

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
Besançon Committee
MINUTES

December 14, 2023

5:00 - 6:15 pm (Zoom)

Action items in red

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Casey Erickson, Kimberly Hayes, Edward Herring, Maxicelia Robinson (Deputy Clerk of Council), Elizabeth Smiley (Chair)

Elizabeth welcomed committee members and reviewed the Agenda, noting the primary goal of the meeting was to begin the planning process for the anticipated mini-delegation visit from Ville de Besançon officials in April 2024.

1. Review of current Besançon Sister City projects and events

- a. "Sister Revolutions" (2023 Grant Project) - quick recap of the project, the two principals, status of completion
- b. "Les Amitiés Musicales" (2023 Grant Project) - status update on the project; travel to Besançon deferred until May 2024. [There was a brief sidebar about the Grants Committee decision to suspend all grants activity and the implication for this outstanding project. Elizabeth and Edward agreed to have follow-up conversation outside of this meeting.]
- c. Lycée Pasteur student delegation visit (February 11-18, 2024)- planning is well underway for this exchange with CHS.
- d. Proposed Gospel Music Exchange (2025)- in very preliminary discussion; proposed along the same format as exchanges that occurred over several years back in the early 2000s.

2. Mini-Delegation visit April 2024

- a. Proposed dates, visitors, and expectations were reviewed.
 - Elizabeth emphasized that this is not considered a formal Mayoral Delegation visit.
 - The two primary visitors are **Florent Werguet**, Director of International Relations for the Ville de Besançon, and **Sadia Gharet**, Deputy Mayor in Charge of International Relations. A possible third visitor, **Patrice Duran**, is the Director of the Academy of Besancon (Dept of Education).
 - This will be a first visit to their North American Sister City on behalf of the current municipal government in Besançon.
 - The visit is being promoted in both cities as an opportunity to recognize the 20th anniversary of the signing of our Proclamation of Friendship.
 - The vision for the delegation visit would be a combination of events highlighting both our community and our sister city relationship, open to

the public whenever possible. We also envision at least one event with city officials.

- b. We reviewed three (3) events that are already under discussion. Elizabeth is in conversation with both grantees regarding the details of their proposed events and will provide the Committee with additional updates and details as they become available.
- The “Sister Revolutions” podcast launch which is being largely organized by Grantee Ben Bernard. To be held at UVA, with co-sponsorship from one or more University departments/organizations. Target audience is the larger academic community, but the event would be open to the public.
 - A “Les Amities Musicales” concert for violin and piano, featuring music by Besançon-born composers. Grantees Daniel & Shelby Sender are working on location and dates. This would be free and open to the public and is likely to be on the Sunday of the delegation visit.
 - Presentation and slideshow on Besançon, offered by Florent Werguet (in English) during his visit at a date, location and event to be determined.
- c. There followed discussion of possible additional events and activities for the visit. These include: an official reception hosted by the Commission; some type of meet-and-greet with Mayor Snook and/or City Councilors; meetings with the Director or Board of the Alliance Française of Charlottesville (AFC); tours of Monticello, Charlottesville, the University, and the Maison Française at UVA. Several considerations were noted:
- Tuesday April 16 may be the better date for an official reception, and we will need to see if the Mayor is available. If we host an official reception, then even if all the City Councilors show up, it would not be considered a meeting. This event could be similar to the one we recently hosted for the Huehue delegation. Ideas for location? The CitySpace space worked well for the Huehue reception. **Max will check on Mayor Snook’s availability for the 4/15 and/or 4/16. Max noted that the CitySpace is not available on 4/16.**
 - Is there interest in a specific meet-and-greet with the Mayor and City Council? **Elizabeth will find out how interested Deputy Mayor Sadia Gharet is in meeting with Mayor Snook one-on-one.**
 - The visitors are interested in a visit to Monticello, especially as their visit coincides with Jefferson’s birthday. **Edward offered to reach out to Monticello about securing free tickets for 4 people and a French-speaking tour guide. This might include a private tour of areas that aren’t typically open to the public.**
 - Alliance Française meetings with Director and/or Board members. In addition, is there an event that the AFC might be interested in hosting or co-hosting with CSCC? **Edward offered to make a first contact with Lucy**

Wellford, the Board Chair for the AFC, who can then let Director Muriel de Wekker know about the various events. Elizabeth and Lucy can then meet after this first contact.

- We need to consider meals that we want to host or co-host and develop invitation lists accordingly.
 - The visitors will not be here long enough to attend the *Lewis & Clark Expedition Center* Sister City Map exhibition at McGuffey on April 19 (a Tom Tom Festival event), but perhaps Sylvia New Strawn could work with the exhibit curator Alexandria Searls to offer the visitors a private preview? EBS will follow up with Sylvia about this.
 - Claire mentioned that we will want to include time for media interviews, and suggested specifically that we try to have a tv interview during the visit. EBS suggested seeing if Ben Bernard and his co-producer Sage Tanguay would want to interview the visitors at WTJU for the podcast launch during their visit. Claire offered to be the point person for these possible media interviews.
- d. We then discussed the development of a task list and timetable for planning. Elizabeth asked Committee members to let her know if there are specific tasks they would like to focus and follow up on.
- Elizabeth will work on a *Draft Itinerary* and circulate it to the Committee for feedback. The Itinerary will include all the scheduled events but will also have unscheduled times, in the event that other possibilities emerge, such as informal meetings or get-togethers that haven't been pre-planned
 - Max will check with City Council and the Mayor's office to determine if there are any other events or conflicts on their calendars that coincide with the delegation visit. She will also inform Council of the upcoming visit once the dates have been firmly established.
 - If the third visitor does join the delegation, he will be asking us to help set up visits with our local, and possibly state, education administrators. We will need to coordinate this with Alicen (EBS will reach out to her as needed).
 - Max noted that communication will be key and that we want to avoid the communication break-downs that occurred with the recent Huehue delegation visit.

There followed discussion of advance and onsite logistics for the visit, as follows:

- Transportation from/to Airport - the City will not cover this (i.e. if we rent a car or van to transport visitors) due to liability issues. City would also have concerns about private citizens providing this service. Max suggested that by hiring a professional driving service, we would be more likely to obtain City Council approval and avoid the liability risks.

- Accommodations - Both Florent and Sadia have expressed a desire to stay with host families during the visit. The potential third visitor would likely expect to stay in a hotel. Florent has asked if we would be able to assist with this? Edward noted that in the past, delegation visitors have covered their own hotel expenses.
 - Transportation to and from events - this will have to be provided by community members/volunteers.
 - Translators - We will need this, as Sadia Gharet does not speak much English. Casey suggested reaching out to people at UVA; Edward offered to contact Janet Horne, Chair of UVA French Dept, but EBS asked that he hold off on that contact for now. She would like to see if the Alliance Française might offer translation assistance first. We should think about incentives for voluntary translating—if someone serves as a translator, could they be invited to a dinner or reception event?
 - Photography/video coverage (will discuss further at future meetings)
 - Determine if we will provide a ceremonial gift (yes- deferred to a future meeting)
- e. Volunteer recruitment strategy - EBS asked for ideas about how to develop volunteer corps to assist with various aspects of the visit. Kimberly suggested we use the free website Volunteer Match, which she has used before with success. *Kimberly offered to coordinate, and Claire will help. They will work on going live in the early part of January.*
- f. Other concerns or issues needing further discussion included
- Budget - we will need to present a request for funding to the Commission in January/February, even if a detailed budget has not yet been developed. *EBS and Edward will discuss this and make a recommendation.* Need to consider our current balance and outstanding commitments in the current FY. *We should look for other community partners to co-sponsor events and provide financial and logistical support.*
 - The Tom Tom Festival is occurring during the delegation visit—consider how this might affect hotel and restaurant availability and make those decisions sooner than later.

3. Discuss additional committee membership

EBS would like to expand the Besançon Committee to include community members. She asked everyone to think of good possible candidates, including local French teachers, former Besancon grantees, an Alliance Française liaison, and community members who have participated in past delegation visits or trips to Besançon.

4. Set additional/upcoming committee meetings

Four additional potential meetings were proposed. Elizabeth will follow with Max to determine best dates for upcoming meetings and will email the Committee when the next meeting has been scheduled on the City calendar.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley, Chair Besançon Committee
Secretary & Besançon Representative
1/22/24