Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
MINUTES
Thursday May 7, 2024
City Space Large Conference Room

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Casey Erickson, Edward Herring, Kimberly Hayes (attending remotely, see note below), Stella Mattioli, Sal Moschella, Elizabeth Smiley, Cherry Stewart
Absent: Alicen Brown, Nana Ghartey, Sylvia New Strawn, Murray Susen
Non-voting Members Present: Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council

(Kimberly Hayes received approval to participate remotely from New York, citing FOIA 2.2-3708.3 allowable reason (4): her job requires her to work onsite in NYC two weeks of every month)

I. Call to Order.
Meeting opened at 4:36 pm. Edward Herring presided. A quorum was present.

II. Approval of Minutes - Commission Meeting April 11, 2024
No corrections to minutes necessary.
Motion to approve as written: C. Erickson
Motion seconded: S. Moschella
Motion passed unanimously

III. Chair's Update (Edward Herring)

a) Edward offered Sylvia congratulations on a successful TomTom Festival event (this was the "Mapping Sister Cities" event at the Lewis & Clark Expedition Center on April 20). Approximately 80 people participated, and it was apparently the most well-attended TomTom event located outside of the Downtown venues.

b) Edward congratulated Elizabeth and the Commission on a successful Besançon delegation visit, noting that as a result of how the events were planned, the visit became a Sister City Week.

c) Edward stressed that every sitting Commissioner needs to take up the task of coming up with ideas for programs and activities and help implement them.

d) The Commission should actively work to stay informed of what's coming up with every Sister City throughout the year. For example, Edward has learned that the Chamber of Commerce is planning a trip to Poggio in March 2025. He hopes to participate in this trip at his own expense.

IV. Secretary's Report (Elizabeth Smiley) - no report

V. Budget & Finance Report (Casey Erickson)

Our current balance is $20,997.10. Once outstanding and pending expenditures have been made, we will have $2849.67 in reserve.

Our request for $15,000 funding allocation from City Council for the upcoming fiscal year was approved.

Given our City Council allocation and the small reserve remaining at the end of this fiscal year, it will be important to identify our spending priorities and to be careful with how we use our funds in the next year.
Casey distributed a draft Proposed 2024-45 Budget (*attach document)* which he then Reviewed.

Reflecting our limited funds, Casey proposed the following key changes to allocations:

- City Rep Travel funds will now be available to each City Rep once during their 3-year term, with no more than $4000 being spent in 2024-2025 on this allocation. It was also recommended that City Reps apply for this funding in the first or second year of their term to maximize the benefits of the visit to our Sister City program.

- Programs & Events dedicated funding increased to support making this a higher priority for the Commission. At this point in the discussion, Claire distributed two documents relating to programs and events, covered in greater detail in section VIII.

- The Grants & Travel Scholarships allocation for the upcoming year has been reduced to $7500, which is lower than in past years. However, this figure still represents half of our City funding. Further discussion will be needed to determine what portion of this will be earmarked for Travel Scholarships.

There was a brief related discussion about the possibility of the Grants Committee receiving an additional $1000 from the City Rep travel allocation in 2024-25 since there are not likely to be 2 City Rep trips scheduled for the upcoming fiscal year.

It was also noted that the current budget for media and internet fees ($300) would be eliminated if we are integrated into the City's website domain as has been discussed, freeing up these funds for other purposes.

Casey reiterated that this Proposed Budget is based solely on the City's $15K allocation and does not reflect any possible additional allocations from the City or any fundraising we may be able to do. A vote to formally adopt the budget was deferred to the June Commission meeting.

VI. Grants Committee Update (Kimberly Hayes)

The Grants Committee is considering adopting a twice-a-year grants cycle rather than the current once-yearly schedule. They are also revamping the application process to attract Grant projects that have a clearer benefit to the community and not just to the individual Grantee.

Max request a copy of the letter mailed from the Grants Committee to Henry Pollock ("Teenage Life During Covid") regarding his uncompleted project and the stop to his funding as a result.

There was brief discussion about unused "Sister Revolutions" funds and the request from Grantee Benjamin Bernard to apply those funds to pay for a translator who helped during the Besançon delegation visit, some SIster Revolutions promotional materials, and grant project fees he incurred on an additional one-day visit to Besancon to conduct historical research for the podcast. Since these expenses were not part of Ben's initial grant application, Kimberly requested vote approval from the Commission to reimburse Ben from the unspent funds.

Motion to approve Ben's request to be reimbursed up to/not to exceed the remaining $563.62 of unspent "Sister Revolutions" Grant funds: C. Denton-Spalding

Motion seconded: S. Moschella

Motion passed unanimously

Kimberly will follow-up with Ben to have reimbursement processed and paid.

VII. Committee Assignment Review & Appointments (Edward Herring)

Edward asked the newest two Commissioners to indicate their Committee choices and called for a vote approval.

Motion made by C. Erickson to approve the following Committee Assignments:

Cherry Stewart - Education Committee; Huehuetenango working group

Sal Moschella - Grants Committee; Finance Committee

Motion seconded: K. Hayes

Motion passed unanimously

VIII. City Reports

a. Besançon (Elizabeth Smiley)

Elizabeth thanked all the members present for their help with events and activities during the Besançon delegation visit in April. It was a collective effort and as a result, a very successful and productive visit. She reported that Florent Werguet is compiling the photos taken by the Besançon visitors along with a written trip report and will share those with us when they are completed. Elizabeth would like to send out some form of community thank you to those who supported the visit and will follow up with Claire to determine the best way to do this. She would also like to collect all the photos taken by various Commissioners into a single photo file; Edward offered to create a google photo folder on our shared drive before our next monthly meeting.

(Kimberly Hayes took the following minutes for the remainder of the meeting, as Elizabeth had to leave at 5:45)

b. Huehuetenango (Edward Herring)
Edward has a meeting on Thursday May 9 with the Ixtatan Foundation staff (?)/ board member(?) to discuss possible next steps and activities and to generate ideas for how they might be implemented since there is no "go-to" person in charge of this Friendship City relationship on the Cville side.

c. Winneba - no report

d. Poggio a Caiano (Stella Mattioli)
Stella reported that she continues to encounter challenges making a contact in the school in Poggio; she reached out to the Principal, who has not returned her correspondence. According to Poggio's Mayor, the Principal often does not return Correspondence. Stella will be visiting family in Poggio in June and plan to try making an appointment to meet the Principal while she is there.

Max noted that contacts in Poggio have seemed unresponsive in some key areas and asked Stella whether Poggion is interested in continuing the Sister City relationship. Stella confirmed that there is still strong interest.

Edward suggested inviting some Poggio reps to come to Charlottesville to reignite Interest in the relationship. He plans to meet with the Chamber of Commerce (regarding the aforementioned trip?) and will invite them into the conversation about this.

e. Pleven (Edward Herring)
Edward reported that we recently received an inquiry from Pleven to gauge our interest in renewing this relationship. He has reached out to the Mayor of Pleven and to the Bulgarian Ambassador in D.C. There is something of a language barrier, as neither of these individuals speaks much English. Edward asked the Commission to consider its level of interest in renewing this Sister City partnership, which is currently in Inactive status. Time for further discussion will be put on the Agenda for our June meeting.

IX. Other Business

- Edward will share his draft Annual Report at the June meeting
- Daman Irby, former CSCC Chair (2020-2023) has expressed interest in helping out the Commission in some capacity– we will consider ways to involve him again
- Max: What are the next steps for Winneba? Edward responded that the next important we'll need to have a new City Rep appointed before we can proceed with those Sister City programs and projects
- Sal mentioned that he will be out of the country for the next 3 Commission meetings.

His is a 9-month appointment at PVCC so he typically spends the summer overseas. He was briefed on procedures to participate while away.

Meeting adjourned at 5:56 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley
Secretary and Besançon Representative

Next full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, July 2 @ 4:30 pm at CitySpace