

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission

AGENDA

Meeting October 19, 2021

<https://www.charlottesville.gov/zoom>

I. Approve Meeting Minutes from September 2021 Retreat

II. City Rep Updates:

- a. Winneba
- b. Besancon
- c. Poggio
- d. Huehue

III. Travel Scholarships Guidelines

IV. City Representative Travel Expenditures

Next Meetings:

Tuesday, November 9 @ 4:30-7:30 pm – Subcommittee Meeting

Tuesday, November 16 @ 4:30 pm – Commission Meeting

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Remote participation supported for the duration of the City Manager's Declaration of Emergency issued March 12, 2020.

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
Minutes
Annual Retreat September 21, 2021
Zoom

Present: Daman Irby, Amanda Folsom, Nana Ghartey, Michael Grinnell, Dave Norris, Stella Mattioli, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward
Non-members present: Maxicelia Robinson

Retreat opened at 4:34 pm Daman Irby presided A quorum was present

Opening activity: each commissioner shared a memorable experience or unique talent

Approval of August minutes

Daman made a motion to adopt minutes as written. Minutes approved unanimously.

Review of Bylaws

Noted: city residency is not a requirement for membership

Noted: Bylaws allow for 10 members plus city reps (max of 13 at present)

Noted: Bylaws specify an “annual organizational meeting” where officers are elected; this has typically occurred at the annual retreat in past years, per D.Norris

Noted: the Commission is allowed to fund raise

Noted: Amanda requested that we clarify whose role it is to be checking the commission gmail inbox regularly and responding to general inquiries

Recruitment of new members

We now have five (5) positions vacant, following the resignations of Neeley Minton and Joan Clarke. City boards and commissions positions are advertised 90 days prior to the quarterly appointment meetings. The next of these will take place in December; applications should be submitted to the City by 12/10/21. Applications are typically reviewed by our City liaison (Kyna Thomas) and the current Commission Chair

There was agreement that we need to more proactively identify and recruit applicants ourselves and to communicate our preferences for candidate consideration to Council. Although these procedures are not specified in our bylaws, they need to be included in an as-yet undeveloped commissioner handbook.

Action items:

- **Michael** will draft and share some ideas for what should be included in a commissioner handbook
- **Adrienne** volunteered to draft a document which outlines the process for member recruitment and describes City Council’s process for accepting/reviewing applications and appointing new members

Review of Strategic Plan

Adrienne noted that, while many items on the current plan are in a state of suspension due to the pandemic, the “Improved Web Presence” section is one area where we can increase activity. We can collectively achieve this goal by regularly updating the info on each sister city on our website, highlighting success stories, and becoming more active on our social media sites.

Daman suggested that an intern might like the job of compiling news reports on each of our Sister Cities and creating a sister city newsletter.

Action items:

- **Elizabeth** committed to feed Besancon updates and news to the Outreach Committee more routinely and challenged the other sister city reps to do the same
- Explore recruiting an Intern to assist in developing a Sister City newsletter

Updating Sister Cities Contact Lists

All current lists are in need of updating.

Nana mentioned that the Chief of the Winneba area is looking into establishing a Sister City liaison there with a long term appointment, which would bridge the turnover in political leadership that occurs every 4 years.

Action Items:

- **City Reps** pledge to have current contact lists drafted by the October meeting
- **Elizabeth** will update the CSCC contact list by the October meeting. She asked all commissioners to submit any corrections or changes in their contact info to her prior to 10/18/21. The updated list will include the term of office info for all current commissioners.

Review Goals/Achievements for 2020-21

Grants committee - Amanda

Goal 1 - completed

Goal 2 - completed

Adrienne suggested that we follow up with grantees and report on their progress more frequently. In response Amanda pointed us to the “Grants Dashboard” that she has created to monitor the progress of each grant. In addition, she proposed assigning a commission liaison to each grant project to monitor progress and has drafted a proposed description:

Goal 3 - still in progress (original completion timeline of April 2021).

Item is on the agenda for discussion tonight.

Communications/Outreach committee- Michael and Adrienne

Goal 1 - completed

Goal 2 - in progress, needs improvement; commission directed to earlier discussions about sharing contact and news

Goal 3 - in progress, but there is no final plan

Goal 4 - in progress; Adrienne has tentatively volunteered to be the secondary person to manage the CSCC website

Nana asked where we are in the process of creating a "Sister City Week" that he had previously recommended. Michael created a list of outreach ideas following that initial conversation, but the CSCC has not moved this project along to date.

More discussion followed regarding: the role of the Outreach Committee (should it be proposing ideas and implementing outreach ideas?); what would be involved in pulling together an idea like this; whether we would need to create an ad hoc committee to implement; the amount of energy and work with community partners that would be required.

Education committee - Daman and Elizabeth

Goals 1 & 2 - have been put on hold due to pandemic restrictions as well as the loss of two committee members

Goal 3 - ongoing; two local students submitted entries to the YAAS 2021 contest in partial fulfillment of this goal, which will be carried over

Action item:

- **Daman** will forward Elias Alonzo's contact info with **Michael**, who will reach out to see if we can find a way to partner with the Ixtatan Foundation in marking Hispanic Heritage Month

Friendship City: Huehuetenango - Daman

Elizabeth represented the Commission at the Ixtatan Foundation's 20th Anniversary celebration on August 28. She reported that the new friendship city contacts in Huehue are struggling with setting up their commission; SCI has resources for this that might be shared with them. Daman noted that there are other sister cities in Guatemala that might be able to advise.

Action item:

- **Daman** will contact SCI about their resource materials and see if it's possible for us as a member organization to share those with our new friendship city contacts in Huehue

Sister City: Winneba - Nana

Nana reported that during the most recent visit, the delegation tried to meet

With all the civic and political departments in Winneba to assist in establishing direct lines of communication with the comparable departments in Charlottesville City government.

Sister City: Besancon - Elizabeth

Goals 1,2,3, 4 (2020) - completed

Goals 2,3,4 (2021) - ongoing but in process; there will be no student exchanges in 2021, not yet clear if they will resume in Spring 2022 or Fall 2022

Elizabeth asked when we should begin working on 2022 goals

Nana would like to encourage City Council members to attend our meetings and to visit our Sister Cities when trips are planned

Action items:

- **All committees/City Reps** will submit drafts of our 2022 goals at the November monthly meeting
- **Daman** will look into scheduling quarterly subcommittee meetings in October if possible

Sister City: Poggio - Stella

Goal 1 (Filippo Mazzei film) is still in process; Stella has the DVD and will work on organizing a film screening when she return to the US

Goals 2 & 3 - ongoing

Goal 4 - contacts in Poggio have indicated they prefer in-person exchanges and are not as interested in a virtual exchange

Discussion of Travel Assistance Standards

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to schedule a longer discussion in an upcoming monthly meeting.

Adrienne suggested the following for consideration: deciding on frequency of awards per calendar year; tying the scholarship award cycle to delegation trips that are in the works. She asked for clarification of what an "individual opportunity" means. Examples offered: a grantee might include travel in a grant application; travel to support a joint business venture benefiting both cities.

Additional questions were raised:

Do we want to sequester separate funding streams for someone who might want to travel to a sister city to explore connections of mutual interest to both cities, as well as someone who wants to participate in a delegation visit?

Is this something we can support, both financially and administratively?

Are these scholarships available to Commission members?

Do we need to revisit the amount a City Rep can request every two years for expenses related to travel to the Sister City? Michael suggested we might review this when we return to this topic at our monthly meeting.

Action item:

- **Daman** will set aside a significant portion of the October meeting for more in-depth discussion of this topic

Review of Commission Membership

- Elizabeth has agreed to continue as Secretary
- Michael has agreed to continue as Treasurer
- Daman would like to have a Co-Chair, especially to assist with ongoing communications with city officials.
- Dave pointed out that the Bylaws envision a Vice-Chair position as a kind of “heir apparent” position for someone who can take a year or so to share in leadership tasks and subsequently be ready to step into the Chair position.
- Acknowledging that there are no nominees at present, Daman has graciously agreed to continue as Chair.

Action item:

- **All Commissioners** are asked to help recruit new members to fill the vacant positions

Meeting adjourned at 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Smiley,
Secretary and Besancon Rep

CSCC Travel Scholarships – Draft Principles and Process for Commission Feedback (4/9/20)

The Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission (CSCC) Grants Committee has begun developing a process for issuing travel scholarships for participants' travel for Sister Cities trips or other exchanges. Below are draft principles and key considerations for the application process. The Grants Committee invites Commission feedback on this outline and several key questions below. Following the next CSCC meeting, the Grants Committee will further develop the application process and draft application form for Commission review and approval.

- Do the proposed principles (below) for guiding the scholarships process align with the Commission's priorities?
- What should be the timeline or cycle for soliciting and accepting scholarship applications?
- Does the proposed approach to requesting verification of enrollment in a public assistance program serve as a good proxy for making need-based determinations? Are there other approaches we should consider?
- Are there additional considerations the grants committee should take into account in designing the application and review process?

Draft Principles:

- Excellent stewardship of public funding, ensuring all scholarship funds serve the public interest and are managed with fairness and transparency, including objective verification of need
- High quality of participant experiences in Sister Cities opportunities
- Increased diversity and inclusivity of Sister Cities travel opportunities
- Reduced barrier to participation for low-income residents
- Cost-sharing by scholarship recipients to ensure shared financial stake in the opportunity

Application and Review Process (in development, for discussion and feedback):

- Purpose: To off-set the costs of travel for individuals to participate in official, organized Sister Cities group trips or for individual opportunities for exchange with a Sister City
- Scholarship window/timeline: Once or twice per year, on rolling basis or as part of an official CSCC run trip? (*for discussion*)
 - Applicants to provide a timeline for their proposal
- Eligibility: adults and students participating outside of an organized school trip that meet merit-based criteria and demonstration of need
- Merit-based determination: Why do you want to participate? What value do you add?
 - Criteria: Scholarship applicant has demonstrated that they have "something to share" in terms of knowledge or experience and "something to gain" to bring back to the Charlottesville community
- Need-based determination: Proof of need will be determined through proxy means-testing
 - Criteria: Documented enrollment in public, means-tested programs such as Free and Reduced Lunch, Medicaid, Housing Voucher, etc.
- Cap on individual scholarship amount: To be set annually
 - For example, \$5000/year in CSCC annual budget for travel scholarships, limited to \$1000-\$1500 per scholarship

- Application form and/or outreach materials to provide suggestions for how recipients can raise additional funding to off-set travel costs
- Issue of scholarship payments: *To be determined*
 - City's financial guidelines generally require reimbursement
 - If funds are needed up front, likely would need to go through a non-profit financial agent, with guidelines for the return of funds not used for the trip or if participant cancels
- Confidentiality for applicants:
 - How can we guarantee some privacy while recognizing that our records could be the subject of FOIA? (*may need to seek guidance from City Attorney*)
- Deliverables:
 - Scholarship recipients will be asked to provide a report back or presentation to the Commission to share their experience and learning

Grants committee next steps:

- Seek resources/examples from Sister Cities International (Amanda)
- Further flesh out proposed guidelines/process
- Develop application process and draft application form for Commission review and approval