



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALDERMAN JOE DAVIS, SR., CHAIR
Al Durka, Eric Gass, Leslie Silletti, and Charles Vang
Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,
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Legislative Liaison: Amy Hefter, 286-2290,
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Monday, November 3, 2014

9:00 AM

Room 301-B, Third Floor, City Hall

Meeting convened at 9:15 a.m.

Present 3 - Davis, Silletti, Durka

Absent 1 - Vang

Excused 1 - Gass

1. Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes from September 15, 2014.

Mr. Durka moved approval, seconded by Ms. Silletti, of the minutes from September 15, 2014. There were no objections.

2. Review of the Application Relative to Establishing a Sister City Relationship with Zadar, Croatia.

Individuals appearing:

*Paul Lucas, Federation of Croatian Societies Inc. of Milwaukee
Damir Braovac, Federation of Croatian Societies Inc. of Milwaukee*

Committee members reviewed a sister city relationship application for Zadar, Croatia, submitted by Mr. Lucas and his nonprofit organization as the local sponsor. The application is contained within Common Council File Number 140088.

Mr. Lucas said that there are three different nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the City of Zadar as part of this relationship. Three organizations were chosen instead of one to prevent alienation of one organization from another and to best resemble the umbrella federation organization in the City of Milwaukee.

Ms. Silletti questioned accountability among the three Zadar NGOs?

Mr. Lucas replied that the NGOs do not anticipate any issues since the local Zadar municipality would be the leading force behind the relationship. The Zadar municipality has positive relationships with all three organizations.

Ald. Davis requested the contact information of the point person in Zadar as well as contacts from the Zadar NGOs. He added that this relationship should bear fruit in the manufacturing, industrial, and cultural sectors.

Mr. Lucas responded that he will forward to clerk staff the requested contact

information. The point person in Zadar is City Administrator to the Mayor, Anita Grzan Martinovic.

Mr. Durtka moved approval, seconded by Ms. Silletti, of the sister city relationship application for Zadar, Croatia as presented. There were no objections. Excused was Mr. Gass. Absent was Mr. Vang.

3. Review of Bomet County, Kenya Relative to a Friendly Exchange or Establishing a Sister City Relationship.

Individuals appearing:

Fessahaye Mebrahtu, Pan African Community Association (PACA)

Alice Kones

David Mugun

Bernadette Karanja, Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board Inc.

Ald. Davis said that it should be clarified as to whether the intent is to pursue a friendly exchange or sister city relationship application and whether the relationship is for the City of Bomet or Bomet County. At a previous meeting regarding this matter, the NGO in Bomet County was not identified. The committee at that time moved for a friendly exchange; however, a recent ordinance change requires an application process for a friendly exchange relationship. The matter is being revisited to clarify what application should be extended. Since the previous meeting on the matter, a Kenyan delegation and the governor of Bomet County had made a visit with him and other City representatives in Milwaukee. Invitations were extended to members of that visitation.

Mr. Mebrahtu said that the NGO in Bomet County is the Bomet Development Trust under the directorship of Bill Rutto from the County Government of Bomet.

Mr. Mugun said that the governor of Bomet County recently lost his only daughter. The governor supports a sister city relationship.

Ms. Kones said that the interest is to establish a sister city relationship.

Mr. Durtka was concerned with whether or not there was a strong Kenyan community group spearheading the effort, whether or not that Kenyan group has a hierarchy with nonprofit status, and the accountability of the relationship. Successful sister city relationships usually involve multiple NGOs due to the tremendous amount of work associated with a relationship. If efforts are from individuals, the fear is that the relationship will lack accountability and progress, and fail when those individuals are no longer in place. He asked for more detailed information regarding the Kenyan group behind the initiative, their leadership, and point person.

Mr. Mebrahtu said that PACA is working with the Kenyan community, which will be responsible for the delivery and accountability of a sister city relationship. PACA has board members who are Kenyans and involved in this effort. PACA will be the fiscal agent as the Kenyan group does not have nonprofit status. There will be a coordinator for the Kenyan group. The goal of PACA is to empower the local diaspora community to be engaged and become the bridge between sister cities.

Ms. Kones said that the Kenyan presence in Milwaukee is strong, supports the sister city relationship initiative, and helped host the governor of Bomet County when he recently visited.

Mr. Mugun said that the Kenyan group is called Kenyans of Milwaukee. The group is

a social group, still organizing, and not ready to apply for nonprofit status.

Ald. Davis said that the preference is to have direct relationships between NGOs instead of fiscal agents for a group of people. If successful, this proposed relationship will be the third sister city relationship under PACA. After a while, the appropriateness of having one sponsor to many relationships would have to be questioned. Accountability is the main concern. Whoever is spearheading the effort, they will have to provide annual reports and inform the committee of benchmarks, progress, activities, delegate visits, business exchanges, and cultural exchanges of the relationship. The independence of the Kenya committee group is the eventual goal that should be achieved.

Ms. Silletti said that each of PACA's sister city relationships should be different and unique from each other.

Mr. Mebrahtu said that PACA celebrates differences with eight different countries represented by its staff. There is a mutual benefit with PACA and the local communities. PACA enables the process while the local community is on the ground doing the work. PACA has Khay Khong assigned to the sister city relationship with Medan, Indonesia. Mr. Mugun and Ms. Kones are assigned to the relationship with Bomet County.

Ms. Silletti requested more information regarding the Bomet Development Trust and its composition, goals, and duration of existence.

Ald. Davis said that if an extension of an application is given, thorough information with narratives should be given with the names of participants as well as explanation of how the relationship will evolve.

Ald. Davis questioned the government structure of Bomet County relative to whether or not it is a provincial government equating to a state or a government equating to a municipality? The focus for a sister city relationship should be on the City of Bomet. Milwaukee County and its sister cities program may be more fitting for Bomet County. The City of Milwaukee has not had a sister city relationship with a county before. Sister city relationships with Milwaukee have been between mayors thus far.

Ms. Kones said that the recent devolution change in Kenya has produced county governments that preside over both the county itself and the villages or towns within a county's boundaries. Bomet County has representatives from its small villages and towns.

Mr. Mugun said that the cities under Bomet County do not have municipal leaders, mayors, or governments anymore. The county government equates to a hybrid of state and county government but does not equate to a state as defined in the United States. The City of Bomet is a small town of about 15,000 people. Bomet County is about 500,000 people.

Ms. Karanja said that the devolution in Kenya divided the Kenyan terrain from provinces into counties to better reflect the different ethnic and tribal groups. Kenyan counties do not equate to the counties as defined in the United States. Kenyan counties are provincial governments that are semi autonomous. Governors do report to the Kenyan president. The counties are built to help development, especially areas with little economic development. Bomet County has a strong agriculture set up with cash crops such as tea, but its farms are still small compared to farms in the United States.

Mr. Mebrahtu and Ms. Karanja both stated that PACA and the Kenyan community will do more research regarding the government structure of Bomet County.

Ald. Davis asked Ms. Hefter to also assist in providing some research on the government structure of Bomet County and if it is a good fit for the City of Milwaukee.

Mr. Durtka moved to hold this matter for further research and information regarding the government structure of Bomet County. There were no objections. Excused was Mr. Gass. Absent was Mr. Vang.

Ms. Kones added that she knows of two successful sister city relationships between two Kenyan counties and two cities in the United States.

Ms. Hefter said that she had contacted Sister Cities International. An intern responded to her that a city and a county can have a sister city relationship with each other as long as there is a very clear agreement and the population of both areas are comparable to each other.

Ald. Davis said that it is important to make sure that the government structures of Bomet County and the City of Milwaukee are similar and compatible with each other. He added that the committee may entertain another meeting in December before the holidays on the matter if the requested information is submitted timely. Perhaps an application can be extended at the next meeting to be completed and brought back to the committee at the start of the new year.

4. Update on Medan, Indonesia Sister City Relationship and Activities.

Ms. Silletti said that she was impressed with the efforts and follow through made by the Indonesian consulate office from Chicago to establish a sister city relationship between Medan and Milwaukee. The consulate office was able to network with various people, hold a business forum, and visited Milwaukee several times. There was recently a great Indonesian delegation tour and sister city relationship signing ceremony in Milwaukee. There were about twenty Indonesian delegates, including the mayor of Medan and high governmental officials, during this recent tour in Milwaukee.

Mr. Durtka gave comments. He was impressed with the number of individuals engaged with the sister city relationship between Milwaukee and Medan and the coordination that took place. He was concerned about the cultural aspect of the relationship due to the limited amount of Indonesian community in the Milwaukee area. The relationship is off to a positive start with business and education exchanges taking place, but the challenge will be to integrate cultural exchange. Having involvement or at least some type of communication of support from a consulate office improves accountability, credibility, and success for the successful sister relationships that he has seen.

Ald. Davis offered further comments. He participated in a recent Indonesian trade exposition trip to Indonesia. The trade expo had over 60,000 delegates from throughout the world in the areas of manufacturing, textile, and industry. During the trip, he was able to visit a number of textile industries. The trip resulted in a memorandum of understanding being established between the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and the University of Sumatra for a student exchange program. There is a proposal on the table dealing with construction and freshwater. There is opportunity to work directly with the consulate general office to progress the relationship culturally and economically. He was encouraged with presentations and offerings that were given to the Indonesian delegates during their trip to Milwaukee.

Those seeking sister city relationships do benefit from having support and involvement from the consulate general offices, but sometimes that do not occur. However, they should be encouraged to reach out to the embassies and consulates of those countries that they are seeking a sister city relationship with.

5. Review of the Application Form for a Friendly Exchange Relationship.

Mr. Lee said that he created the friendly exchange application form for the committee to review and approve. The new changes to the ordinance require an application process for a friendly exchange relationship equating to the application process for a sister city relationship. The new application mirrors a sister city relationship application with the term "friendly exchange" replacing the term "sister city". There is currently no application form for a friendly exchange relationship.

Mr. Durka moved approval, seconded by Ms. Silletti, of the friendly exchange relationship new application form. There were no objections. Excused was Mr. Gass. Absent was Mr. Vang.

The "Friendly Exchange Relationship Application Form" approved by the committee can be found within Common Council File Number 131540.

6. New Business for Future Discussion.

There was no new business for future discussion.

7. Set Next Meeting Date and Time.

The next meeting will be set based on the submission of requested materials regarding Bomet County, Kenya.

Meeting adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

Chris Lee, Staff Assistant