Sister Cities Commission Meeting
March 12, 2025, 4:30pm – 6:00pm
CitySpace, 100 Fifth Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902 (Small conference room)

Call to Order

I. **Approval of Minutes** – February 4, 2025

II. **Chair's Report** – Edward Herring

III. **Finance Report –** Casey Eriksen

IV. **Committee & City Reports**

a. **Grants** – Kimberly Hayes

b. **Education** – Alicen Brown

c. **Programs & Events** – Sylvia New Strawn

d. **Outreach & Communications** – Claire Denton Spalding

e. **Huehuetenango, Guatemala** – Edward Herring **friendship city*

f. **Besancon, France** – Elizabeth Smiley

g. **Poggio a Caiano, Italy** – Stella Mattioli

h. **Winneba, Ghana** – Kimberly Hayes

Adjournment

The next Sister Cities Commission meeting is Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 4:30 pm at CitySpace,

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call (434) 987-1267 or submit a request via email to ada@charlottesville.gov. The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide 48 hours' notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
MINUTES
Tuesday, February 4, 2025
CitySpace Large Conference Room

Present: Alicen Brown, Claire Denton-Spalding, Edward Herring, Stella Mattioli (participating remotely), Sal Moschella, Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley (participating remotely), Cherry Stewart
Absent: Murray Susen, Casey Erickson
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):*

- Stella Mattioli *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to work constraints and participating remotely from her workplace in Charlottesville, VA*
- Elizabeth Smiley *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to illness and participating remotely from her home in Charlottesville, VA*

Late arrivals noted: Cherry Stewart 4:56 pm

CALL TO ORDER
Meeting opened at 4:36 pm. Edward Herring presided. A quorum was deemed present.

1. **Approval of Minutes** (Edward Herring)
   Full Commission meeting - December 3, 2024
   Motion to approve minutes as written: Alicen Brown
   Motion seconded: Sylvia New Strawn
   Motion passed unanimously

   Full Commission meeting - January 14, 2025
   Motion to approve as written: Alicen Brown
   Motion Seconded: Sal Moschella
   Motion passed unanimously

2. **Chair's Report** (Edward Herring)
   Edward welcomed one interested community member visitor.

3. **Finance Report** (Edward Herring reporting for Casey Erickson)
   Current balance is $21,924.89.

   Draft Proposed Budget: Edward distributed projected expenses for the next 18 months. He then reviewed the proposed figures, which are based on the assumption that the Commission will receive a $15K allotment from City Council again for the next fiscal year. Edward noted that even though we are carrying nearly $20K unspent funds into the next FY, the budget will be tight given projected expenses related to planned exchanges and other programs. At Claire's request, the City Rep travel funding figure was clarified as follows: 2 years ago this figure was increased to $3000; last year the amount was decreased specifically for the current fiscal year to $2000; the proposed FY 26-27 budget reflects the previously approved $3000 figure. Edward noted that if restoring the City Rep travel allocation to a higher level requires vote approval, this can be placed on the agenda for our March or April meeting.

Action item: Max asked Elizabeth to track the City Rep travel amount approvals from prior Commission minutes and attach to these minutes.

Max reported that the City Manager met with lead team managers today to discuss how the city's budget might be impacted by federal and state funding cuts. A $15K request from the Commission will be considered however it is not likely that any increase would be considered at this time.

Edward noted that Guatemala trip in Fall 2025 - if there are 10 travelers, Edward (trip leader's) airfare will be waived, which would be a savings to the Commission.

Sal asked for clarification of the Grant allocation figures. Edward noted that in prior years the Commission was able to allocate as much as $16,000 towards Grant awards due to unspent funds. However, the Grants budget has been lower for the past several years as a result of our increases in program and exchange activity with no corresponding increase in our annual City allocation.

Action item: Alicen requested a report be prepared of our itemized budget requests across several years so that Commissioners are better able to review and compare amounts related to our programs and projects.

Edward will present a Proposed Budget for FY 26 for vote approval at our March meeting.

4. **City Reports**
   a. **Huehuetenango, Guatemala** (Edward Herring)
   Official Mayoral Visit to Huehue, October 2025:
   We have received an official letter from Huehue's Mayor to bring a Cville Mayoral delegation to visit in October. Edward will distribute a draft proposed trip itinerary at the March meeting.

   b. **Besançon, France** (Elizabeth Smiley)
   Gospel Choir Exchange, July 2025:
   Elizabeth requested that the Commission agree to host a welcome reception for the visiting Besançon choir members and their Charlottesville hosts. Edward noted that the Proposed Budget includes a $3000 earmark for this event.

Motion to authorize Elizabeth to plan a CSCC hosted Welcome Reception during the July 2025 Gospel Music Exchange: Edward Herring
Motion seconded: Sal Moschella
Motion passed unanimously
Action item: Elizabeth will present a more detailed proposal for this event at our March meeting.

c. **Poggio a Caiano, Italy** (Stella Mattioli)
Mayoral Visit, Summer 2025:
Planning for the Mayor's visit this summer is underway. Stella has proposed an August visit, although a date still has not been finalized at this time. The current projected delegation size is 4 people. Edward noted that the Proposed Budget includes a $3000 earmark for this visit.

d. **Winneba, Ghana** (Kimberly Hayes)
City Rep Trip, April 2025:
Plans are underway for Kimberly's first City Rep visit to Winneba in early April, approximately one month ahead of the Winneba Foundation's planned Spring trip. Kimberly is working on her itinerary and a travel budget, which she will present for approval at our next meeting. She estimates requesting around $2400 in travel funding.

Edward would like to develop a standardized manual for how to plan and conduct Sister City Rep visits and delegation visits. He plans to send out an email inviting any Commissioners to participate in helping with this process.

5. **Committee Reports**
   a. **Grants** (Kimberly Hayes)
   There are 8 grant applicants for this cycle. The Committee hopes to convene next week to review applications. Although we have $8500 allocated for this cycle, we are not obligated to disburse that entire amount. The committee will make determinations and recommend disbursement amounts.

   Beginning with this cycle, the Commission will generate contracts for each Grantee who is chosen and will take a more thoroughly advisory role with Grantees to better insure that Grant funds are spent appropriately and that the reimbursement process runs more smoothly. The current Grants Committee members are Kimberly, Casey, Sal, Max, and Edward.

   Max reminded us that it is the intention of City Council that our Grants serve the residents of Charlottesville and that the Committee needs to take this into consideration when considering Grant proposals.

b. **Education** (Alicen Brown)
New middle school exchange:
Alicen reported on a new partnership between Walker Upper Elementary 5th graders and a comparable-aged class at a school in Besançon. The two groups of students are collaborating on creating an online art museum. The project is designed for students to develop both language and art skills. The virtual museum website is already “live” and Besançon is hosting the technology. Alicen will present the museum at our March meeting.

CHS-Lycee Pasteur Theater exchange, Spring Break 2025:
The CHS students will be staying in host families for 5 nights during this exchange. Alicen noted that this represents a deliberate equilibration and shifting of the commitment to the exchange on the CCS/C’ville side. Conversations are also underway at CHS about how to involve more students who are taking French in future/ongoing exchange trips to Besançon.

c. **Programs & Events** (Sylvia New Strawn & Cherry Stewart)
Huehue book project update (Sylvia):
Book donations are being dropped off at Habitat for Humanity. Sylvia thanked Kimberly for making a sign to place at the drop-off location. She thanked Claire for setting up 2 community t.v. broadcasts to promote the project.

Voices of Adult Learners Project with Besançon writers (Cherry):
Cherry and Elizabeth met virtually last week Emily Stuyyvers, Office of Int’l Relations for Besançon, who has offered to be the Besancon contact for this project. She will recruit up to four participants from Besançon and will organize their involvement in the VoAL writing competition. The VoAL event that culminates the annual competition is on March 20 at the PVCC Dickinson Center.

CSCC Promotional items(Edward Herring):
Edward sent out an email today with a number of proposed promotional items for our review. He noted that the list he sent today was not a representative sample and did not include a number of the items that Cherry had proposed in an email circulated to the Commission last week.
Action item: Alicen offered to make and circulate a google survey of all the proposed items for all Commissioners to rank their preferences.

d. **Outreach & Communications** (Claire Denton-Spalding)
Claire’s recent press release about the Huehue Book Drive generated two media interview requests (CBS and Channel 29), which she handled.

Upcoming events she will be promoting include the CHS/Lycée Pasteur exchange, and the Voices of Adult Learners/Besançon collaboration

Claire noted that her term ends this July and she does not expect to apply for another term. She would like to begin training her successor prior to her departure if possible. Claire suggested that we look to recruit a potential new At-Large member with a marketing or communications background.

Other Business:

There was brief discussion regarding our ability to develop and maintain both volunteers and community supporters for projects and events. Max noted that FOIA may prevent the Commission from maintaining a central mailing list of local community members who might serve as volunteers or potential donors. Max suggested we consult the City IT department for clarification on this.

Edward noted the need to move our March meeting to a different week to accommodate the City Council meeting that evening. **Action item**: he will send out a doodle poll to determine the date of the March meeting.

The meeting in April will be moved to the second Tuesday, April 8.

Edward expressed his appreciation for the work of the Commissioners to make our meetings more productive.

ADJOURNMENT
Motion to adjourn: Claire Denton-Spalding
Motion seconded: Alicen Brown
Meeting was adjourned at 5:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley,
Secretary & Besançon Representative

Next Commission Meeting:
tbd