



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR
Al Durtka, Aaron Szopinski, and Oscar Tovar
Staff Assistant, Chris Lee, 286-2232, Fax: 286-3456,
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Wednesday, September 6, 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/774823701>. You can also dial in using your phone United States: +1 (571) 317-3122 and Access Code: 774-823-701.

1. Call to order.

Meeting was called to order at 1:06 p.m.

2. Roll call.

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

Also present:

*Deborah Moore, Common Council - City Clerk's Office
Dr. Christine Mosorec, Mosorec International Foundation, Inc.
Nevenka Bralic*

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes from June 6, 2023.

Meeting minutes from June 6, 2023 were approved without objection.

4. Review and approval of new sister city relationship applications.

A. Abuja, Nigeria

*Appearing:
Dr. Dele Ojelabi
Cordelia Ekwueme
Dr. Francis Obuseh*

Dr. Ojelabi, Obuseh, and Ms. Ekwueme presented. They founded the Milwaukee Action Network, Inc. (MANI) to be the local sponsoring nonprofit applying to establish a sister city relationship with Abuja, Nigeria. They desired to connect with their home

country and to seek a meaningful partnership between the cities. The local Nigerian community was in full support and has provided various letters in support. MANI would serve to facilitate collaborations between the cities.

A video was shown depicting information regarding Abuja, Nigeria as follows:

Nigeria was situated in West Africa, was a British protectorate until the 1960, and became a republic in 1963. Nigeria was the most populous country in Africa and the seventh most populous country in the world. Abuja was the 8th most populous city in Africa. The government was democratic with elections. Abuja has a quasi-mayoral system similar to Milwaukee's system. The government entity there was Abuja Metropolitan Area Council (AMAC). Economy was based on export, primarily petroleum and cocoa beans. There were over 250 or more indigenous groups in the country with over 500 or more different native languages. English was the official language. Abuja and Nigeria was full of vibrant and unique festivals, weddings, and feasts. Abuja was one of the fastest growing city in the world with an annual growth of 35%. Abuja was both the administrative and political capital of Nigeria, headquarters of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), regional headquarters of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), signatory to the Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoN) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The presentation resumed. AMAC was eager to establish its first sister city relationship with the United States.

Collaboration between the two cities could be cultural (art exhibits, music festivals, culinary events), economic (trade missions, business delegations, tourism), educational (student exchange, scholarships, joint research projects), for environmental sustainability (exchange of practices), and for social and/or humanitarian initiatives (alleviation of poverty). Current activities thus far would include economic development opportunities, community engagement, advocacy awareness, building of partnerships, research and planning. AMAC was ready to move forward.

Members inquired about the composition of MANI, the lack of Nigeria referenced in MANI's name, and Basketball Africa Basketball in Nigeria.

Dr. Ojelabi and Obuseh replied. They along with Ms. Ekwueme headed MANI. They have the full support of the local Nigerian community and groups in the City. They thought about incorporating Nigeria into the nonprofit name but did not include it. Abuja would have its own nonprofit on their side. Abuja was eager to visit Milwaukee, there would be contingent of 6 delegates that would come, and they wanted for the City to send them an invitation to aide them in their VISA application process. They were not sure what city Nigeria's Basketball Africa League team was from, but most likely the team was in Lagos. They can work to make more connections regarding the basketball initiative.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the application to establish a new sister city relationship with Abuja, Nigeria with Milwaukee Action Network, Inc. as the local nonprofit sponsoring organization. There was no objection.

B. Kragujevac, Serbia

*Appearing:
Stefan Dostanic
Milo Salisich
Rose Sasich
Miso Jovic*

Mr. Dostanic presented. Their St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral church was the local nonprofit sponsor. The Serbian community was been part of the City for 111 years. The church and Serb Hall was been in the south side of the City. A sister city relationship with Serbia via Kragujevac was long overdue. They initiated the sister city relationship. They had a 3-legged stool approach to facilitate collaborations between the cities based on economic development, culture, and education. There were serious commitments on both sides. Kragujevac had a population of over 170,000 including its surrounding communities.

Ald. Marina Dimitrijevic, 14th aldermanic district, appeared and gave testimony in support. She and her family (father's side) were of Serbian descent. Such a sister city relationship would be impactful in keeping Serbian heritage in the City and making dividends in economic development. The Serbian community has and continues to grow in the City making the City their home. The church and hall have been invaluable in preserving Serbian culture in the City.

Mr. Lee stated that the committee's recommendation would go next through the Community and Economic Development, Common Council, and Mayoral approval processes via legislation followed by a sister city agreement signing prior to the relationship becoming official.

Member Durtka moved approval, seconded by member Spann, of the application to establish a new sister city relationship with Kragujevac, Serbia with St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral as the local nonprofit sponsoring organization. There was no objection.

5. Discussion, updates, and/or motion(s) on sister city relationships.

A. Tema, Ghana

Mr. Lee gave an update. The local nonprofit sponsor Ghana Milwaukee Association Inc. (GMA) was invited to attend today's meeting but was not present. Communications and engagement with GMA has been challenging. GMA has not been very responsive and engaged recently. Despite being invited there was a lack of GMA and Tema representation at the Milwaukee Sister Cities Day and Meet and Greet event. There was a last correspondence from Tema that their mayor would travel to Milwaukee from March 21-26, 2024.

Members discussed wanting to still establish the sister city relationship, if possible, and that there existed the potential for Basketball Africa League collaborations. Lack of GMA and local community engagement and participation as of late were concerning. Local community support and GMA participation were important to follow through with the sister city relationship. Prior to moving forward with a signing ceremony any further, GMA should attend and appear at the next meeting to address their involvement going forward and the signing ceremony.

B. Other

There was no other discussion.

6. Discussion on sister city related events or activities.

A. Meet-and-greet recap

Chair Stamper discussed the success of the meet and greet event and thanked the organizers (Dr. Mosore, Ms. Moore, and Mr. Lee) and all booth participating current and prospective sister cities. There were news media present and many calls of interest. The event attracted many visitors. Perhaps the event could occur annually with the organizers to set the next date for the event. He thanked Dr. Mosore for the African garment.

Member Durtka added that he would be making a presentation regarding sister cities to the United Nations Association of Greater Milwaukee on Saturday, September 9, 2023 at 10 a.m. and all were invited to come to the free event. There was a virtual option.

Dr. Mosore concurred with earlier comments. She said that the event originated 6 years ago, she came on board to help chair the event, and the event was finally made possible through the support and resources from City Clerk staff and chair Stamper's office.

Ms. Moore said it was a pleasure to help coordinate the event, thanked all participating organizations, she was looking forward to next year's event, and that next year's event should be considered for a different date or non-summer season due to the summer being very busy for folks.

Mr. Lee said that the event was for the Milwaukee sister cities and was a success due to their participation. He and his organizer partners complemented each other with respect to each others strengths (planning, logistics, and implementation).

B. Sister Cities International

Chair Stamper and member Spann discussed their travel to Cape Town, South Africa for the SCI Africa Summit. Of note were their meetings with many notable officials and figures, including Nelson Mandela's granddaughter. Sequanna Taylor also traveled and lead initiatives for future youth and student collaborations. Many initiatives coming from the summit was the 505 initiative to establish 500 African-based sister city relationships in 5 years and Basketball Africa League. The economic impact to Cape Town was substantial.

Chair Stamper said he attended recently a SCI board conference in Durhnam, North Carolina (as a new board member) along with member Durtka and made many connections.

Member Durtka commented. Chair Stamper's inclusion to the SCI board was great. SCI was going through a reinvention. There were many things being planned for the future. He was a country rep for Japan and would be attending a summit there in 2025. There will be an Americas (North, Central, South America) conference in San Antonio in May 2024 looking to establish sister cities in the Americas. Mayors nationwide were encouraged to attend.

Member Spann inquired about the proposal to establish a sister city relationship with the British Virgin Islands.

Mr. Lee replied that his office has yet to receive an application and that the applicant contact has been non-responsive as of late.

Dr. Mosore said she would try to contact that individual (British Virgin Islands applicant) and inquired about continuing synergy from the Africa Summit in South Africa to establish a sister city in South Africa.

Member Durtka said that previous Sister Cities Committee chair and alderman Joe Davis led a sister city with uMhlathuze, South Africa in the past, that that relationship became inactive with his departure, and that any proposal for a sister city would need to be led constructively by a community and not with individuals.

Chair Stamper said to add an agenda item for the future to discuss establishing a sister city relationship in South Africa.

C. Holiday Folk Fair

Member Durtka gave an update. The folk fair would occur November 17-19, 2023 at the Wisconsin State Fair Expo Center. The event was under development. The City and Milwaukee Sister Cities should participate as it has been in the past with a booth to promote the sister cities.

Chair Stamper said that the meet and greet event was an emulation of the folk fair and for member Durtka to direct the committee and organizers on further instructions for participation.

Ms. Bralic inquired about the this year's theme for the folk fair.

Member Durtka was having technical difficulties.

Chair Stamper said that member Durtka would provide more information.

D. Milwaukee/Tarime Sister Cities day-Tanzania Day

Dr. Mosore presented. She was organizing this specific event for the sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania to keep the momentum going stemming from the meet and greet event. This event would coincide nicely with the agreement signing of the sister city relationship stemming back from November 2016. The event would be held November 9, 2023 at Milwaukee City Hall in the rotunda and possibly Common Council Chambers from 10 am to 12 pm. There would be entertainment, cultural activities, food, vendors, meet and greet, showcase of Tanzanian culture, and a gathering of the Tanzanian community. Support is needed. There would be collaboration with the overall African community. She was meeting with embassy staff. There was possibility for Ambassador H.E. Elsie S. Kanza to attend.

She also added that there was plan for a Tanzanian trip for December 2024, Taste of Tanzania in 2023/2024, and that sister city activities have continued to be based around education, culture, economic development, and tourism)

E. Other

There was no other discussion.

7. Public comments.

There were no public comments.

8. Announcements.

Member Spann announced this meeting would be his last as he was stepping down and resigning his membership from the committee.

Chair Stamper thanked member Spann for his experience, leadership, friendship, and commitment to the committee.

Dr. Mosore thanked member Spann for his support and travels to other cities.

9. Next steps.

A. Agenda items for the next meeting

Items to include update on Tema, Ghana and discussion on establishing a sister city relationship with South Africa.

B. Set next meeting date and time

To be determined and to occur in-person.

10. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

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