



Sister Cities Commission Meeting

April 15, 2025, 4:30pm – 6:00pm

CitySpace - 100 Fifth Street NE, Charlottesville, VA 22902 (Small conference room)

Call to Order

- I. **Approval of Minutes** – March 12, 2025
- II. **Chair's Report** – Edward Herring
- III. **Finance Report** – Casey Eriksen
- IV. **Committee & Sister City Reports**
 - a. **Grants** – Kimberly Hayes
 - b. **Education** – Alicen Brown
 - c. **Programs & Events** – Sylvia New Strawn / Cherry Stewart
 - d. **Outreach & Communications** – Claire Denton Spalding / Alicen Brown
 - e. **Huehuetenango, Guatemala** (*friendship city*) – Edward Herring
 - 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, May 6, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. 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**

Wednesday March 12, 2025

CitySpace Small Conference Room

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Edward Herring (participating remotely), Stella Mattioli, Sal Moschella, Sylvia New Strawn, Elizabeth Smiley

Absent: Alicen Brown, Casey Erickson, Cherry Stewart, Murray Susen

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)*:

- Edward Herring *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to illness and participating remotely from his home in Charlottesville, VA*

Late arrivals noted: none

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting opened at 4:33 pm. Edward Herring presided. A quorum was deemed present.

I. Approval of Minutes (Edward Herring)

Full Commission meeting - February 4, 2025

Motion to approve minutes as written: Kimberly Hayes

Motion seconded: Sal Moschella

Motion carried

II. Chair's Report (Edward Herring)

- a. Monticello has once again invited us to participate in their community partner tent for various dates. Edward is requesting the Commission agree to participate and asks for volunteers to staff the table. **Action item:** He will send these dates out ahead of our April meeting so that we can determine our volunteer availability.
- b. Founder's Day event at Monticello, April 13. Edward has been invited to participate in the wreath laying ceremony again this year. We will be obligated to purchase a wreath. There was discussion and it was decided that participation benefits our ongoing relationship with Monticello.

Motion to approve purchase of a wreath for the Monticello Founder's Day ceremony: Sylvia New Strawn

Motion seconded: Sal Moscella

Motion carried

- c. Voices of Adult Learners event, Thursday March 20. Edward asked all members to review the email invitation that Cherry distributed last week and make plans to

attend if possible to support the collaboration with first-time participants from Besançon.

- d. Edward has started drafting a set of SOPs to guide soliciting monetary donations and applying for grant funds. He requested two additional members to assist him with the development of these guidelines.

Max clarified that once SOPs have been drafted they will need to be submitted to the City Attorney's Office for review and approval. Once approved, the Commission will be able to solicit donations. Any monetary donations will be deposited in a general fund and City Council will then vote to allocate those amounts to the Commission. It is not clear how the Commission will be able to apply for grants; this will have to be worked out with the City Attorney's input.

III. **Finance Report** (Edward Herring reporting for Casey Erickson)

Current balance is \$21,701.89

Edward has revised the Proposed FY 26 Budget and will send that out following this meeting.

Sylvia requested reimbursement for a \$45 cake she purchased to thank the Habitat for Humanity staff for its help with the Huehue library book drive. They agreed to provide a drop-off location at their resale store.

Motion to approve reimbursement of \$45 to Sylvia New Strawn: Claire Denton-Spalding

Motion seconded: Kimberly Hayes

Motion carried

IV. **Committee & City Reports**

a. **Grants** (Kimberly Hayes)

The Grants Committee met to consider the applications received. Of the 8 submitted, three were ineligible as the applicants did not meet the criteria of living or working in the City of Charlottesville. Of those remaining the committee determined that only 1 application clearly articulated how the proposed project would serve the citizens of both Sister Cities and selected this project for funding.

The proposed project is to make a children's book with content from both Charlottesville and Winneba. The applicant has requested funds for publishing and promotions and not for travel to Winneba.

Kimberly reported that the Grants Committee plans to open another application cycle this Spring since there remain allocated but unused funds to award.

b. **Education** no report

c. **Programs & Events** (Sylvia New Strawn)

Huehue Book Project - Sylvia and Claire will be reviewing all the books and puzzles that have been donated to determine which ones will ultimately be sent. Sylvia anticipates a shipment of 300-400 items. **Action item:** Edward suggested Sylvia get quotes for shipping these items in the event that the diplomatic pouch option falls through due to changes at the State Department under the current administration.

Ix Farmer's Market - Sylvia has selected four (4) dates for the Commission to staff an information booth at the Saturday morning Ix Market. She distributed a sign-up sheet for those dates and asked all members to consider volunteering for a shift. She will reach out to the members who are absent as well. **Action item:** Sylvia will follow up with Ceil (Market contact) to confirm the dates and arrange for a table and tent to be set up.

Commission Promotional Items - Edward noted that he hopes Alicen will present a report on the preferred items at our April meeting

d. **Outreach & Communications** (Claire Denton-Spalding)

Claire has offered to write an overview for her position to be included in our new member orientation handbook in the event that she is unable to provide the new outreach and comms member with an in-person orientation.

Promotions: A thank you to Habitat for its support of the Huehue library book drive will go up on our website; the Voices of Adult Learners event will also be promoted on our webpage, highlighting our French sister city participation

e. **Huehuetenango, Guatemala** (Edward Herring) **friendship city*

Edward will provide a full report on the plans for the October mayoral trip at our April Commission meeting.

f. **Besançon, France** (Elizabeth Smiley)

Voices of Adult Learners Project w/Besançon Writers - Elizabeth and Cherry will be in attendance. Our Besançon contacts recruited four (4) participants and all four will be highlighted at the reading event and have been included in the VOAL published book.

Gospel Choir Exchange, July 2025 - Elizabeth distributed a more detailed outline of the proposed CSCC Welcome Reception, with updates on the search for a

possible venue for a large community concert as the culminating event of the exchange. **Action item:** Elizabeth and Sal will have additional conversation about the Dickinson Center (PVCC) venue. Other suggested venues: First Baptist Church, Main St (Stella); Ting Pavilion (Mas). **Action item:** Max will provide Elizabeth with the contact for their event management.

g. **Poggio a Caiano, Italy** (Stella Mattioli)

Mayoral Visit, Summer 2025 - Stella reported that there are no updates related to the visit proposed for this summer (likely in August)

She inquired with Max about any follow-up regarding a street naming possibility during the delegation's summer visit. Max confirmed that for now, the City has put a pause on all street-naming pending further discussion by Council.

h. **Winneba, Ghana** (Kimberly Hayes)

City Rep Trip, April 2025 - Kimberly still intends to travel to Winneba in April but is in additional negotiations with her contact there regarding the timing of the visit. He recently suggested that she align her trip with the Charlottesville Winneba Foundation trip scheduled in May; her priority is to establish a relationship on behalf of the Sister Cities Commission apart from the CWF.

V. **Other Business:**

The following Commissioner terms expire this June. Eligibility for additional terms are in parentheses: Alicen Brown (1), Claire Denton-Spalding (2), Edward Herring (1) , Sylvia New Strawn (2), CherryStewart (3). In addition, Murray Susen's unexpired term will come open as he will graduate from CHS this June.

The current application period will close May 1. **Action item:** Any commissioners who intend to reapply are requested to let Edward know by the end of April.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Edward Herring

Motion seconded: Kimberly Hayes

Meeting was adjourned at 5:39 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley, Secretary & Besançon Representative

Next Commission Meeting: Tuesday, April 8 4:30-6:00 pm, CitySpace