

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

MINUTES

Meeting July 20, 2021

Zoom

Present: Amanda Folsom, Michael Grinnell, Daman Irby, Neeley Minton, Dave Norris, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward

Absent: Joan Clarke, Nana Gharthey, Stella Mattioli

Non-members present: Erin Hughey-Commers, Kate Kogge, Rachel McLaughlin, Lachen Parks, Maxicelia Robinson

Meeting opened at 4:33 pm Mr. Irby presided A quorum was present

I. Approval of June minutes

Motion to approve with no corrections: Mr. Grinnell Seconded: Ms. Ward

Motion passed unanimously

II. Meet-and-Greet with Huehuetenango's Sister City Commission and other local officials

Mr. Irby greeted the guests from Huehuetenango. All participants introduced themselves.

III. Updates on Huehuetenango-related projects and activities

A. "Huehuetenango and Ixtatán Internet and Introductions" project
Elias Alonzo, Director of Development for the Ixtatán Foundation

Mr. Alonzo reported that this virtual Meet-and-Greet was made possible as a result of the CSCC 2020-21 grant funding to establish a stable internet connection in Huehue. He is currently working on the second part of the grant project, the creation of an official website to highlight business, civic, and cultural activities in Huehue and to further facilitate our Friendship City connection.

Additionally, he reported that in May 2021 he traveled to Huehuetenango and met with Mayor Gustavo Cano in order to sign the official letter announcing our intention to become Sister Cities. Mr. Alonzo also served as a resource, meeting members of the CSCC and coordinating with Rachel McLaughlin on her grant-funded art project.

B. "Peace and Creative Connection Through Arts" project
Rachel McLaughlin, Mountainside Arts (Art School)

Ms. McLaughlin reported on her CSCC 2020-21 grant-funded art project, an art exchange between Mountainside Arts school in Charlottesville and the Escuela de Arte (ERA) "Rafael Pereya" in Huehuetenango. She had prepared a visual presentation with photos of Cville participants, their artwork and then artwork sent to Cville by the Huehue students.

To complete the exchange, the artworks received from Huehue participants will be exhibited locally (location tbd) and she will organize and host a final zoom party for the participants in both cities. Guests at today's CSCC meeting are invited to attend. Expressed thanks to Kate, Elias, and the faculty at the art school in Huehue.

Ms. McLaughlin expressed her appreciation for the support and assistance of Ms. Kogge from the CSCC and Mr. Alonzo from the Ixtatán Foundation during the planning and implementation of this project.

C. Ms. Zonia Juárez, representing the Universidad Da Vinci, showed us a short promotional video ("Maravillas naturales de Huehuetenango/Guatemala"), highlighting the natural beauty and Mayan heritage of Huehuetenango, originally named Xinabajul in the ancient Mam (Mayan) language. This year, Guatemala commemorates the 200th anniversary of its independence from Spain. Ms. Juárez invited members of the Commission to participate in their local events which are scheduled for September 20, 2021, at Zaculeu archaeological park.

D. Additional greetings/appreciations exchanged

1. Mr. Héctor Rodolfo Méndez Pérez delivered greetings on behalf of Mayor Gustavo Cano, along with an invitation to visit Huehuetenango as we continue to build the friendship between our communities.
2. Alida Mariel Vasquez spoke, offering more thanks and recognition to the collaboration of colleagues from Universidad Da Vinci.
3. Mr. Ronaldo Andrés Gómez, Executive Director of the Ixtatán Foundation expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet, reiterated the Foundation's commitment to strengthening the Friendship City relationship, and looks forward to visits between communities.
4. Mr. Alonzo announced that on August 28 the Ixtatán Foundation will commemorate its 20th anniversary and invited the CSCC to attend the celebration planned in Charlottesville.

At the conclusion of the Meet-and-Greet, Mr. Irby invited the guests from Huehuetenango to remain online if they wished while the Commission completed its regular meeting business. In the next few minutes, however, all of them said good-bye and thanked everyone present for the opportunity to meet.

IV. Nominations/Vote for new Co-Chair

Mr. Irby opened the floor for discussion and possible nomination of a new co-chair to replace Kate Kogge. There was brief discussion but no nominating, and it was agreed to postpone a vote until more members of the Commission are present to participate. It was proposed that we have a more in-depth discussion and examination of officer positions during our annual retreat in September.

Mr. Irby stated that he felt comfortable continuing as sole Chair until that time.

V. Other Business

- a. Brief discussion of our numbers/membership in CSCC and challenges to reaching full capacity: at present we have 10 active members, with 2-3 additional persons once we fill outstanding positions (Youth representative, Business rep, and potential Huehuetenango rep); there has been some difficulty filling these spots due in part to recruiting that yields interest from non-city residents and preference by CC to accept only city residents; our by-laws state that that city residents are given precedence but that condition is not required; we can consider asking CC for flexibility if we have interested non-city candidates for spots have been unfilled for some time. To be discussed further at Sept. retreat.
- b. Brief discussion of the Sept. retreat - question as to whether it will be in person or not; Max noted that city will be returning to in-person meetings as of Sept. 7th, so likely our retreat can be also; Dave explained that the traditional procedure for retreat entails Chair assembling an agenda, working from template from years past; Daman and Dave will discuss this further.
- c. Veronica Ramirez, representative from Huehue who had not been present earlier, joined the zoom at some point in our final business, she spoke to us briefly about topics that may have had to do with culture and music, but since she spoke in Spanish and we no longer had the interpreters, most of us were not able to understand. Neeley communicated our thanks in Spanish once she had finished.

Meeting adjourned at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley, Secretary and Besancon Rep

Next CSCC meeting is on Tuesday August 17 @ 4:30 pm