



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes

### SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

**ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR**  
*Al Durtka, Tiffany Barta, Oscar Tovar and Charles Vang*  
**Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,**  
*clee@milwaukee.gov*  
**Legislative Liaison, La-Wanda Fletcher, 286-8661,**  
*lfletc@milwaukee.gov*

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Thursday, June 22, 2017

10:00 AM

Room 301-A, Third Floor, City Hall

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**Meeting convened at 10:04 a.m.**

*Present 4 - Stamper, Durtka, Barta, Vang*

*Excused 1 - Tovar*

*Mr. Vang arrived at 10:13 a.m. during agenda item 2.*

**1. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from April 27, 2017.**

*Ms. Barta moved approval, seconded by Mr. Durtka, of the meeting minutes from April 27, 2017. There were no objections.*

**2. Discussion on sister city programming, structure, capacity and personnel.**

*A. Discussion with other sister city programs*

*The committee discussed the sister city programs of other cities via a conference phone call with the program coordinators from those cities to gather ideas to help enhance the City's sister city program with respect to promotion, achievement of goals, and infrastructure.*

*Denver, Colorado Sister Cities*

*Ms. Beth Hendrix, Denver Sister Cities, gave an overview on Denver's sister city program via conference call.*

*The program formed in 1948 and holds the second oldest sister city relationship in the country. The program was within its government prior to being pushed outside of government in the late 1980s as a nonprofit 501-3(c) organization by the mayor to shield the program from municipal fluctuations. There is a close relationship with the mayor's office, and there is one mayoral appointee liaison on the board of directors in the 501-3(c). Denver has combined 12 sister cities and friendships and is expecting to acquire 2 more. There are no limit on the number of sister cities that Denver can have. Last year's revenues were \$375,000. About \$50,000 was received from the city budget.*

*There was strategic planning done 3 years ago. Each sister city has a volunteer committee that does programming. The chairs of these committees once were a part*

*of the board of directors but were removed due to doing too much tasks outside of programming. Currently, there is a board of directors and a second advisory board. The advisory board has a liaison that is a part of the board of directors. The board of directors focuses on governance and fundraising. The advisory council focuses on programming. Each chair of the sister city committees are a member of the advisory council.*

*Ald. Stamper inquired about revenues, promotion, mutual benefit exchanges, dedicated staffing, ideas for improvement, corporate support, startup week, and frequency of board meetings.*

*Ms. Hendrix replied.*

*Revenues come from donations and fundraising events. There is a major fundraising gala in conjunction with a worldwide festival. There are at least a dozen trips yearly to sister cities with a 5 percent donation to the office that are applied to trip costs. There are 2 university partnerships at the \$5000 level and an anticipated \$15,000 level for an additional university partnership. The university partnerships result in global events on campus that create better school relationships with the sister cities. There is conversation to create a scholarship for student exchanges. Money is always an issue, and she has yet to find a sister city agency without money issues.*

*Promotion programming is assisted through many avenues. There are partnerships with many local agencies such as tourism agencies, airport, and local world trade center. The mayor participates in trade missions. There is social media. Focus of the program, overall, has shifted from a student exchange program to a program that professionally promotes the city as a global one.*

*Mutual benefits economically and culturally depend on the sister city. The relationship with Potenza, Italy is based on culture due to the lack of industry there. The relationships with Nairobi (Kenya), Brest (France), Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia), and Kunming (China) have economic activities.*

*Denver's program has 1.5 dedicated staffing, including herself as a salaried full-time position and a half-time office manager. Both positions handle a variety of responsibilities beyond normal duties, which requires a lifestyle approach. She has been in her position for 3.5 years, is the second paid director, and first time full-time paid executive director. She serves two boards for the program. The program has been volunteered-run from 1948 until 2013.*

*Community engagement is important to promote and enhance a program. There are great opportunities for celebration and engagement of diaspora, immigrant communities, and regions outside of the local city. Of importance is to engage companies doing business in the city, get their buy-in, get sponsorship support, and acquire corporate membership.*

*Doing fundraising or obtaining fundraising from businesses has been difficult. There has been great luck with the local airport, tourism agency, and world trade center. There has been one major corporate sponsor through the local manufacturing company, GeoTech, that has been providing rental space, internet, phone, and substantial cash donations for her office. Companies involved with Denver's sister cities have increased their relationship with GeoTech due to its corporate support to Denver's sister city program.*

*Denver has the largest free startup week in the country. Information on the startup week can be found online. Entrepreneurs from sister cities will be invited to come*

and participate, such as being part of a panel. Her office may help with lodging reservations.

Board meetings occur once a month. There is an executive committee that meets prior to a board meeting to plan meetings and establish goals.

Ms. Barta questioned a youth and young professional component, university support and involvement, and program support to maintain successful relationships.

Ms. Hendrix replied.

Universities are offered to sign up as members to the sister city program resulting in their students becoming members. Membership includes discounted prices at sister city events. Sister city events are advertised through university member campus newsletters. Certain events are targeted for certain schools, such as the School of Public Affairs.

There are university student programs but no specific young professional programs. There are at least 10 student exchanges per year at the high school and lower level. Maintaining engagement with young students has been difficult due to them moving onto other aspects of their lives or education.

Assisting sister city relationships to maintain success is a challenge, such as due to changes in administration. Denver's sister city relationship with Cuernavaca, Mexico has been dormant due to organized crime violence, municipal turnover, and lack of communication or response from there. There is also struggle with the Chennai (India) sister city relationship, but the relationship is improving due to Denver representatives going there to engage that city face-to-face. The sister city relationship with Nairobi (Kenya) will go back to square one after elections that will take place there resulting in a new administration there.

Mr. Owczarski questioned a city codified relationship with Denver's 501-3(c) organization, having a sister city program inside or outside government, when Denver's program was inside its city government, and best practices regarding program structure. He added that Milwaukee's city sister program was codified to run out of the mayor's office but that has not been the case in practice.

Ms. Hendrix responded. She is unsure and not aware of codification for their sister city program. Government representation may be detailed in the organization's by-laws or articles of incorporation, but she will have to check. There are advantages and disadvantages to having a program inside or outside city government. She is unsure of a perfect structure. The program was pulled outside of government by the city's mayor in the late 1980s. The 501-3(c) was established in 1964. She is unsure if her organization had operated inside city government prior to being pulled outside. The sister city program in Aurora, Colorado has its 501-3(c) operate inside its city government.

*Lexington, Kentucky Sister Cities*

Ms. Kay Sargent, Lexington Sister Cities, gave an overview on Lexington's sister city program via conference call.

Lexington has 4 active sister cities and will sign on a 5th one. All of the sister city relationships are active. The program is 60 years old. The first sister city is from 1957 with Deauville, France. This relationship was volunteered run until a 501-3(c) was established in 1974, and a sister cities commission was established in 1988 by

*the mayor. Their program is structured as a 501-3(c) and commission under the mayor's office. The commission consists of 7 members inclusive of a council member, mayoral staff, university member, corporate member, tourism agency member, and other sector members. All members are appointed by the mayor. Each sister city relationship has its own committee with a chair. These committees usually meet when there are delegations and student visits. The commission meets quarterly to oversee and ensure sister city programming activity and assist relationships with commission knowledge. Programming and ground work are done by the committees and volunteers. 50 kids total are sent per year to the four sister cities accordingly. Lexington is in the thoroughbred of horse racing, and its entire sister city relationships are built around the unique commonality of horses.*

*Staffing is consisted of herself as a salaried full-time paid executive director position and an assistant. Her office oversees the sister city relationships, programming, and fundraising. There are many fundraisers per year. Corporate donations are sought out. There is a membership program and other ways to raise money. She is involved in all committee and commission meetings.*

*Ald. Stamper inquired further about ground work activities, sister city program memberships, corporate fundraising or sponsorship, a youth component, and operating budget.*

*Ms. Sargent replied.*

*Ground work is done by each sister city committee. The one for France is engaged with scheduling and activities for 15 students who are visiting Deauville. The committees would deal with delegations, student visits, and events. As part of the program membership there is an ambassador program - a one-time \$500 donation to become an ambassador and volunteer. Ambassadors have been important to help her office.*

*Program membership started in the late 1990s. The membership program takes a few years to develop. Membership brochures are given out during events and fundraisers. Membership fee is \$45 a year for a family and \$25 for a single person. Benefits of being a member include being a part of a mailing list, receiving newsletters, invitations to events, and ability to join on an annual visit to a sister city which rotates every year. This year 40 members will be going to Deauville. Delegation trips are a good incentive for people to join as members. There are corporate members at \$250 per business a year. Also, there is the ambassador program with a one-time \$500 donation.*

*In addition to the corporate membership program there is an annual golf scramble fundraiser event that brings in about \$10,000. There are other various fundraising events in the year such as for St. Patrick's Day celebration, Thursday night downtown live events, and selling of alcohol during events. The sister city program piggybacks many events held by other entities. Corporate donations mostly come from special events. She arranges meetings with businesses and people to garner support and resources, which is more effective than sending out letters and emails. Tourism is a big part of the program, especially when visiting other sister cities. Her office partners with the League of Municipalities and sets up booths at the league's and other conventions to promote their program, which many state officials, representatives, and mayors would be in attendance. There is partnership with the local airport where they can post up sister city signs. There are partnerships with two major universities. There is partnership with the local media through the newspaper, TV, and radio that assists with advertisements.*

*There is a youth program but no youth committee. Students do go on trips. The youths that do help with sister city activities eventually scatter and go on with their lives to continue their education, start their careers, or start families. Retired and older people show more ability, commitment, and time to volunteer, get work done, and become ambassadors as opposed to younger people.*

*The program's budget averages about \$200,000 yearly. She is responsible to raise all of the money for the budget.*

*Ms. Sargent asked about Milwaukee having an international festival. She added that Milwaukee can participate in its festivals by setting up booths, banners, and handing out information at the festivals like her city does. Social media should be utilized as a promotional tool, which her assistant sets up, especially for the younger generation.*

*Members said that Milwaukee has the largest annual indoor multicultural event through the Holiday Folk Fair, Summerfest, and various ethnic fests prior to the conference call ending.*

*Ald. Stamper said that both Denver and Lexington have dedicated staff, capacity, programming, and actual operations occurring.*

*Mr. Owczarski commented. The programs of those cities went through a process and had to start from somewhere. Both program directors, based on the conference calls, appear to be fundraisers who spend much of their time raising money as oppose to programming. Milwaukee's sister city committee originated out of the mayor's office with restraints, such as the provision to expend no monies. A fundamental organizational change is required to reach the success of Denver and Lexington. Of importance is to consider whether there should be a committee or 501-3(c), whether the program should be managed inside or outside of city government, and whether or not city resources will be allocated to the program if it stays in-house. Only people and human resources behind a problem or initiative can achieve goals and tasks. Both of the other cities have committed staff and volunteers. Only so much can be done through volunteerism. There has been a restriction on this committee and program that city resources cannot be appropriated for sister city activities.*

*Members discussed further.*

*Ms. Barta said that enhancing the City's sister city program requires long term planning, small steps, leveraging of existing resources, promotion through social media, and building off of what the City already has. An existing resource is Summerfest.*

*Member Durtka commented. There have been issues and a lack of communication to bring leaders together despite efforts. An example includes a lack of notification or invitation to members about the recent water conference in the City. Of importance are to identify assets and resources, make natural connections, have commitment from leaders and committee members to participate in events which has been lacking, and bring major actors and leaders together. Some existing assets include Milwaukee World Festivals Inc., the other major ethnic fairs, industries, and educational institutions. The Holiday Folk Fair is from November 17th to 19th this year.*

*Ald. Stamper concurred. Members, including himself, need to participate in events and promote sister cities and the program. Booths can be set up at events. Some existing resources include the water hub, lakefront, and Holiday Folk Fair. Members*

*should think about identifying current assets, resources, and structure whether it is best to be in-house or outside. The ordinance should be lifted to allow expense of funds, such as the funds from the Community, Economic and Development Committee.*

*Mr. Vang commented. Cities like Denver and Lexington seem to want to promote their cities globally. Milwaukee has limited resources to promote its program. The membership program concept for residents and corporations is a great idea. The sister city program needs its by-laws or code to expand with a budget and ability to expend funds. Not much can be done without a budget.*

*Mr. Owczarski added that the committee should review the city ordinance to determine if it still coincides with the committee's purpose and circumstances. He can participate in a review of the city ordinance with the committee at its next meeting, especially on striking the restriction on the expense of funds. Historically, there has been an entrenched negative attitude towards junketing and trips for sister city activities.*

*Ald. Stamper added remarks. Trips are an important to have. The Common Council will have to be persuaded to go against historic attitudes on sister city activities. Fundraising is needed. The ongoing discussion on the City's sister city program and review of the city ordinance should be items for the next meeting.*

*Ms. Barta added that existing infrastructures, such as through university or school exchanges, with budgets towards trips should be leveraged.*

*B. Additional personnel update*

*C. Resources inquiry update*

*Mr. Owczarski gave an update on both items 2, B. and C., together and handed out drafts of letters for the committee to review. As requested at the last meeting there has been a few entities identified to draft letters to send out to inquire and seek out economic development resources. The entities are: the International Institute of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Business and Trade Center of Sister Cities International, and internally the City's Department of Employee Relations (DER). A letter was not drafted for the International Institute of Wisconsin due to the institute being more centered on cultural, political and educational exchanges based on an inquiry to the institute. WEDC does have international exchanges and cooperation. Letters were drafted for the rest of the other entities and would include the sister city research that had been done for the committee by the Legislative Reference Bureau. The letter to DER is about possibly classifying a position to serve the committee, and research would be sent to DER as well. In response, subsequently, DER would be open to do a classification study detailing responsibilities, skills, qualifications, and salary of a new proposed position.*

*Mr. Owczarski said that he will prepare the three letters for Ald. Stamper to sign and send copies to members.*

*Ald. Stamper said that he would like to receive and review the letters first prior to signing them.*

*Mr. Durtka requested that a letter also be sent to the International Institute of Wisconsin for the organization to officially respond and address an economic component within the organization.*

*D. Committee recommendations*

*Ald. Stamper said for the committee to identify existing assets and resources and discuss them at the next meeting.*

*E. Other*

*Individuals appearing:*

*Christine Thompson Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation  
Paulette Bagora, UW-Milwaukee retiree*

*Ms. Thompson Mosore commented. There is room for improvement for the City's sister city program. Perhaps the local sponsors to the sister city relationships, like her organization, can participate in the brainstorming discussions that the committee will continue to have on enhancing the sister city program. The existing local sponsors can offer assistance. Adding dedicated volunteers can be doable, and she is willing to volunteer.*

*Ms. Bangura commented. There is opportunity to employ students without pay from universities, such as UW-Milwaukee, who need to acquire experience as part of their international or global studies. She can assist with UWM contacts.*

*Ms. Barta said that she has connections with all of the colleges.*

*Ald. Stamper commented. Perhaps committees can be formed for each sister city, and the chairs of each committee could come together as one body. Interns can be utilized.*

**3. Establishing a sister city relationship with Daegu Metropolitan City, South Korea.**

*A. Scheduling signing ceremony*

*Individual appearing:*

*Elizabeth Hittman, Environmental Collaboration Office*

*Ms. Hittman gave an update. The local sponsor is the Water Council. The sister city process has passed all the meetings. A signing ceremony to acquire signed agreements from both mayors is the last step but is proving to be challenging due to Mayor Kwon Young-jin not being able to travel anymore this year due to party affiliation with the impeached South Korean president. A Daegu delegation was here in Milwaukee for a water summit in June. Daegu is hosting a water summit in Daegu in September and is hopeful that Mayor Barrett can attend and sign an agreement there. If Mayor Barrett cannot go then the proposal is for Mayor Barrett to sign the agreement in Milwaukee first, make a video recording, send a representative, and have Mayor Young-jin sign subsequently in Daegu.*

*Members did not oppose a signing in Daegu as proposed.*

*B. Review of agreements*

*Ms. Hittman said that there were suggested changes from the Daegu side. After comparison, the main differences in the revised version from the original are the omission of language with respect to Sister Cities International, US Sister City Program history, and mutual understanding from two of the original paragraphs.*

*Ald. Stamper commented. Reference referring to the origination of the US Sister City*

*program can be omitted. Reference to mutual understanding should be in the agreement.*

*Member Durtka moved to hold to the call of the chair the agreement. There were no objections from those members present.*

#### **4. Discussion with sister city relationships.**

*Individuals appearing:*

*Khay Khong, Pan-African Community Association (PACA)*

*Mebrahtu Fessahaye, Pan-African Community Association (PACA)*

*Christine Thompson Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation*

*Paulette Bagora, UW-Milwaukee retiree*

*Paige Prichard, Milwaukee Irish Festivals*

*Ald. Stamper said that this agenda item is an open discussion with local sister city sponsors regarding a possible meet-and-greet event, sister city updates, and suggestions for improvement.*

*Mr. Khong commented. He is the main contact for the sister city relationship with Medan, Indonesia. The Indonesian community in the City is very small unfortunately. Colectivo Coffee can be a possible venue to do a meet-and-greet. The company imports Indonesian coffee and has hosted Indonesian events both in Madison and Milwaukee. Regarding the sister city relationship with Medan, there have been a few events. There was a January business networking event with the World Trade Association of Milwaukee. Last November there was participation in the Holiday Folk Fair.*

*Ms. Thompson Mosore commented. There have been different events concerning the relationship with Tarime District (Tanzania), such as Tanzania Tea Thursdays and Tanzania Day. There should be committee and community participation in these kinds of events to promote the relationship and sister city program. She plans to expand and do these events again. She would like for a delegation, including Mayor Barrett, to visit Tarime this December or next year. There are ways to find resources outside of government. A suggestion for improvement is to have prior communication of presentation expectations, whether through another meeting or conversation, together with the local sponsors so that they have a clear understanding of what to present or discuss at a committee meeting. A meet-and-greet should occur before this winter. A possible venue is Irie Zulu restaurant on North Avenue, which has hosted Tanzanian events. Utilizing social media for promotion is important. Also important is visibly seeing City leadership participating, attending events, and promoting through social media.*

*Ms. Bagora commented. She is here to support PACA. There is opportunity to bring different communities to learn about the current sister cities and sister city program at an event. Milwaukee is rich with resources that should be leveraged. Face-to-face conversations have more impact than written communication.*

*Mr. Fessahaye commented. PACA is the local sponsor to the sister cities Medan (Indonesia), uMhlathuze (South Africa), and Bomet County (Kenya). PACA's vision for sustainable relationships is to have the local community that is representative of the sister city be involved rather than through efforts of an individual who may no longer be there. The communities involved should be educated about the mutual benefits of a relationship. Events have been done with local communities providing resources, such as food. Setting a booth at the Holiday Folk Fair is a great idea. Each sister city can raise funds to set a booth, plant flags there, and take turns*



*manning the booth.*

*Ald. Stamper commented. All local sponsors and the committee should participate and set up booths, perhaps together, at the Holiday Folk Fair to take advantage of the event as a local resource, support the event, and promote the sister cities and sister city program. A trip to Tarime this December should be tabled due to a lack of dedicated resources, especially from City government. Perhaps there should be a kickoff event in the City Hall rotunda for the committee and local sponsors to promote the sister cities and program. Members, including himself, needs to do a better job of attending and participating in sister city related events or activities.*

*Mr. Durtka commented. Setting a booth at the Holiday Folk Fair representative of the sister cities has been desired over the years but has not occurred. Setting a booth as described is welcomed but requires planning and participation from sister city representatives and committee members. Not all committee members have attended in past events. Invitations have been delivered to members and City officials regarding events and trips in the past, but nobody wanted to go. Everyone has to set time for, look at if sister city related events are a priority, and make sister city activities a lifestyle.*

*Ms. Prichard commented. Milwaukee Irish Festivals is the local nonprofit sponsor for the sister city relationship with Galway, Ireland. She submitted this year's annual report on the sister city relationship but will update it based on initial staff feedback about the new annual reporting standards. Irish Fest is where there is much interaction with Galway. Political delegations to Milwaukee always occur at the fest yearly. This year the new mayor and a few city ministers from Galway will be visiting Milwaukee from August 17th to 19th and will participate in various events such as receptions at the fest, reception at City Hall, and a festival organizer luncheon. An available resource for the City is Milwaukee World Festival, Inc. (MWF), which consists of all of the ethnic festivals coming together to coordinate the various summer ethnic festivals. The committee should sit in or leverage MWF to promote sister cities. Her organization is housed in the Milwaukee Celtic Building, an old masonic lodge with a great hall and kitchen, just north of downtown Wauwatosa. The building can be a site for a meet-and-greet or sister city event. Irish Fest is from August 14th to the 17th.*

*Mr. Durtka added remarks. He has participated in MWF. He attended Polish Fest recently last week and was disappointed to see the lack of City representation there during its opening ceremony. The City must support these MWF ethnic festivals.*

## **5. Announcements and updates.**

*A. Sister City International 61st Annual Conference (7/13-15, 2017, Virginia Beach, VA)*

*Ald. Stamper said that attending the conference is member Durtka who can come back and provide an update to the committee about the conference.*

*Mr. Durtka questioned the City's delegate to officially vote or send a ballot to the annual conference, which has been an issue. He represents the City and State but is not a voting member. The previous committee chairman voted previously.*

*Member Barta moved that member Durtka be delegated to vote at the SCI annual conference in lieu of the committee chair, Ald. Stamper. There were no objections from those members present.*

*B. Other*

*Mr. Durtka said that Italian Fest, Mexican Fiesta, and Indian Summer are coming up.*

*Mr. Vang questioned Asian Moon Fest.*

*Mr. Durtka replied. Asian Moon Fest was a compilation of very diverse Asian groups organizing a fest together; however, the fest had dissolved like other festivals, such as Arabian Fest and African World Fest, due to lack of capacity, differing ideas, or other complications.*

*Mr. Khong said that much of the different Asian groups have formed separate, smaller events such as Indian Festival in Humboldt Park for August and Silver City in July for the Southeast Asian community.*

**6. Agenda items for the next meeting.**

*Ald. Stamper said he will converse with staff to set agenda items for the next meeting based on review of the meeting minutes today. Items may possibly include the discussion on leveraging existing assets and planning for a meet-and-greet event.*

**7. Next meeting date and time.**

*Next quarterly meeting would be in September. Yet to be determined.*

**8. Adjournment.**

*Meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.*

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