

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

Meeting December 7, 2023

CitySpace Small Conference Room

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Casey Erickson, Kimberly Hayes, Edward Herring, Stella Mattioli (participating remotely), Syliva New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley, Murray Susen

Absent: Alicen Brown, Nana Ghartey

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

Meeting opened at 4:36 pm Edward Herring presided A quorum was deemed present

I. Chair (E. Herring) called the meeting to order

II. Secretary's Report (E. Smiley)

a. October 2023 Minutes

Elizabeth was unable to retrieve the missing information from either the meeting transcript or audio due to poor sound/recording quality.

Motion (E. Smiley) to approve the October Minutes as previously presented, with two names missing from the voting record

Motion seconded (S. New Strawn)

Motion carried unanimously

b. November 2023 Minutes

Motion (M. Susen) to approve November Minutes as written

Motion seconded (C. Denton-Spalding)

Motion carried unanimously

c. Elizabeth reminded commissioners to upload all commission-related documents to the shared google drive. Edward asked Elizabeth to provide an orientation to the documents stored on the drive at an upcoming meeting.

Action item: Edward will put this on the Agenda for a meeting in early 2024

III. Chair's Update (E. Herring)

a. Huehue Delegation Visit - *report attached*

Edward reviewed the key events of the visit and reported that there were over 1000 "hits" on our facebook page related to and during this delegation visit.

b. VA Sister Cities Statewide Meeting on December 2 - *report attached*

Edward represented our Commission at the meeting, organized by Fred Blanton, SCI VA State Representative, and hosted by the Richmond Sister Cities Commission. Edward noted that the Richmond commission is set up much like ours, but that they have established a foundation which allows them to raise money and to coordinate administrative support for the activities and programs

with all 7 of their sister cities. Max signaled her support for our exploring the development of a similar foundation. Former commissioners as well as other community leaders would be invited to become members of an exploratory committee.

Action item: Max will research whether the development of a sister city foundation is something that City Council will have to approve. Edward would like to go ahead and form an exploratory committee; Casey volunteered to be on the committee and all other commissioners are invited to contact Edward if they would like to be involved.

Ratification of said committee required by vote:

Motion (E. Herring) to ratify the establishment of a committee that will explore the feasibility of establishing a foundation whose purpose would be to raise funds and support the activities of the CSCC.

Motion seconded: (C. Denton-Spalding)

Motion carried unanimously

- c. Maintaining Momentum and Energy - no additional discussion

IV. Communications Update (C. Denton-Spalding)

- a. Claire's committee worked with the City's communications department on promotions for the Huehue Delegation visit, including scheduling both radio and tv interviews. The print media were less responsive and Claire will concentrate on working with her contacts in radio and tv for upcoming events.

- b. Business cards and name tags for commissioners

There is interest in having name tags made for Commissioners to wear at CSCC events, as well as business cards that Commissioners can use when meeting with city partners or traveling to Sister Cities on CSCC business.

Edward circulated Commission business cards he had ordered for himself prior to the Huehuetenango delegation visit. He requested approval from the Commission to be reimbursed for this purchase.

Motion (E. Herring) to approve reimbursement of \$49 he spent on CSCC business cards for himself

Motion seconded: (C. Erickson)

Motion passed with one abstention

Max noted that the City has never previously made business cards or name tags for its board and commission members. Discussion followed.

Action item: Claire proposed she work with Max to determine best options for name tags, business cards, or both. She will bring a recommendation/request for approval to the January meeting. She requested that the Commission allocate up to \$100 to be spent on these items once a decision has been reached.

Motion (C. Denton-Spalding) to approve allocating up to \$100 to pay for generic business cards and name tags

Motion seconded (E. Herring)

Motion passed unanimously

c. Website

Murray has volunteered to help manage our website. Claire will provide him with an overview and then they will meet with Max to explore whether or not to use the City's website or to continue hosting our website independently. There was additional discussion about whether to continue with WIX or switch platforms. As of now, we are subscribing to WIX on a month-to-month basis. Kimberly recommended looking into Square Space as an alternative platform.

V. City Rep Updates

a. Huehuetenango (E. Herring)

Edward proposed that as a next step we organize a delegation visit to Huehuetenango. There was discussion of whether this should be in 2024 or 2025. Casey recommended waiting until 2025 so that we can work up a budget for a trip and include it in our next allocation request to City Council.

b. Besançon (E. Smiley) - *November report, attached*

Elizabeth reported on the upcoming Besançon Committee meeting scheduled for **December 14**. This meeting is open to the public. The main goal will be to begin planning for a proposed small delegation visit from 2-3 Besançon officials in April. There will be subsequent updates and when a budget has been determined, Elizabeth will bring any requests for funding to the full Commission for vote approval. Elizabeth had two (2) April 2023 Besançon Trip Reports printed to have available in the Clerk of Council's office; she requested reimbursement for the printing costs of \$51.66. She shared two posters, given to us by visitors from Besançon, which if dry-mounted can be stored with other Sister City gifts and materials at City Hall and used for display purposes at CSCC events.

Motion (E.Herring) to approve up to \$100 to cover reimbursement costs of 2 Sister City 2023 Trip Reports and anticipated costs to have 2 Besançon posters dry mounted for display

Motion seconded (S. New Strawn)

Motion passed unanimously

- c. Winneba (E. Herring reporting for N. Gharthey)
Nana returned to Ghana on December 6 and will remain there for several months. There is no Winneba Foundation delegation trip planned for December but there are plans for a trip in May 2024.
- d. Poggio (S. Mattioli) - *November report, attached*
Stella gave a status update on the Darnell Walker “MisMatch Around the World” grant-funded video project. Edward asked for the grantee to provide a “roll-out” plan for how the videos will be made available to the Charlottesville community. Claire offered to help with publicity.
Action item: Stella will follow-up to connect Claire and Darnell to discuss how the CSCC can assist with local promotion of the videos.

VI. Committee/Officer Updates

- a. Finance (C. Erickson)
Current total balance: \$30,714.06. Pending expenditures: \$21,086.22 for outstanding grants and the Winneba supply shipment allocation. Casey supports the proposed suspension of the Grants cycle (see below) because there are a number of grants-related expenses that need to be reconciled before we know our true balance and the remaining available funds for this fiscal cycle. He recommends we increase our requested allocation for the next fiscal year in consideration of both inflation and the need to support ongoing Huehuetenango Friendship City activities and exchanges. In response, Max reminded us that City Council will view funding for Huehue activity differently while and as long as it remains a Friendship City. (Note: If we do decide to sister with Huehuetenango, we can submit a recommendation to Council to become Sister Cities as early as July 2024).
- b. Grants (K. Hayes)
This is the time of year when we would normally launch the next grants and travel scholarship cycles. The Grants committee met on Dec 6 and out of that meeting, are recommending that we pause the next Grants cycle until the start of the 2024 fiscal year. This will allow us to reconcile outstanding 2023 grants not yet completed and will allow the Grants Committee to further refine the criteria for grant application submission.

Motion (K. Hayes) to pause launching the next grants cycle until July 2024

Motion seconded (S. New Strawn)

Motion carried unanimously

Kimberly reported that a Charlottesville High School Band Booster member contacted the Grants Committee with a request for funding to subsidize travel expenses for an upcoming Marching Band trip to Rome, Italy. If the Commission

wishes to support this request, a proposed option is to fund \$750 for each of 4 students (total of \$3000). Discussion followed. There was general agreement that this does not meet the criteria for a Sister City exchange, therefore no motion was made on this item.

Action item: Kimberly will inform the Band Booster member that while the Commission did consider the request, it was not approved.

- c. Education (E. Herring reporting for A. Brown) – *November report, attached*
Twenty-five Besançon students from the Lycee Pasteur will be in Charlottesville **February 12-18**. The Commission has been asked to participate and provide support with events on Feb 13 and 14—the two days when the students will not be attending CHS and have other excursions. On Feb 13 they will visit UVA, where they will be hosted by the Center for Politics. On Feb 14, they will visit Monticello. Edward has obtained free tickets for the Monticello tour. There are several potential requests for CSCC funding related to this student exchange visit:
- A request for \$45 to cover 10 lunch vouchers for the CHS cafeteria for the students whose host families will not be providing lunch during the days at CHS
 - A request that the CSCC cover the cost of box lunches for the students during their Monticello visit (we have paid for these during prior Lycee Pasteur student exchange visits)
 - A request for \$240 to cover food/beverages for a breakfast reception on the first day that the visitors attend CHS with their student hosts

Voting on these funding requests was deferred to our January meeting, pending updates and additional information from Alicen.

- d. Programs & Events - 2024 Calendar (S. New Strawn)
Sylvia announced that the interactive exhibit about our Sister Cities will be at the McGuffey Art Center on **Saturday, April 20** as part of the 2024 Tom Tom Festival. This exhibit is a collaboration between McGuffey and former CSCC Grantee Alexandria Searls, Executive Director of the Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center at Darden Towe Park.

VII. New Business: Comments & Questions

- a. Requests for reimbursement
Max reminded us that the proper process for requesting reimbursements is to bring requests to the Commission for approval prior to incurring expenses.

- b. We will need to reschedule our January meeting due to a conflicting City Council meeting that afternoon. Edward will request an alternate meeting date and will forward it to us as soon as it has been confirmed.

VII. **Meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm**

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley
Secretary & Besançon Rep

Upcoming Meetings:

Besançon Committee Meeting (virtual) - December 14 5-6 pm

Next Commission Meeting - January TBD 4:30 - 6 pm

[Attachments](#)