



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR
Al Durtka, Bruce Spann, Aaron Szopinski, and Oscar Tovar
Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,
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Tuesday, June 6, 2023

1:30 PM

Virtual

Special Meeting

This will be a virtual meeting conducted via GoToMeeting. Should you wish to join this meeting from your phone, tablet, or computer you may go to <https://meet.goto.com/929251621>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 and Access Code: 929-251-621.

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m.

2. Roll call.

Present 4 - Durtka, Stamper, Spann, Szopinski

Excused 1 - Tovar

3. Introduction of new membership.

Member Szopinski introduced himself as the Milwaukee Health Department designee member, having worked in the Mayor's Office, being familiar with sister cities, and was excited to serve.

4. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from April 19, 2023.

Meeting minutes from April 19, 2023 were approved without objection.

5. Review and approval of letters of intent to establish sister city relationships.

A. Abuja, Nigeria

*Appearing:
Dele Ojelabi
Dr. Francis Obuseh*

Mr. Ojelabi presented. A letter of intent was submitted with Milwaukee Action Network Inc. (MANI) as the local nonprofit sponsor. Abuja was the federal capital city of Nigeria with similar governmental structure to Milwaukee with elected officials. Abuja was also interested in establishing a sister city relationship and have submitted a letter of interest from the Abuja Municipal Area Council. Abuja officials and MANI were aware of the approval process, and Abuja officials were willing to visit Milwaukee. Common interests for mutual exchange were being determined.

Members inquired about existing sister city relationships with Abuja and the activities of MANI.

Mr. Ojelabi replied. Abuja has no sister city relationships presently, was involved with Sister Cities International, was similar to Milwaukee in size and other aspects, and was focused to learn from other cities about sanitation and public infrastructure among other things. MANI was created for the sister city relationship and would serve as an umbrella organization to facilitate activities with other local Nigerian organizations and groups.

Member Durtka moved approval of the letter of intent and to extend an application to establish a sister city relationship with Abuja, Nigeria with Milwaukee Action Network Inc. as the local nonprofit sponsor. Member Spann seconded. There was no objection.

Mr. Lee said that the next steps would be for the committee to review a completed application, once submitted, followed by legislation through the Common Council process.

B. Kragujevac, Serbia

*Appearing:
Stefan Dostanic
Mile Salisich
Rose Sasich
Miso Jovic*

Mr. Dostanic presented. A letter of intent was submitted with St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral as the local nonprofit sponsor. Both cities were working class cities rich with traditions. There was strong potential for cultural and educational exchanges. Both cities possessed strengths in trade and job growth. There has been 141 years of diplomatic relations.

Member Spann said he knew of local Siberian engineers in Milwaukee and that Kragujevac would be a good European sister city.

Member Durtka said that there was a strong Serbian community in Milwaukee to extend worldwide.

Member Durtka moved approval of the letter of intent and to extend an application to establish a sister city relationship with Kragujevac with St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral as the local nonprofit sponsor. Member Spann seconded. There was no objection.

Mr. Lee said that the next steps would be for the committee to review a completed application, once submitted, followed by legislation through the Common Council

process.

Mr. Dostanic announced Serbian Days hosted by St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral from August 25 to 27, 2023.

6. Discussion, review, or updates on sister city relationships.

A. Tema, Ghana

*Appearing:
Isaac Ashun*

Mr. Ashun gave an update. Tema officials were optimistic to visit Milwaukee this December 7 to 17, 2023 to conduct a sister city signing ceremony. They were late to apply for VISAs which caused a delay. Perhaps Tema officials should be given three months to confirm their December travel before there was consideration to do a virtual signing ceremony instead.

Members discussed that the signing ceremony has delayed the sister city relationship to becoming official, for there to be a deadline of August 6, 2023 for Tema officials to confirm their December travel, and for the signing ceremony to become a virtual one should travel remain an issue after August 6, 2023.

B. Other

*Appearing:
Nevenka Bralic*

Ms. Bralic gave an update. Activities of the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia has been based on implementing a cohort of elementary school exchange program between the cities centered on testing water levels for lead poisoning. The relationship has been for 6 years. Their Milwaukee MCT musical dance group visited Zadar in 2018. There was recently a meet-and-greet held to greet Ivan Marcelic on May 8, 2023. A proclamation was made from the Mayor's Office to make May 8, 2023 Ivan Marcelic Day to recognize him for his visit, as a highly regarded citizen from Croatia, and his endeavor to ride his motorcycle along Route 66 in the United States. Chair Stamper attended and presided over the meet-and-greet.

Chair Stamper said the meet-and-greet was a delightful and humorous event (due to his mispronunciations) and that member Spann attended the event later on.

7. Discussion, review, or updates on sister city related events or activities.

A. Meet-and-greet

*Appearing:
Dr. Christine Mosore*

Dr. Mosore gave an update. The event was 6 years in the making. She was an organizer with City Clerk staff Ms. Moore and Mr. Lee. There was City support to hold a meet-and-greet in combination to expand the event to as a Milwaukee Sister Cities Day celebration to make it more meaningful. It would an opportunity for promotion, networking, meet and greets, collaborations, and celebrations. The event was set for

Wednesday, July 12, 2023 with doors opening at 10 am and a short program at 12 pm followed by refreshments and food. The location would be in the Milwaukee City Hall rotunda with its open space and proximity to City officials. She and clerk staff were meeting to organize the event, which was still developing. Activities would include entertainment, music, food, cultural displays, booths for the Milwaukee sister cities, and an informal short program. Clerk staff was working on promoting the event with invites, press release, and flyers. Participation was needed from the committee and Milwaukee sister cities (local sponsors and communities). The event would feature current Milwaukee sister cities and be open to other prospective sister cities as well. A meeting with all Milwaukee sister city participants would occur to finalize details.

Member Durtka inquired about the adequate supply of food and refreshments.

Mr. Lee said that the plan and marketing would be for light refreshments and food, but there would be the possibility to increase food and refreshments with City resources.

Chair Stamper said he was open to utilize City resources and/or funds toward the event wherever possible to cover any gaps, would set a budget with Clerk staff, and would welcome traditional dress wear and wine at the event. All committee members and prospective sister city communities were welcomed to participate or attend the event.

B. Sister Cities International conferences

Member Durtka said that the Sister Cities International Leadership and Annual Membership Meeting would be in Durham, North Carolina from July 26 - 28, 2023. There would be board and president elections made. There is an interim president (former president had resigned). Many initiatives were underway including the initiative to establish over 500 new sister city relationships in Africa. Chair Stamper was involved with the board.

Chair Stamper said that he was attending the meeting for the first time on the board and would discuss with member Durtka for further insight.

C. Other

There was no other discussion.

8. Public comments.

There were no public comments.

9. Announcements.

There were no announcements.

10. Next steps.

A. Agenda items for the next meeting

To be determined.

B. Set next meeting date and time

To be determined.

11. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.

*Chris Lee, Staff Assistant
Council Records Section
City Clerk's Office*