



# 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 Penalosa and  
Aaron Szopinski*  
*Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,  
clee@milwaukee.gov*  
*Legislative Liaison Gunner Raasch, 414-286-3467,  
Gunner.Raasch@milwaukee.gov*

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Thursday, March 21, 2024

10:00 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

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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/138241341>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (872) 240-3212 and Access Code: 138-241-341.

**1. Call to order.**

*Meeting called to order at 10:04 a.m.*

**2. Roll call.**

**Present** 5 - Durtka, Szopinski, Stamper, Cheney-Trawinski, Penalosa

**Also present:**

*Sharon Durtka*

**3. Introduction of new committee membership.**

*Member Penalosa was welcomed as a new member replacing Oscar Tovar as the Mayor's designee to the committee. She serves as a Community Outreach Liaison in the Mayor's Office.*

**4. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from November 7, 2023.**

*Meeting minutes from November 7, 2023 were approved without objection.*

**5. Discussion, review, and/or approval of sister city relationship applications, annual reports, and/or initiatives.**

- a. Galway Ireland
  - i. Renewal application (expires 5/23/24)
  - ii. 2024 annual report (due 3/16/24)

Appearing:

Amelia Bursi, Irish Festivals, Inc. dba Celtic MKE

Ms. Bursi gave a presentation on both the renewal application and 2024 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway.

CelticMKE was home to Milwaukee Irish Fest with the mission to promote and celebrate all aspects of Irish and Celtic cultures and heritage. CelticMKE was an umbrella organization for Milwaukee Irish Fest, School of Music, Summer School, The Ward Irish Music Archives, and Foundation. It provided year-round community, cultural, youth, and community engagements. The sister city relationship was initiated in 1993 by the Spirit of Galway group, officially recognized in 1997, and has grown with many Galway representatives visiting Milwaukee especially at their annual festival. Similarities between the cities would be cultural festivals and close proximities to major bodies of water for both cities.

Sister city goals would include increasing tourism in both cities, exchange/promote cultures of both cities, promote Irish culture throughout North America, activate CelticMKE's mission, and activate United Nations-based Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Current activities would include using their organizational connection and relationship to further their mission, develop economy, and develop tourism in Galway. CelticMKE's partnership had helped to host a successful international 2024 Association of Irish and Celtic Festivals Conference in Galway. The conference brought international exposure and attendance to Galway resulting in exposure for local artists, facilities, and Macnas Parade. It also opened further lines of communication for future parade collaboration. As a member of the UN, Ireland would work to promote and achieve UN SDG goals by 2030 for a more sustainable future in addressing various global challenges. CelticMKE would work with a Sustainability Facilitator to focus on 5 of 17 UN SDG goals of good health and well-being, quality education, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production. The heart of CelticMKE's mission was to share and promote Irish culture.

Members asked for further clarity and evidence of CelticMKE's UN SDG engagement and annual lunch with Irish officials visiting Milwaukee.

Ms. Bursi replied. They have just started their SDG goals and has met with their facilitator. Examples of activities would include promoting and using reusable cups at events concerning responsible consumption and production and offering women mental health services. They had volunteers, were looking to build their upon their goals, and promote actionable goals to their counterpart in Galway. These goals were long term, they would take small steps, and they would report further as the years go by. The annual lunch was during Irish Fest, and invites would be forwarded to the committee.

Member Penalozza moved approval of the renewal application and 2024 annual report for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. There was no objection.

b. Zadar, Croatia

i. 2024 annual report (due 1/24/24)

Appearing:

Nevenka Bralic, Federation of Croatian Societies, Inc.

Ms. Bralic gave a presentation on the 2024 annual report on the sister city relationship with Zadar. The sister city relationship became official back in May 11,

2015. Activities in the past have included The Federation's MCT dancers going to Zadar in 2018 (will travel there again this summer), participation in the UN Schools of International Learning World Fair on April 11, 2019, and participation annually in the Sister Cities booth at the Holiday Folk Fair. There was a meet-and-greet and proclamation made at Milwaukee City Hall for Ivan Marcelic Day on May 8, 2023 with Mayor Johnson recognizing Mr. Marcelic, a designated dignitary from Croatia, for his Harley Davidson motorcycle ride trip along Route 66 in the United States. Ms. Bralic was a research chemist. One ongoing project for the relationship was for a water health and lead testing project between elementary schools from both cities. The project would apply early learning through Science Technology Engineering Arts Math (STEAM). A cohort of two schools, one from each city, would run simple analytical tests, document, and digitally present to each other. She was still trying to get collaboration with Milwaukee Public Schools. A MoU was sent to the MPS superintendent in 2021 but no response has been received.

Members inquired about youth engagement, codifying goals, and setting metrics for the water health and testing project.

Ms. Bralic replied. She has not been able to achieve collaboration and was still pursuing MPS, possibly Golda Meir School. She would welcome assistance, especially from chair Stamper and Ms. Durtka. She has not established goal statements.

Ms. Durtka asked for further information to be sent to her and she would try to look into MPS.

Chair Stamper said for Ms. Bralic to contact him after spring break to examine further codifying goals.

Member Durtka and chair Stamper said that the annual reporting of each sister city should be consistent in format. Each annual report should provide specific information regarding goal setting, analysis of progress made, and measurable outcomes. Perhaps a questionnaire should be established and required for each sister city to respond to in their annual report.

Member Cheney-Trawinski moved approval of the 2024 annual report for the sister city relationship with Zadar, Croatia. There was no objection.

- c. Bomet County, Kenya
  - i. 2023 annual report (due 11/11/23)
  - ii. Avocado farming initiative

Appearing:  
David Mugun

Mr. Mugun gave a presentation on the 2023 annual report and the avocado farming initiative for the sister city relationship with Bomet County.

The sister city relationship became official in 2015. The Milwaukee African Women's Association (MILAWA) was the local sponsor for Milwaukee, and Strategies for Peace, Education, Research and Development (SPERD) would be the counterpart in Bomet. A key initiative has been providing clean drinking water in Sigowet Village in Bomet. A borehole was drilled in the village through collaboration with the Rotary Club; however, filtration was still needed, as the high fluoride water was not fit for consumption. It would cost \$15,000 to \$30,000 to install filtration. Other activities have included promoting tourism in Kenya, cultural exchange, and student exchange

*between the cities.*

*Avocado farming and export from Bomet East and Narok South was an initiative they would like to see a market for in Milwaukee and the United States. Avocado farming started in 2016 in Bomet with an initial support of 40 seedlings. Out of 200 farmers, 54 were currently harvesting avocados. The number was expected to increase to 100 by 2025. In Kenya there was the formation of Cooperative Societies (SACCO) with three groups (Limotiok, Chemaner, Kaparuso). Harvesting would occur twice a year during peak time (April – June) and off season (December – February). Export would involve a MoU with exporters. Current rates would be known via Google. Challenges to avocado farming would include effects of climate change, pests, predators, unreliable exporters, market fluctuation, and limited experts/knowledge. Benefits to avocado farming would include improved economic status, opportunity for children to go to school, regional collaboration and networking, and expansion of avocado farming and farmers. Call for action would include sourcing for steady market and buyers, engaging trained agronomists, and negotiating minimum price to yield high profits, increased production, and improved livelihoods.*

*Members inquired about further assistance towards clean drinking water and avocado export in Bomet and student exchange that has occurred.*

*Mr. Mugun replied. There has been no further assistance to install water filtration due to limited local resources in Bomet. The filtration issue has existed for over 5 years. There had been two students going to Bomet from Milwaukee and close to 10 students coming to Milwaukee from Bomet. They would like to see student exchange activity increased and be more mutual going forward. Bomet lacked an avocado market in Milwaukee and the United States, and further assistance to find a market in Milwaukee or elsewhere was desired. There was avocado trade between Europe and Kenya, but not for the United States.*

*Member Durtka said that avocado trade to Milwaukee may not be sustainable, if achieved.*

*Nick Powell, appeared and gave public comment. The Chamber of Commerce may provide food security guidance. He could be contacted to offer some guidance on water filtration through his experience in doing boreholes in Tema, Ghana.*

*Member Cheney-Trawinski added that she could also be contacted to offer guidance on water filtration through her nonprofit experience in doing boreholes as well.*

*Member Durtka moved approval of the 2023 annual report on the sister city relationship with Bomet County. There was no objection.*

*Member Cheney-Trawinski left the meeting at 11:11 a.m.*

*d. Tarime District, Tanzania*

- i. 2023 annual report (due 12/11/23)*
- ii. Summer student exchange program (August 2024)*

*Appearing:*

*Dr. Christine Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation, Inc.*

*Dr. Mosore gave a presentation on the 2023 annual report and summer student exchange program for the sister city relationship with Tarime District. Her foundation was based in both cities, where the Milwaukee branch supports the branch and community in Tarime. Activities have included ongoing providing of education and*

school supplies for both boys and girls in Tarime, providing clean safe drinking water for the school and entire village in Tarime with a water well (drilled in 2017) and water tank (catch rain water), working towards the installation of an electric generator (as opposed to solar which was not strong enough) to pump water during the dry season when there would not be enough water, providing of musical instruments to the village and church in Tarime, and the hiring and training of youths in Tarime to install the electric generator and use of musical instruments. There has been projects to empower girls and women in Tarime. She recently visited Tarime this winter, met with a group of local women, donated items to them, trained them, and supported their businesses in Tarime. Also during her visit she climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro in part to honor her father.

Next steps included continued promotion of the relationship via Sister Cities Committee meetings, events, and social media. She participated in the Sister Cities booth at the Holiday Folk Fair and the committee's meet and greet event last year in July. She and her foundation also sponsored and held a Tanzanian Day on November 9, 2023 to celebrate and commemorate the relationship. The event was well attended by officials, committee members, Mayor Johnson, schools, and students. The event was reported on the news and/or newspaper in Milwaukee and Tanzania. There was effort to connect U.S. businesses to buy coffee from Tarime, particularly via a Milwaukee Jazz cafe owner. She was working with the embassy and government to plan a trade mission trip to Tarime and Tanzania. She met with the Tanzania ambassador and district commissioner on the coffee project. She also met with the Tarime mayor virtually. They would continue to increase education, classrooms, and opportunities in Tarime. They continue to rebuilt the cultural center in Tarime that was damaged by rain. They were developing a call to action relating to a summer student exchange program in August 2024. Upcoming events would be shared.

Member Szopinski left the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

Member Durtka inquired about the number of delegation from the recent Tanzania trip and for quantifiable objectives and outcomes from the relationship activities. He said the student exchange program was very relevant and asked for further information for the benefit of the committee, such as an itinerary.

Chair Stamper inquired about the date for Tanzania Day for 2024.

Dr. Mosore replied she could share those numbers, that their trips to Tanzania ranged between 10-15 people each time, the itinerary for the student exchange program was still under development, and she would share the flyer and itinerary once finished. Tanzania Day would occur in November similar to last year but was to be determined.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Penalozza, of the 2023 annual report on the sister city relationship with Tarime District. There was no objection.

- e. Abuja, Nigeria
  - i. Initiatives

Appearing:

Dr. Dele Ojelabi, Milwaukee Action Network, Inc.

Dr. Ayo Francis Obuseh, Milwaukee Action Network, Inc.

Dr. Ojelabi commented. Since the signing ceremony they have started to put together funds and initiative goals. There focus was threefold for cultural, economic,

and social/humanitarian exchange. They were collaborating with MATC towards an MoU for a student scholarship exchange program with Nigerian students coming to Milwaukee. They would also converse with UW-Milwaukee for a student exchange program with the University of Abuja. Abuja officials wanted Milwaukee officials to visit Abuja, and he would further discuss this in the future. They were planning a tentative 3-country trade mission visit to Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone. There were 6 committed business owners for the trip and some interest from others, such as from the African American Chamber of Commerce and MKE Tech Hub. They would make a presentation to the State. Abuja was interested to purchase hospital supplies or in donations, and they were conversing with a hospital system contact. Abuja was interested also in obtaining fire equipment. There would be fundraising done for various of these activities.

Chair Stamper said that much activities were to come.

f. Other

There was no other discussion.

**6. Discussion, review, and/or motion(s) on prospective and current sister city relationships relative to their status and establishment.**

a. Tema, Ghana

- i. Local sponsorship status and support
- ii. Agreement signing ceremony

Mr. Isaac Ashun for Ghana Milwaukee Association, Inc. (local sponsor) was present virtually but did not unmute and respond when given the opportunity to provide an update.

Chair Stamper directed to hold this update and discussion once more to the next meeting.

b. Abuja, Nigeria

- i. Signing ceremony recap

This item was mentioned earlier during discussion on item 5, e., i.

c. Kragujevac, Serbia

- i. Signing ceremony recap

Appearing:

Mike Jovic, St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral

Mr. Jovic commented. It was a pleasure to work with Ald. Stamper, the committee, and staff on the signing ceremony. The ceremony was successful. There was a delegation of 8-9 officials from Kragujevac who visited Milwaukee. They had meetings with various business and educational agencies including UW-Milwaukee, Medical College of Wisconsin, Port Milwaukee, MMSD, and other businesses. There was much activity occurring, which would be provided in an annual report when it becomes due. They were planning a trip to Kragujevac in June and committee and/or City officials were invited to take. There would be an annual cultural Arsenal Fest held in Kragujevac in June.

d. South Africa prospective relationship

*This item was not discussed and was held. To be included on next meeting agenda.*

*e. Other*

*Appearing:*

*Caitlin Ward, Irish Festivals, Inc. dba CelticMKE*

*Ms. Ward introduced herself as the new Executive Director for CelticMKE and looked forward to future collaborations on the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland.*

**7. Discussion on sister city related events and/or activities.**

- a. Holiday Folk Fair (Nov. 17-19, 2023) recap*
- b. Sister Cities International conferences*
- c. Meet-and-greet (September 2024)*
- d. Other*

*All items above were held and not discussed due to the lack of time. All to be included in the next meeting agenda.*

**8. Review and approval of the Sister Cities Committee 2023 Annual Report.**

*Mr. Lee said that the annual report summarized the meetings, activities, accomplishments, and other information regarding the committee for 2023.*

*Member Durtka moved approval of the 2023 Sister Cities Committee Annual report. There was no objection.*

**9. Public comments and/or announcements.**

*None.*

**10. Next steps.**

- a. Agenda items for the next meeting*

*All items that were held today. Additional items to be determined.*

- b. Set next meeting date and time*

*To be determined, possibly in early May.*

**11. Adjournment.**

*Meeting adjourned at 12 p.m.*

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