



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR

**Colleen Cheney-Trawinski, Al Durtka, Adamaris Penaloza and
Aaron Szopinski**

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Wednesday, September 25, 2024

10:00 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

This is also 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/319810781>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (646) 749-3122 and Access Code: 319-810-781.

1. Call to order.

Meeting called to order at 10 a.m.

2. Roll call.

Present 4 - Durtka, Stamper, Cheney-Trawinski, Penaloza

Excused 1 - Szopinski

Also present:

*Anya Verkhovskaya, Friends of Be An Angel, Inc.
Boris Nayflish, Friends of Be An Angel, Inc.
Dr. Christine Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation, Inc.
Dr. Dele Ojelabi, Milwaukee Action Network
Dr. Francis Obuseh, Milwaukee Action Network
Stefan Dostanic, St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral
Miroslav Mike Jovic, St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral
Amelia Bursi, Irish Fest, Inc. dba CelticMKE
Deborah Moore, City Clerk's Office*

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from July 25, 2024.

Meeting minutes from July 25, 2024 were approved without objection.

4. Discussion, review, update(s), and/or motion(s) relating to current and/or prospective sister city relationship with regards to their establishment, status, activities, and/or termination.

a. Tema, Ghana termination

Mr. Lee commented. The committee wanted to entertain terminating the relationship lacking any response from the local sponsoring organization, Ghana-Milwaukee Association Inc. Representatives have been notified to respond to the committee on their commitment to the relationship, but they have been nonresponsive for the better of two years. The relationship has been pending a signed agreement ceremony since 2019.

Member Durtka said that he was aware of some educational efforts regarding the relationship and that most of the leadership had left Milwaukee.

Dr. Ojelabi said that the previous representatives leading the organization had moved to Chicago.

Chair Ald. Stamper said that the termination of the relationship would not impact a new application being made in the future.

Member Durtka moved to recommend termination, seconded by member Cheney-Trawinski, of the sister city relationship with Tema, Ghana due to the lack of local sponsorship, lack of community support, and inactivity. There was no objection.

b. Other

Dr. Mosore gave an update on activities for the sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania. There was the Mosorec International Global Experience: 2024 Summer Student Exchange Program-Trip to Tanzania, East African from August 22 to 24, 2024. They took 8 high school students from different schools there where they visited many places, local schools there, engaged locals and students there, and donated items there. Funding for these students were made in-kind by family, friends, sponsors, and donation from her MIF foundation. There is plans to alternate and establish a trip next year to bring students from Tanzania to Milwaukee, ideally to attend and participate in next year's Tanzania Day in Milwaukee. Further support and sponsorship was needed from the committee for next year's trip. Students who completed this year's trip would be presenting their experiences with families, on social media, and at this year's Tanzania Day.

Chair Ald. Stamper asked for Dr. Mosore to get together with Dr. Ojelabi and himself offline to assist Dr. Ojelabi on establishing student exchange activities for the sister city relationship with Abuja, Nigeria.

Dr. Mosore continued. She had been in the past virtually and will participate in sharing out information regarding the local sister city activities with Tarime District to the Convention of Tanzanian Diaspora in America later this month of September, which is being held in Austin, Texas. Tanzania Day would take place again in November to commemorate the 8th anniversary date of the relationship. The date of the ceremony would be determined between November 9 to the 12th at Milwaukee City Hall Rotunda. There would be a program, entertainment, and food/refreshments similar to last year's event. Support was needed from the City to create a flyer/program graphic for the event and also towards food, if possible. She would like for chair Ald. Stamper to participate in the program.

Chair Ald. Stamper said for Dr. Mosore to forward to him and Ms. Moore further information regarding the event.

Mr. Dostanic said that they had no new updates on the sister city relationship with Kragujevac, Serbia. They would soon detail their activities in their upcoming annual report. They have been busy with summer events, especially with Serbian Days and an international soccer tournament.

Dr. Obuseh and Dr. Ojelabi provided an update. Planning was ongoing for a Nigeria delegation trade trip and student exchange. They needed the mayor's office to help connect them with the fire chief on any available fire equipment donations and skills training that can be given to Abuja.

Member Penaloza asked for further information to be given to her.

Ms. Bursi gave an update. Irish Fest was held in August and was a success. Galway officials, including the ambassador, visited Milwaukee officials on August 16, 2024 during that time. They would participate in the upcoming Holiday Folk Fair sister cities booth. There were plans to take a trip to Galway, visit officials there, and partake in activities there.

5. Review and/or approval of the sister city relationship annual reports.

a. Irpin, Ukraine 2024 annual report (due 6/15/24)

Mr. Lee said that the committee requested for a revised annual report to detail local activities between the cities as opposed to the broad national and international activities of the organization.

Ms. Verkhovskaya and Mr. Nayflish presented a revised annual report and on local activities between the cities in 2023. There was delegation exchange with both mayors holding their 3rd collaborative discussion on June 27, 2023 virtually. They discussed mutual projects and initiatives, such as the donation of children's books to Milwaukee and possible mural installation at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport. Cultural exchange included the donation of 100 children's books from Irpin to the Milwaukee Public Library and celebration of Ukrainian Independence Day on August 24, 2023. The raising of the national flag of Ukraine in Milwaukee and video message by Mayor Cavalier Johnson was shared to Irpin via media coverage there. Local community members also helped participate and volunteer at the Milwaukee Sister Cities Booth in the Holiday Folk Fair.

Humanitarian support activities in 2023 included rescuing 7 families with vulnerable children and resettling them from Irpin to Milwaukee, and helping them get treatment and medical services with hospitals. There was a co-op with the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin to support a Ukrainian child diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a rare disease. This program was ongoing, and another family was brought to Milwaukee a few days ago.

A large coalition of local business and charities helped to donate 1,715 generators to Ukraine to help provide electricity and heat there. The Rotary Club of Milwaukee helped fundraise over \$100,000. The relationship with the Rotary Club was ongoing with projects such as providing rental housing for families resettling to Milwaukee. They have a central warehouse in Milwaukee collecting and shipping of medical supplies and equipment to Irpin and Ukraine through the help of volunteers, many of which are medical professionals. There are two teams in both cities to coordinate the transport of these medical materials. There was a donation from Advanced Wireless,

Inc. of 840 Wi-Fi access points given to Irpin and Ukraine to restore internet capabilities for schools, bomb shelters, and residents free of charge.

The relationship was flourishing. Many of these activities were publicized in news articles.

Member Durtka questioned the board makeup of Friends of Be an Angel, Inc., and if there was local leadership overseeing the relationship in Milwaukee.

Ms. Verkhovskaya replied. Their organization was non-profit, headquartered in Milwaukee, operates globally with other countries, has 3 other board of directors including herself, and has further information regarding the organization explained within the annual report. Herself, Mr. Nayflish, and ten other volunteers were leading activities of the organization locally.

Member Durtka moved conditional approval, seconded by member Cheney-Trawinski of the 2024 annual report for the sister city relationship with Irpin, Ukraine contingent upon submittal of a listing of the local leadership or local chapter of Friends of Be an Angel, Inc. in Milwaukee. There was no objection.

6. Review and/or approval of a revised annual reporting form and/or questionnaire.

Mr. Lee commented. The annual report form and questionnaire was discussed at the last meeting with members providing input. The report form and questionnaire was updated to reflect the committee's desire to have the questionnaire questions specify that reported activities and progress information be based on the past year only. Also, a summary worksheet was created that can be used by the local organizations to submit along with their reports.

Mr. Lee noted that Ms. Nevenka Bralic had sent written comments expressing her opinion that the form questionnaire was too rigid and did not offer flexibility relating to format.

Members discussed. They liked the updated version but wanted it further condensed. Questions (beyond the ones asking for activities, progress, and measurable outcomes based on the past year) that asked for information regarding the local sponsorship be optional rather than required (unless there were any changes) in an effort to eliminate duplication from a sister city's original application and to condense the form questionnaire. There should be the requirement that all participants attend meetings in-person.

Dr. Mosore said that flexibility should be given on attending meetings in person and that she would like to see a subcommittee established for the sister city representatives to meet and discuss activities in an effort to shorten the meetings of the full body.

Chair Ald. Stamper commented. Reasonable exceptions can be made for in-person attendance, especially if an individual was out-of-town. As chair, he has allowed for meetings to be hybrid, but will try to switch to in-person meetings gradually. At a minimum, presenters must be in-person to present their annual reports to the committee.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Penaloza, of the worksheet and an amended annual report form and questionnaire based on members' additional

input stated earlier. There was no objection.

Mr. Jovic added that the annual report form questionnaire was proper in verifying the work of the sister city relationships.

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

a. Holiday Folk Fair

Member Durtka commented. It would be the 81st anniversary year for the fair. The fair theme was "Celebrate the Culture of Traditional Art". Dates for the fair were November 22-24, 2024. There should be better coordination for the sister cities booth with a better exhibit, better volunteer staffing coverage from all sister city communities, better equal representation of the sister cities, better allocation of space, no more mini flags handed out, and better explanation or description of cultural items displayed at the booth. The United Nations organization had requested that their booth be situated next to the sister cities booth.

Ms. Moore commented. All sister city communities should volunteer and contribute cultural items to display. Display items should try to relate to the theme of the fair in traditional artwork or craftwork. Descriptions of those items and their significance should also be provided. Display items should be dropped off to her by Thursday, November 21st at City Hall. She will create and send out a volunteer sign-up sheet to everyone.

Chair Ald. Stamper and Dr. Mosore said that they want to volunteer for Sunday 1-4pm time slot.

b. Meet-and-greet event

Ms. Moore said that it was discussed to hold the next event next spring. Possible dates were April 24, May 8, or May 15, 2025.

Chair Ald. Stamper said the event should occur after spring break and for Ms. Moore to provide an update on a chosen final date.

c. Other

There was no other discussion.

8. Public comments and/or announcements.

There was no discussion.

9. Next steps.

a. Agenda items for the next meeting

To be determined.

b. Set next meeting date and time

To be determined for early December 2024.

10. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

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