

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
MINUTES - Annual Retreat
Tuesday September 9, 2025
CitySpace Large Conference Room

Present: Alicen Brown, Kimberly Hayes, S. Lisa Herndon, Edward Herring, John Mason, Stella Mattioli, Sal Moschella, Bonita Patton, Kristen Petros de Guex, Elizabeth Smiley, Cherry Stewart

Absent: none

Non-voting Members Present: Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council

Late arrivals noted: Cherry Stewart at 5:39 pm; S. Lisa Herndon at 5:51pm

Call to Order

The retreat was opened at 5:38 pm. Edward Herring presided. A quorum was deemed present.

I. **Welcome** (Edward Herring)

- Opening remarks
Edward noted that we have completed a busy and challenging year and look forward to another full year ahead
- Introductions - New and Continuing Commissioners
Kimberly initiated a round robin in which each person introduced themselves with a 6-word story about why they sought to serve on the Sister Cities Commission

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

Full Commission meeting - July 8, 2025

Motion to approve with additions proposed by Max: Kimberly Hayes

Motion seconded: Sal Moschella

Motion carried unanimously by all those present at the July 8 meeting

Full Commission meeting - August 5, 2025

Elizabeth read in a proposed addition to the draft August minutes

Motion to approve minutes as amended: Kimberly Hayes

Motion seconded: S. Lisa Herndon

Motion carried unanimously by all those present at the August meeting

New City Committee meeting - August 28, 2025

Edward called to approve with one amendment: addition of the signature of the minutes taker

Approved with amendment by the committee members

III. **Welcome Activity** (Kimberly Hayes)

Kimberly placed members in dyads and had each dyad select a prompt from among a list of types of movies (musicals, comedies, etc). Dyad partners then spent about 4 minutes developing a story line for their chosen movie, using the exercise to get to know their partner. Then dyads presented/pitched their movie story lines to the group.

IV. **State of the Commission** (Edward Herring)

Edward reported that the Commission is in very good condition thanks to the hard work of current and recently retired Commissioners.

- Review of Annual Report (**copy included in Retreat Agenda packet**): Edward presented the annual report in person to City Council on September 2
- 24-25 Major Accomplishments: *these were not reviewed*
- Meeting Attendance Policy & Expectations (**copy of City's attendance policy included in Retreat Agenda packet**): Edward acknowledged that the Commission has not been consistent previously at enforcing this policy, but asks the current group to work diligently to meet these expectations

Max noted that a copy of our own Policy for All-Virtual Public Meetings and Remote Participation was included in the Retreat Agenda packet. This policy must be vote-adopted by the Commission every year. *This was not taken up at the Retreat but deferred to an upcoming meeting.*

V. **Discussion & Review: Status of Friendship City, Huehuetenango** (Edward Herring)
(The Retreat Agenda Packet contained the following documents relevant to the history and discussion of our partnership with Huehuetenango):

- CSCC Checklist: Affiliating with a New Sister City
- Sister City Affiliation Checklist (for Huehuetenango)
- Draft Minutes of the [New City] Committee meeting on August 29, 2025
- Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the Sister City relationship between Charlottesville and Huehuetenango

Edward reviewed the history and background in the selection and adoption of Huehuetenango as our Spanish-speaking Sister City candidate. City Council officially approved "Friendship City" status on July 1, 2021. Since then, a key task for the Commission has been to determine if there is sufficient benefit to both cities to recommend moving from Friendship City to full Sister City status. It is the recommendation of the New City Committee that the Commission vote to seek City Council approval to officially "sister" with Huehuetenango.

Max noted that the Commission's checklist for sistering requires official visits by elected officials of both cities prior to establishing an official Sister City Charter. As this has not

already occurred the Commission would have to be willing to waive this provision in order to determine by vote tonight whether or not to ask City Council to approve the sistering with Huehuetenango. Following brief discussion there was a call to vote:

Motion to request City Council approval to advance the status of Huehuetenango from Friendship City to Sister City with Charlottesville: Edward Herring

Motion seconded: Alicen Brown

Motion carried unanimously

If City Council approves this request, and once a Sister City Charter has been signed by both sitting Mayors, Edward will request an additional \$5000 from the City's 2027 budget to support the addition of this Sister City.

Dinner Break

During the dinner break Sal introduced a strategic planning document (refer to Agenda item VI. **Strategic Planning**, below) summarizing the responses to the survey that Edward sent out prior to the Retreat (**document attached**). Commissioners were asked to complete the New Project Ideas section; Sal tallied our responses and will present process recommendations at our next meeting. Due to time constraints, the remainder of the planning work sheet was also deferred to a future meeting.

In the interest of time, Edward proposed eliminating items VII. (Work Sharing Workshop), VIII. (Innovation & Problem Solving session) and X. (Committee Updates) from the Retreat Agenda

Motion to move directly to Sister City Updates: Edward Herring

Motion seconded: John Mason

Motion carried unanimously

VI. **Strategic Planning** (Edward Herring and Sal Moschella)

This agenda item was addressed out of order, during the Dinner Break

- Survey review
- Process recommendations
- CSCC Logo review: *this was not reviewed*
- Technology and training needs: *these were not reviewed*

~~VII. **Workshop: Work Sharing, Collaboration, Succession Planning** (Edward Herring and Kimberly Hayes)~~

~~VIII. **Innovation & Problem Solving Session** (Sal Moschella and Kimberly Hayes)~~

IX. **Sister City Updates**

- Besançon (Elizabeth Smiley)

CHS will welcome a delegation of high school students from the Lycee Pasteur for 5 nights, October 11-16. Alicen Brown is coordinating the itinerary with David Becker (CHS teacher contact for the exchange). Edward has been helping with arrangements for excursions to Monticello and to UVA. Updates on 2026 potential sister city projects to be presented at upcoming meetings.

- Poggio a Caiano (Stella Mattioli)
2026 is the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Cville-Poggio Sister City relationship, therefore it would be ideal to have some kind of exchange or programming to commemorate it; the sitting Mayor of Poggio indicates he still intends to visit Cville for three nights in December, dates tbd.
- Winneba (Kimberly Hayes)
Some progress has been made on reestablishing a working relationship with city officials and community partners in Winneba. Former City Rep Nana Ghartey's assistance in this endeavor will be a key to its ongoing success. To honor Nana's legacy as well as secure his reinvestment in the success of the Commission's work, the Winneba Committee is considering developing a documentary highlighting his royal family lineage in Winneba and his role in the establishment of the Cville-Winneba Sister City partnership.

Max noted that the City of Cville receives a city-related magazine quarterly from Besançon and she wonders if the Commission would be interested in sending magazines to each of our Sister Cities as a way to keep our partners in those communities updated on local cultural, economic, and civic happenings.

~~X.~~ **Committee/Program Updates**

XI. **Committee Sign-ups**

Edward distributed a list of Officers and current Committees. There was discussion about the process for voting on the Officers. Concerns were expressed about the newest members not having had an opportunity to learn about the various positions in advance in order to determine if they are interested in self-nominating. The decision was made to defer voting on the slate until the October meeting. In the interim, Alicen will create a nomination form for distribution which will include Officer position descriptions.

XII. **Elections/Appointment of Officers**

This item was deferred to the October full Commission meeting, see above

XIII. **Wrap-Up & Next Steps**

- Key Takeaways
- Action Items
- Feedback

Due to time constraints, these items were not included

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting: John Mason

Motion seconded: Alicen Brown

Motion carried

Meeting adjourned at 8 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley, Secretary & Besançon Representative

Next Commission Meeting: Tuesday October 7, 4:30-6:00 pm, CitySpace Conference Room

attachment

*10/21/2025

Motion to approve minutes as written: John Mason

Motion seconded: Sal Moschella

Motion carried unanimously