



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR

Al Durtka, Tyler Weber, Oscar Tovar, and Bruce Spann

Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,

clee@milwaukee.gov

Legislative Liaison Gunner Raasch, 414-286-3467,

Gunner.Raasch@milwaukee.gov

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

1:00 PM

Virtual 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/608703237>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (646) 749-3122 and Access Code: 608-703-237.

1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

2. Roll call.

Present 5 - Durtka, Tovar, Stamper, Spann, Weber

Also present:

Gunner Raasch, Legislative Reference Bureau liaison to the committee

Deborah Moore, Events and Outreach Coordinator (City Clerk's Office)

Anya Verkhovskaya, Friends of Be an Angel, Inc.

Boris Nayflish

David Mugun

Christine Thompson-Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation, Inc.

Sequanna Taylor, Milwaukee County 5th District Supervisory, MPS School Board

Nevenka Bralic, Federation of Croatian Societies, Inc.

Mark Denning, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Melissa Ward, Irish Festivals Inc. dba CelticMKE

Miso "Mike" Jovic, St. Sava Cathedral Board President/JMB Trucking CEO

Stefan Dostanic, Milwaukee Deputy County Clerk

Very Reverend Radomir M. Cutilo, St. Sava Cathedral & Orthodox School Dean

Mile Sasich, Retired International Economic Development Manager

Rose Sasich, Retired Northwestern Mutual Officer/St. Sava Cathedral Board Member

LaTonya Baker, Generation of Excellence Trendsetters CEO

3. Introduction of new membership.

Member Weber was introduced as a new member representing the Milwaukee Health

Department as Interim Commissioner.

4. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from November 2, 2022.

The meeting minutes from November 2, 2022 were approved without objection.

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

Ms. Verkhovskaya and Mr. Nayflish commented. They were submitting application to renew the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine for another 5 years with Friends of Be an Angel, Inc. as the new local sponsor. Main recent activities under Friends of Be an Angel, Inc. and the relationship has revolved on organizing and distributing aide and support to local refugees and to Ukraine abroad due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. Medical supplies, food, fire fighter gear, and 1700 generators have been collected and sent to Ukraine. The generators were collected in partnership with the Rotary Club and Briggs & Stratton. There was a warehouse in Chicago that was being used to collect and ship supplies as well as to treat ill children. Social services support was being provided to the local refugee community.

Member Durtka inquired about the number of directors serving on the board of Friends of Be an Angel, Inc., and said that of importance was to build up and increase board membership.

Member Spann said that he would be interested to meet civil engineers from Irpin that may have come to Milwaukee.

Ms. Verkhovskaya said that board membership was at 3 presently including herself due to the focus on crisis management; the organization would now be focused on sustainability, expansion, and increasing its board; and she would soon travel to Ukraine.

Member Weber commended the bravery of everyone involved in assisting or fighting for Irpin and Ukraine.

Mr. Lee said that the previous local nonprofit sponsor was St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church which they no longer was able to continue as the local sponsor going forward, that the committees recommendation on the renewal of the sister city relationship would be followed by the Common Council adoption process via legislation, and that the next opportunity was for the matter to be scheduled for the Community and Economic Development Committee meeting on April 26, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the renewal application to extend the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine with Friends of Be an Angel, Inc. as the local nonprofit sponsor. There was no objection.

6. Review and approval of sister city relationship annual reports.

A. Bomet County, Kenya (due 11/11/22)

Mr. Mungun discussed the 2022 annual report for the sister city relationship with Bomet County, Kenya. A focus has been to open the channels between the sponsors from

each city to work towards collaboration. Bomet continued to seek support from Milwaukee. Activities have included participation in the Holiday Folk Fair sister cities booth and supplying sanitary pads to school girls in Bomet to help them stay in school. Exporting of avocados from Bomet and Kenya remains to Milwaukee remains a great opportunity that has yet to materialize. There was a recent drought, but avocado was being exported to the United States in other areas.

Members discussed federal agricultural inspection of exporting avocado to Milwaukee may be a challenge or has yet to be resolved, for there to be thought of exporting an easier product to Milwaukee alternatively, and for Port Milwaukee to be engaged on their possible assistance. Also, there should be engagement with Milwaukee Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection and the Milwaukee World Trade Association.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Tovar of the 2022 annual report for the sister city relationship with Bomet County, Kenya. There was no objection.

B. Tarime District, Tanzania (due 12/11/22)

Ms. Thompson-Mosore gave a presentation on the 2022 annual report for the sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania. Mosorec International Foundation, Inc. (MIF) is the local sponsor in both cities and is situated in both locations. Mutual interest for both cities would include collaboration, connection, community engagement, cultural and educational opportunities, and economic opportunities. The Milwaukee community has focused its attention to support the community in Tarime while Tarime has focused its attention to learn and receive support from Milwaukee. Through MIF, main activities have been providing support to the Tarime community, school children, youths, and young adults with a community building gathering place, chairs, educational books, transportation, school uniforms, job opportunities, musical instruments, and agricultural training. There was support to empower women and girls in Tarime. She had helped to provide or connect a local Tarime woman to supplies to restart her business that had been destroyed from a big marketplace fire in Tarime. There was support, collaboration, and involvement with HEMAD and HEMAD events in Milwaukee to fight human trafficking. The MIF community also has participated in the Holiday Folk Fair sister cities booth. Future MIF goals were to increase access to education in Tarime with building additional classrooms, chairs, and desks for students; implement cultural exchange and a MIF cultural center; and arrange a trip to Tanzania for 2023 or 2024.

Chair Stamper inquired about the marketplace fire and the costs associated with the community center in Tarime.

Ms. Thompson-Mosore replied. She did not know the exact costs but the community center building was affordable with using wood. She personally gave money for business supplies, entrepreneurship training, and school supplies to the woman whose stall was burnt in the Tarime marketplace fire.

Sup. Taylor said she would connect offline with Ms. Thompson-Mosore with regards to human trafficking prevention.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the 2022 annual report for the sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania. There was no objection.

C. Zadar, Croatia (due 1/27/23)

Ms. Bralic discussed the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia. Due to both cities featuring major bodies of water, the main activity has been centered on water health and establishing a cohort of elementary schools from both cities to have their students conduct water analysis. Part of the water analysis would involve STEM mechanisms, POU analysis on saturated filter, and simple techniques. There was ongoing effort to get a MoU with Milwaukee Public Schools. The preference was to do the project at an elementary academic level prior to working at higher levels with agencies such as The Water Council.

Chair Stamper asked Sup. Taylor to follow-up with Milwaukee Public Schools on their collaboration on this project.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia. There was no objection.

D. Irpin, Ukraine (due 2/1/23)

Ms. Verkhovskaya and Mr. Boris discussed the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine. Much has been said already when presenting the renewal application. To add, Irpin was working on rebuilding its city with 70% of the city being destroyed. Money (desired about is \$1 billion) and materials were being sought for the rebuild with \$200 million already gathered. 65% of critical infrastructure was rebuilt. The focus was not to rebuild the residential infrastructure. The population was slowly returning back to the city. A book entitled "Battle of Irpin" authored by Petro Shcherbyna was being gifted to the City of Milwaukee. Ms. Boris visited Irpin 2.5 months ago, and Ms. Verkhovskaya will travel to Ukraine in a month.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Weber, of the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine. There was no objection.

E. Galway, Ireland (due 3/16/23)

Ms. Ward discussed the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. The relationship stemmed from 1993 and 1997. Irish Fest in 2022 saw a delegation of 10 Galway representatives visit Milwaukee. There was a reception last year to receive the delegates last year with city officials. Galway Bay FM radio host Keith Finnegan remains as the principal in Galway for the relationship. His team recently did a radio documentary in Ireland on Irish Fest and the sister city relationship. International folk music artists We Banjo 3 returned to perform at Irish Fest and taught at the CelticMKE summer school. CelticMKE also partnered with and recorded videos of Milwaukee Bucks player Pat Connaughton, on Irish culture and his Irish heritage. CelticMKE was part of the Association of Irish and Celtic Festivals Conference, and the association will hold their 2023 conference in Galway. Milwaukee Iris Fest for 2023 will be from August 17-20.

Member Weber moved approval, seconded by member Durtka, of the 2023 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. There was no objection.

7. Discussion, update, review and/or motion(s) on establishing sister city relationships.*A. Tema, Ghana*

Representatives from the local sponsoring organization, Ghana-Milwaukee Association, Inc., were not present.

Mr. Lee said that the sister cities signing ceremony between the two cities was to be postponed again and to be determined due to the Tema delegation having travel/scheduling conflicts. The option of having a virtual ceremony and signing of the agreements was entertained in the past; however, Tema expressed the interest for an in-person process.

Members discussed that travel and obtaining VISAs were an issue for Ghana, any travel issues has delayed making the sister city relationship official, holding a virtual signing ceremony could be entertained, in-person would be more ideal/preferred still, and for members and/or other participants of influence to directly work with state and federal entities to assist Tema delegates in acquiring VISA approval for travel.

Sup. Taylor added that the Tema delegation was trying to align a visit to Milwaukee with their other destinations elsewhere in the United States.

Members Stamper, Tovar, Spann and Sup. Taylor said they would like to help directly in contacting proper state/federal officials on the VISA travel issue.

B. Kragujevac, Serbia

Mr. Jovic, Dostanic, Rev. Cutilo, Mr. and Mrs. Sasich gave an introductory presentation regarding the opportunity to establish a sister city relationship with Kragujevac, Serbia as follows:

Kragujevac is Serbia's heartland located in the country's center, 100 km south of Belgrade on the banks of the Lepenica River, and is rich in natural beauty and history. The city is the 4th largest city in the country with a population of 171,628 covering 835 square kilometers, and is the center of Sumadija region characterized by rolling hills and fertile orchards.

Kragujevac's history involved first human settlements back 40,000 years, Romans and Illyrians living there until the arrival of Slavs, Ottoman Empire rule for almost 500 years, being declared Serbia's capital in May 1818, adoption of its first constitution in the Balkans in 1838, resistance to German occupation during World War II, and the largest rescue operation of downed American Airmen in history known as Operation Halyard. The city has Sumarice Memorial Park in remembrance of the Kragujevac massacre, which saw an estimated 2,800 men and boys massacred by German occupation forces during World War II.

Kragujevac has been an important industrial and trade center for Serbia for more than two centuries, first in the 1840s, and is known for its automotive and firearms industries. Johnson Controls produces car seats and interiors in the city. The city has one of Serbia's 14 free economic zones established there as of September 2017. Kragujevac has 22 primary and 8 secondary schools and the University of Kragujevac as the country's 4th largest university.

Milwaukee has a large Serbian population with cultural and religious connections to Kragujevac. Those connections would include Serbian Orthodox Church (built in 1912) in Milwaukee, folk dancing (KUD Abrasevic), museums, libraries, and 9 international festivals.

Member Durtka said that he was working with the church on this proposal, the presentation was only an introduction, and that all parties were aware of the next steps in the process.

Mr. Lee said that a local nonprofit sponsor would need to identified and submit a letter of intent to the commitment as the next step.

C. Other

There was no other discussion.

8. Discussion, update, review and/or motion(s) on sister city related events or activities.

A. SCI South African Summit

Chair Stamper, member Spann, Sup. Taylor, and Ms. Baker discussed their summit experience in Cape Town, South Africa. They all enjoyed their time there, met numerous important officials and dignitaries (including kings and princes), networked, and participated in many important events and speaking sessions.

Chair Stamper commented. While there, he learned that Milwaukee was a leader in having the most number of sister cities in the United States. The next closest was San Antonio. South Africa was looking to establish diplomacy in Milwaukee and a partnership with the NBA and the Milwaukee Bucks. He also met the daughter of Nelson Mandela and drank wine. Everyone spoke highly of member Durtka there. He was offered an opportunity to serve on the Sister Cities International Board. He enjoyed the gala event and the last day of celebration.

Member Spann commented. Ms. Lorna Johnson from Sister Cities International made the summit a reality. Having the presence of local elected officials from Milwaukee there was important. As previously mentioned, an important collaboration with the United States is the establishment and support of Africa Basketball League. The league has many notable investors and has Dwayne Wade's son on a team in Cape Town. Some notable experiences included a private reception at a consul general's home and hearing from many guest speakers such as from the South African ambassador. Sister Cities International has the goal to establish 500 new sister city relationship in Africa.

Ms. Baker commented. Her company helped to launch prenatal centers, an arts center, and duplicate prenatal services in South Africa. Services involved addressing pregnancies and barriers, counseling, education on diseases, support services, virtual job trainings, housing support, and community gardens.

Sup. Taylor commented. She was interested in visiting schools, establishing scholarships for students, and establishing student exchanges for sister city relationships. There was interest to establish a sister city relationship between Milwaukee and South Africa.

Member Durtka said that the president and CEO of Sister Cities International had resigned and the organization was in a transition of change.

B. Holiday Folk Fair

Members (led by member Durtka), Ms. Moore, and Ms. Thompson-Mosore discussed

the 79th annual Holiday Folk Fair being a success with between 42,000 to 45,000 guests attending, the fair being the first time back in-person, there being many participants including the Ukrainian community with food, that the sister cities booth location this year was also a good location, the booth engaged many visitors, that future locations for the booth would likely change, and different booth locations would benefit in bringing a different mix of visitors.

Staff and volunteers were commended for their contributions and time staffing the sister cities booth.

C. Meet-and-greet

Ms. Moore and Thompson-Mosore said that they planned to meet, with clerk staff Mr. Lee, on this event and would provide further updates in the future.

D. Other

There was no other discussion.

9. Review and approval of the 2022 Sister Cities Committee annual report.

Mr. Lee said that the annual report was required by City ordinance and summarized the meetings and activities of the sister cities committee as well as the status and activities of the sister city relationships. Main takeaways from the 2022 report include changes in committee membership with the additions of members Ald. Russell Stamper, II and previous Health Commissioner Kirsten Johnson, termination of the sister city relationship with Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea due to inactivity and lack of sponsorship/community support, the sister cities booth at the 2022 Holiday Folk Fair, and continued discussions on sister city programming, promotion, and additional capacity.

Mr. Lee was commended on the report and his assistance to the committee.

Member Tovar moved approval, seconded by member Durtka, of the Sister Cities Committee 2022 Annual Report. There was no objection.

10. Public comments or announcements.

There were no public comments and announcements made.

11. Next steps.

A. Agenda items for the next meeting

To be determined.

B. Set next meeting date and time

To be determined for late June or early July.

12. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

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