

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

Tuesday April 15, 2025

CitySpace Small Conference Room

Present: Alicen Brown, Claire Denton-Spalding (participating remotely), Kimberly Hayes, Edward Herring, Stella Mattioli (participating remotely), Sal Moschella, Elizabeth Smiley, Cherry Stewart

Absent: Casey Erickson, Sylvia New Strawn, 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)*:

- Claire Denton-Spalding *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to illness and participating remotely from her home in Charlottesville, VA*
- Stella Mattioli *(B.4) unable to attend in person due to work constraints and participating remotely from University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA*

Late arrivals noted: none

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting opened at 4:39 pm. Edward Herring presided. A quorum was deemed present.

I. **Approval of Minutes** (Edward Herring)

Full Commission meeting - March 12, 2025

Motion to approve minutes as written: Sal Moschella

Motion seconded: Cherry Stewart

Motion carried

II. **Chair's Report** (Edward Herring)

a. Commission terms unfilled and expiring on June 30

Edward reported that Sylvia New Strawn, Claire Denton-Spalding and Murray Susen will not be applying for additional terms. Max clarified that the following positions will need to be filled: Business Rep (currently unfilled), Student Rep, At-Large (2).

Edward asked non-returning members to help recruit replacement members. Alicen will help identify a new Student Representative from CHS.

Sylvia suggested that the commission begin conducting exit interviews for departing members who have served 3 or more years. Edward will contact those who are departing and will schedule interviews to gather feedback about their time on the commission. Max requested that exit interviews be structured to

follow a set of questions that both the Commission Secretary and Max will keep on file.

Edward distributed copies of a letter (**attached**) from Justin O'Jack, chief representative of the UVA China office, inquiring about interest in exploring a potential sister city relationship with Shanghai, China. There was a brief discussion and review of the process for proposing and selecting sister cities. Past proposals have come from community members, affinity groups, the Commission itself, and City Council. Max urged the Commission to prioritize determining our commitment to Huehue before considering exploring another sister city partnership.

Action item: It was decided that Edward will draft a reply letter and that the Commission will discuss and approve it at the May meeting.

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

Current balance is \$21,507.89

Edward distributed an updated Spending Schedule for April 2025- June 2026 (**attached**). He reviewed the figures and noted our expected allocation of 15K will permit us to operate within this projected budget.

Cherry suggested we consider spending more money on community outreach.

Action item: Alicen will send the Commission a document with the top promotional items and their estimated costs, for review and vote approval at the May meeting.

IV. **Committee & City Reports**

a. **Grants** (Kimberly Hayes)

The Committee awarded one (1) grant and has notified the grantee. Kimberly will serve as the official Commission liaison for this grantee since the project focuses on our Winneba sister city partnership. The Committee plans to open a second grants application cycle with a tentative date of June 1.

b. **Education** (Alicen Brown)

The recent student theater exchange to Besançon was considered a success. Alicen appreciated Edward's thorough planning. She forwarded a letter (**attached**) from David Becker to the CHS Administration about the positive exchange experience. Alicen is talking with teachers at CHS about how to expand future CHS/Lyceé Pasteur exchanges so that they include a broader range of the student population, particularly for travel to Besançon. She noted that CHS is being approached by other members of the community about exchanges with locations other than our sister cities.

c. **Programs & Events** (Cherry Stewart, E Smiley for Sylvia New Strawn)

Festival of Cultures on May 24, YMCA

This is another community outreach opportunity for the Commission at a large annual event. The CSCC has participated in this event in past years and there was interest in participating again this year. **Action item:** Cherry will follow up with more specific information and liaise on behalf of the Commission.

Ix Farmers Market report

Elizabeth reported on the first of four IX Market info table dates, Saturday 12.

Around a dozen curious market goers stopped by our table. Our booth will draw more visitors if we have an eye-catching banner to mount between the rear tent poles. **Action item:** Edward will look into display banners and report findings at our May meeting. Next IX Market date: May 10. Volunteers are still needed to help staff the two dates in the fall.

d. **Outreach & Communications** (Claire Denton-Spalding) - no report

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

Mayoral Delegation Trip, October 2025

Edward distributed a Travel Plan and Agenda for the trip (**attached**). He is creating a brochure for community-wide distribution featuring a QR code with which interested travelers can apply. Announcements to the public are scheduled to go out over the next month. The delegation will consist of 15 travelers. Currently there are 6 committed participants: Mayor Wade, Edward (CSCC), 4 from the GuateMaya Alliance.

Max suggested extending the invitation to all the additional City Councilors

(**Action item:** Edward will send them an email next week). Sister City Commissioners are invited to apply to participate at their own expense.

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

Voices of Adult Learners Project w/Besançon Writers, March 2025

Cherry gave a quick report on the event. There were technical difficulties with the video files sent to us by our Besançon city partners, however their recordings will be spliced into the final event videotape and we will be able to provide copies to them.

Gospel Choir Exchange, July 2025

The Cville choir directors have drafted a proposed itinerary for the visit and there are ongoing discussions regarding the date, time and location of a community-wide concert. Elizabeth will keep the Commission updated as details become finalized.

Elizabeth will be traveling to Besançon in the final week of May and has allocated three days for sister city meetings and related business. Her itinerary is being organized by staff in Besançon and she will share it with the Commission at the May meeting if it has been finalized.

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

Mayoral Visit, Summer 2025

Stella reported that she is still waiting on confirmed travel dates from the Mayor's office, however August remains the target time frame.

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

City Rep Trip, April 2025

Kimberly reported that she was unable to book her planned inaugural City Rep trip this month after her primary contact in Winneba withdrew his assistance to organize meetings and facilitate her introduction to key officials there. Kimberly has reached out to Mayor Wade and others for assistance in resolving any roadblocks and supporting the partnership with the Sister City Commission.

V. **Other Business:** (Max)

- Previously, the City Attorney's Office agreed to provide FOIA and Public Records training to the members of the Sister Cities Commission. When the Commission is ready, Max will coordinate with the City Attorney's Office to schedule the training.

ADJOURNMENT

Due to the early departure of one commissioner, we did not have a quorum for a motion to adjourn, so the remaining members agreed by consensus to close the meeting at 6:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Smiley, Secretary & Besançon Representative

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

Attachments

*5/6/2025

Motion to approve minutes as written: Sylvia New Strawn

Motion seconded: Cherry Stewart

Motion carried