



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. KHALIF J. RAINEY, CHAIR

Al Durtka, Sanjib Bhattacharyya, Oscar Tovar, and Bruce Spann

**Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,
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Monday, July 20, 2020

10:00 AM

Virtual

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://global.gotomeeting.com/join/951669389>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (872) 240-3311 and Access Code: 951-669-389.

1. **Call to order.**

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. **Roll call.**

Present 4 - Durtka, Tovar, Rainey, Spann

Excused 1 - Bhattacharyya

3. **Introduction of members.**

Members made brief introductions as follows:

Member Durtka said he was from the Wisconsin International Institute of Wisconsin, is the state coordinator for Sister Cities International, and hoped that the sister cities program can expand to develop programs and reach out for more members.

Member Tovar said he is from the Mayor's Office and wanted the synergy to continue to embrace cultures, diversity, economic development, education, tourism, and other exchanges.

Member Spann said that he was a Common Council president appointee, owns a private engineering firm, travels, and has personal interest in the sister city relationship with Tarime District (Tanzania).

Chair Rainey said that he is the 7th aldermanic district alderperson, chair of the Community Economic and Development Committee, was previously a Milwaukee County supervisor, am the new Sister Cities Committee chair, and was looking forward to learning more about sister cities.

4. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes.

Meeting minutes from November 6, 2019 were approved without objection.

5. Review and approval of the renewal application to extend the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia.

Mr. Lee said that the renewal application was filed late, that the relationship had expired May of this year, that representatives of the local sponsor could not attend today's meeting, and that they would like for the renewal application to move forward.

Members said that they had some questions that they would like to ask and get addressed by the local sponsor in-person before moving forward with the renewal.

Member Durtka moved to hold the renewal application to the call of the chair, seconded by member Tovar. There was no objection.

6. Review and approval of sister city relationship annual reports.**A. Tarime District, Tanzania (due 8/13/19)**

Appearing:

Christine Thompson Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation

Ms. Thompson gave an overview of the 2019 annual report for the sister city relationship with Tarime District. Main focus items of the relationship have been the water well drilling project in Tarime and supply of materials to assist the students and community residents in Tarime. There were two trips to Tarime in December 2018 and 2019. The planned December 2020 trip was cancelled due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, and it is uncertain whether the trip can be done. Committee members and Milwaukee officials are welcomed to join future trips to Tarime. The water well is partially finished with a pump and access to water; however, it still needs electricity installed for the pump, which the Tarime government is available to do the work. Trip activities to Tarime included visits to or meetings with the local school and village members; pledge against human trafficking with 30 young men involved; and supply of school supplies, food, and gifts to students and village residents.

Member Spann moved approval, seconded by member Tovar, of the 2019 annual report for the sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania. There was no objection.

B. Bomet County, Kenya (due 8/29/19)

Appearing:

Dr. Alice Kones

David Mugun

Dr. Kones and Mr. Mugun gave an overview of the 2019 and 2020 annual reports for the sister city relationship with Bomet County. There has been little activity recently due to the global pandemic, departure or changes in local sponsorship on both ends, and changes in government in Bomet County. There are efforts to try to mobilize resources, equipment, and health care training to the hospital in Bomet. Health care

professionals from Bomet coming to the United States is on hold due to the pandemic. A main focus has been the water well project in Bomet. A water hole was dug up, was found to contain high levels of fluoride, needs a water purification system, and was closed up. The village cannot afford the purification system, which needs funding to advance it forward. Bomet opened a new university with the possibility for student exchanges. Solutions are needed to export products, such as tea and avocados, from Bomet to Milwaukee. Bomet farmers have been trained and are ready to do exports. Hopefully new sponsorship for the relationship can increase and strengthen activities, promote tourism, and bring delegates to both cities. A new local nonprofit sponsor, Gotabгаа International, was willing to become the new sponsor on the Milwaukee side.

Member Spann said that the Chris Long foundation has shifted its focus to support water operations to cities of need in the United States instead of in Tanzania and Kenya for the time being.

Member Durtka said that more clarification and detail is needed on the new local sponsorship.

Dr. Kones and Mr. Mugun added comments. Although it is a national organization there is a local chapter with over 50 members, and Mr. Mugun is a member. The organization serves to assist items of interest to its community members. More information about the organization can be provided.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Durtka, of the 2019 and 2020 annual reports for the sister city relationship with Bomet County, Kenya. There was no objection.

C. Zadar, Croatia (due 12/25/19)

Mr. Lee said that local sponsor representatives could not attend today's meeting, and that members are in receipt of their 2019 annual report.

Members said that they had some questions that they would like to ask and get addressed by the local sponsor in-person before moving forward with the report

Member Durtka moved to hold to the call of the chair, seconded by member Tovar, the 2019 annual report for the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia due to nonappearance. There was no objection.

D. Irpin, Ukraine (due 2/1/20)

Appearing:

Joseph Spolowicz, St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church
Boris Nayflish, Griffon Brands

Mr. Spolowicz gave an overview of the 2020 annual report for the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine. The church has been the local sponsor. He and his sister traveled to Irpin in 2019 and met with the acting Mayor of Irpin, presented gifts, received gifts for Milwaukee, and toured Irpin. Irpin is known as a recreational vacation destination. Boris had also gone to Irpin on a business trip. They have been active in participating at the Holiday Folk Fair sister cities booth, participating in Sister Cities Committee meetings, and maintaining electronic communication with the City of Irpin. Irpin would like for Milwaukee officials to visit Irpin.

Mr. Nayflish added that the City of Irpin is ready for mutual exchange in areas such as student exchange, city programming, and public safety.

Mr. Spolowicz inquired about the proposed idea of having a dedicated City position for the City's sister cities program.

Member Spann questioned travel restrictions to Ukraine due to the active war between Ukraine and Russia.

Mr. Spolowicz and Nayflish replied that it was safe to travel to western Ukraine, Irpin, and Kiev since the war only impacts eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Lee said that the previous committee chair Ald. Russell Stamper, II and members had previously suggested that there be a dedicated position to do sister city programming, but due to City budget constraints the sentiment has been to explore acquiring capacity outside of the City as opposed to from within it.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the 2020 annual report for the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine. There was no objection.

E. Galway, Ireland (due 3/16/20)

Appearing:

Molly Modlinski, Irish Festivals, Inc. (Celtic MKE)

Mike Mitchell, Irish Festivals, Inc. (Celtic MKE)

Ms. Modlinski and Mr. Mitchell gave an overview of the 2020 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. Irish Fest in 2019 had the City of Galway as its main showcase where 20 delegates from Galway came to Milwaukee. The fest also had musical acts and cooking demonstrations among other things.

Mike had gone to Galway back in January 2020. Their organization also has routinely gone to Galway to present at schools there. Galway was selected as the European capital city for 2020, was going to have an international festival there, but cancelled the festival due to the global pandemic. The pandemic had caused a reduction of travel to Galway.

Member Tovar questioned Irish Fest for 2020.

Ms. Modlinski and Mr. Mitchell replied that the festival would be a virtual one with the theme "Milwaukee Irish Fest at Home", be held August 13 through 16, 2020, and garner a more global audience due to its virtual nature.

Member Durtka moved approval of the 2020 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. There was no objection.

F. Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea (due 5/6/20)

Mr. Lee commented. The 2020 annual report was submitted for the sister city relationship with Daegu Metropolitan City. Ms. Elizabeth Hittman from the Environmental Collaboration Office is the point person and could not attend the meeting. The local sponsor is the Water Council. The sister city relationship is primarily focused around fresh water technology exchange and delegation visits to each city's water summits.

Member Durtka moved to hold to the call of the chair, seconded by member Tovar, the 2020 annual report for the sister city relationship with Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea due to nonappearance. There was no objection.

7. Review of the status of sister city relationships.

A. Tema, Ghana (agreement signing and ceremony)

Appearing:

Martin Oduro, Ghana Milwaukee Association, Inc.

Mr. Oduro gave an update. The global pandemic has restricted travel in Tema. Once travel is opened up again and the pandemic has subsided, then Tema officials can resume setting a date to participate in a signing ceremony here in Milwaukee. They are still working on a number of other things. Port training has been put on hold as well.

B. Other

There was no other discussion.

8. Discussion on sister city related events and activities.

A. Holiday Folk Fair (2019 and 2020)

Appearing:

Arlisia McHenry, Common Council President's Office

Ms. McHenry gave an update. She had organized the sister city booth at the fair last year, which was the third consecutive year. The booth exhibit was successful with volunteers and displays of the sister cities. She is no longer in her previous position to do city events and has moved on to serve the Common Council President's office; however, she would be willing to volunteer in future activities such as this one.

Member Durtka commented. There is uncertainty about the 2020 fair. His organization organizes the fair and will make a decision soon on whether it would be held or not.

B. Meet-and-greet

Ms. McHenry gave an update. She was not able to plan the meet-and-greet event due to the pandemic. She would be willing to volunteer for such an event in the future. Further discussion with Chair Rainey would be needed to figure out how to proceed with the event in her absence as the organizer.

Mr. Mitchell said that Irish Fest would still be open to be the venue host.

Ms. Thompson Mosore and member Tovar said that the event should occur next spring 2021, that the event should not be a virtual one, and that the purpose of the event was to bring everyone together.

C. Sister Cities International annual conference

Mr. Durtka gave an update. The conference was a virtual one that occurred in early July. It was a success with over 1000 attendees over two days with a more international audience. He attended the conference, all board meetings, and sessions. A new chairperson, Carl Lopez, was appointed for Sister Cities International. Several new initiatives came out of the conference such as one to collectively better coordinate, connect, and improve efforts for African-based sister city relationships.

Member Spann added comments. He, too, attended the conference. Lana Johnson is the lead behind the African-based sister cities new initiative. He was invited to an upcoming virtual meeting regarding the new initiative and can invite the local sponsors of Milwaukee's African-based sister city relationships to participate in this meeting.

D. Other

Ms. Thompson Mosore said that there needed to be more awareness of Milwaukee's sister cities.

Member Durtka commented. The sister city booth exhibit at the Holiday Folk Fair was one way to better help promote the sister cities. Everyone should look at new ways to further promote the sister cities.

9. Review and approval of the Sister Cities Committee 2019 Annual Report.

Mr. Lee said that the report highlighted the meetings and activities of the committee in 2019. Main activities included approval to establish a new sister city relationship with Tema (Ghana), renewal of the sister city relationships with Galway (Ireland) and Medan (Indonesia), termination of the sister city relationship with uMhlathuze (South Africa) due to inactivity, the addition of Dr. Sanjib Bhattacharyya to the committee as a new member, and discussion to promote and add capacity to the City's sister city program and relationships.

Member Spann moved approval, seconded by member Tovar, of the 2019 Sister Cities Committee annual report. There was no objection.

10. Announcements.

Mr. Lee was commended for his assistance to the committee and sister city relationships.

Chair Rainey was welcomed for being the new chair of the committee.

11. Agenda items for the next meeting.

To be determined, including items that were held by the committee.

12. Set next meeting date and time.

Next quarterly meeting to be determined for September or October. There was sentiment to hold meetings for Thursday mornings, if possible.

13. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

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