

Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission
MINUTES - ANNUAL RETREAT
September 20, 2022
Building Goodness Foundation

Present: Claire Denton-Spalding, Michael Grinnell, Nana Gharthey, Edward Herring, Daman Irby, Elizabeth Smiley, Adrienne Ward, Vivien Wong

Absent: Stella Mattioli, Sylvia New Strawn

Non-voting members present: Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council

Daman Irby opened the Retreat at 4:40 pm by welcoming everyone, noting that this was the first in-person meeting of the Commission since prior to the pandemic.

I. Approval of August Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve: Alicen Brown; Seconded: Michael Grinnell; Motion passed

II. Vote on adding "Email Coordinator" position to By-Laws

Adrienne Ward reviewed the proposal & the process for amending the By-Laws.

Discussion: Michael asked that we specify whether this position can be held by someone who is already an officer. There was consensus that this would be acceptable. Daman called for a motion to approve the position of Email Coordinator, specifying in the language that this position can be held by a Commissioner who is already serving as an office.

Motion to Approve: Michael Grinnell; Seconded: Alicen Brown; Motion passed

Action item: The Secretary will revise the By-Laws prior to our next meeting

III. Ice Breaker (Claire Denton-Spalding, facilitator)

After introducing themselves, each Commissioner revealed an interesting personal talent or described a memorable travel experience or other activity.

IV. New Member Orientation Handbook: Intro & Discussion (Adrienne Ward & Elizabeth Smiley, co-facilitators)

Adrienne and Elizabeth described the impetus for developing an Orientation Handbook and gave a quick overview of what the Handbook covers. They invited feedback on the content and asked whether anything stood out to readers as needing clarification. They distributed index cards and asked Commissioners to indicate additional topics or ideas to be considered for inclusion. Several people offered suggestions, which will be compiled into a list and uploaded to the shared google drive.

The development of the Handbook brought into sharp focus a longstanding yet pertinent issue, which is the need for the Sister Cities Commission to raise its profile within the Charlottesville community. These questions were put to the group: *What do we need to be doing to raise community awareness of our Sister City relationships?*

How do we get community members engaged and involved in the work/projects of our Commission? A number of Commissioners offered ideas, some of which sparked additional conversation revealing the challenges and constraints we have faced and continue to face as an entity. (A summary of proposed ideas and comments is attached).

V. Dinner Break

Over the dinner break, Edward Herring gave a powerpoint presentation on Huehuetenango that he prepared after several meetings with our Friendship City partners there. He is preparing to travel to Huehue in early November to continue building connections and explore projects and exchanges of mutual interest. He proposes that we focus our efforts on developing a relationship built on educational exchanges, which will require the support and engagement of our local school systems. First steps might include organizing teacher exchanges or pen pal programs between student classrooms which, if successful, could lead to physical exchanges between students from both communities.

Following Edward's presentation, Kelly Eplee, current Board President of the Ixtatan Foundation, explained that the Foundation was formed to address educational needs in mountainous areas outside Huehue without existing primary schools. There is a strong Mayan/indigenous culture in Ixtatan which contributes to the cultural richness of our Friendship City.

VI. Brainstorming Session: Strategies for Raising the CSCC Profile in our Community (Claire Denton-Spalding, facilitator)

Commissioners were invited to answer the question: **How might we build community support for the Cville Sister Cities Commission?** Claire gave Commissioners a stack of sticky notes and three minutes to write down as many ideas as they could think of. Ideas were shared aloud, then collected and organized thematically on a large board. Claire identified the themes/groupings that emerged and reviewed the suggestions in each. She will provide a snapshot and write-up of what we produced and distribute it to the Commission for further reflection and then discussion at upcoming meetings. Next steps will be to identify the feasibility of the ideas generated and focus in on those that we wish to implement.

VII. City Rep Updates:

Winneba (Nana Ghartey, reporting)- Nana reported that the fire engine was officially "handed over" to the Winneba Fire Department about two weeks ago. He has also recently presented a gift of appreciation from the Winneba Fire Chief to the Charlottesville Fire Chief.

(At this point, we lost our audio connection and the remaining City Rep Updates as well as most of the Standing Committees Updates were not recorded. Audio recording was resumed in time to hear the Education Committee Update, as follows.)

VIII. Committee Updates

Education: Alicen Brown reported that the city schools have been told that “international visits” may resume this academic year. It is not yet clear what this means for the pre-existing student exchanges (Besancon) or for any new exchanges that have been proposed. Elizabeth Smiley asked if it would be useful for the Commission to meet with the new Superintendent Gurley to make a brief presentation on our historical Sister City student exchanges. Alicen will run this up the flagpole at CCS and report back. Any presentation will need to be extremely concise–bullet points on one page or 5-slides in a powerpoint.

IX. Proposed Slate of Officers and Committee Members

Daman Irby asked members to confirm their existing Committee memberships; additional assignments were made so that all Committees are now filled for the remainder of this fiscal year. The Proposed slate of Officers for 2022-23 was presented, as was the Proposed Roster of Committee Members with designated Chairs (list is attached).

Motion to Approve the Slate of Officers and Committee Assignments: Alicen Brown; Seconded: Edward Herring; Motion passed.

Action item: The list of Officers and Committee Members will be uploaded to the shared google drive.

X. Other business not on the Agenda

There was brief discussion about possible dates for our next Committee meetings, as well as whether or not in-person meetings will be approved going forward.

Action item: Edward Herring will create a doodle poll and distribute it to determine potential dates for scheduling a 3-hour block during which the Committees can sequentially hold 45-minute meetings.

Retreat adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday October 18 @ 4:30 pm. Location TBA.