner was offered to them by the city council. The trip was made possible also thanks to the travel scholarship that paid for the trip of some of the students. The concert took place at the Church of Santissimo Rosario in Poggio a Caiano, and was attended by members of the Poggio community.
- From July 5 to July 8, Darnell Lamont Walker, winner of one the grants, went to Poggio to work on his project. He recorded different events and parts of the city and he also talked and interviewed various members of the community. He was accompanied by members of the city council, who also offered him dinner and refreshments. The project, a miniseries about the life in Poggio, will be ready to be streamed on Youtube and Vimeo around September-October.
- The new mayor, Riccardo Palandri, was elected on May 15th. He and his new council told me that they would like to keep active the relationship between Poggio a Caiano and Charlottesville, also by organizing other events in the near future. I told them that we would keep in contact to come up with something to do together.

submitted by Stella Mattioli, Poggio Representative