



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

Thursday, August 11, 2016

10:00 AM

Room 303, 3rd Floor, City Hall

1. Call to Order.

Meeting called to order at 10 a.m.

Present 4 - Durtka, Vang, Barta, Stamper II

Excused 1 - Tovar

Individuals also present:

Lawanda Fletcher, Legislative Reference Bureau
Sam Dawson, International Institute of Wisconsin

2. Review of the Meeting Minutes from June 16, 2016.

Mr. Durtka moved approval of the meeting minutes from June 16, 2016. There were no objections. Members Tovar and Vang excused.

3. Discussion relating to establishing a sister city relationship or friendly exchange relationship with Lublin, Poland.

-Review of Letter of Intent

Individuals appearing:

Joanna Gibelev, Polish American Congress - Wisconsin Division
David Rydzewski, Polish American Congress - Wisconsin Division President
Dr. Mark Pienkos, Polish American Congress - Wisconsin Division Vice President
Dr. Donald Pienkos, Polish American Congress - Wisconsin Division Vice President
Jim Klisch, Lakefront Brewery

Ms. Gibelev gave initial remarks. She is an assistant city attorney for Milwaukee but is representing the Polish American Congress Wisconsin Division to serve as the local sponsor. The interest is to establish a sister city relationship. The idea of establishing a sister city relationship stemmed from her realization of the similarities between the two cities during her travels back to her native city, Lublin. A sister city relationship between the two cities would be a great platform to exchange those similarities to benefit both cities with economic and cultural exchange opportunities. Milwaukee has the fifth largest Polish population in the United States. There is substantial Polish heritage represented in the City, such as through Polish Fest and

other fairs. Lublin officials and its president, Dr. Krzysztof Żuk, are supportive of the sister city initiative and are extending to Milwaukee to send a delegation to Lublin.

Ms. Gibelev proceeded to give a presentation on the City of Lublin relative to its sister city relationships, demographics, geopolitical profile, higher education, young population, heritage, cultural exchange, economic opportunities, and local modes of commuting,

Lublin has much cooperation with the international community. The city has over two dozen sister cities with other countries including Ukraine, numerous European Union countries, Canada, and the United States.

Lublin's city population is 341,722 and metro population is about 712,000, roughly the size of Milwaukee. The city has a young population. There are nine different universities teaching over 70,000 students and graduating 20,000 students each year. The population is very multilingual, and English is much spoken.

Lublin is the ninth largest city in Poland overall. It is the largest city in eastern Poland and is known as a "European Union gateway to the East". The city is dynamically expanding its infrastructure with an airport with many national and international connections, well developed railroad system, and a convenient network of multiple expressways.

Lublin's nine higher education institutions comprise of 25% of the city's population, which presents an enormous human capital. Many young professionals are retained in the city. The city accommodates about 4500 foreign students from nearly 100 countries.

Lublin has a multicultural heritage. President Dr. Krzysztof Żuk and its city are heavily supportive of initiatives to share the city's diverse heritage to its citizens and visitors alike. Festivals have been a great platform to teach the city's history and cultural heritage as well as attracting tourists. The city is reattempting to earn the title to be the European Capital of Culture and nearly won that recognition in 2007. Lublin is known as "The Capital of Festivals", offers a new one yearly, and holds a multicultural festival called Multicultural Lublin. There are also efforts within the city to preserve and showcase the history and culture of the Jewish population.

Mr. Vang joined the committee at 10:21 a.m.

Lublin offers much business opportunities due to its proximity to eastern foreign markets such as Ukraine, special economic zone, expanding transportation infrastructure, lower operation and employment costs compared to the rest of Poland, and a skilled personnel base of multilingual students. Sectors that are available for economic exchange in Lublin include the food and beverage industry, craft beer, medical equipment solutions such as MRI technology, information technology and research, automotive and engineering, biotechnology, bioscience, and agriculture. Local modes of commuting, such as trolley buses and bike rentals, in Lublin also offer business opportunities like revenue from advertisements.

Mr. Rydzewski added comments. He has traveled to Poland recently and has seen new investments in the country since its German or Soviet occupation. The country and its citizens are highly interested to participate in the world economy.

Dr. Donald Pienkos added comments. He is a professor and chairman of the Polish Studies Committee at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. He was a past president of the Polish American Congress Wisconsin Division. He has traveled to

Poland as well. Lublin is a beautiful city and has a great history. Lublin was once a great historic meeting place that brought the leaders and citizens from Lithuania, Ukraine, and Poland together as a union. The city is a gateway to east and is a key city to provide access and development to eastern countries like Ukraine.

Dr. Mark Pienkos added comments. He visited Lublin last year. There are obvious comparisons between Lublin and Milwaukee. He is the vice president for public relations for the Polish American Congress nationally and was previously a president for the Wisconsin division.

Mr. Klisch added comments. A sister city relationship between the two cities would greatly help Milwaukeeans with Polish backgrounds to learn and understand the Polish culture, heritage, and history. He is interested in craft beer and trade possibilities in Lublin for his brewery company in Milwaukee.

Ald. Stamper said that he sees many similarities and opportunities between both cities in festivals, culture, history, urban agriculture, and beer.

Mr. Durtka remarked. There were preliminary talks to establish a sister city relationship with Lublin before. He had met a delegation from Lublin last year during an event in Lublin, Wisconsin. He is impressed with the local support, representation from the Polish American Congress Wisconsin Division to be a part of the sister city initiative, and written support from the president of Lublin.

Ms. Barta said that she is impressed with the history of Lublin, as presented, and the support that is represented here today, especially from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. She questioned the local government structure in Lublin.

Ms. Gibelev replied that the local government structure in Lublin is exactly the same as Milwaukee's and Lublin's city head official is interchangeably referred to as either mayor or president. The term president is a more prevalent preference there.

Mr. Vang concurred that he was impressed with the local group behind the initiative and the history of Lublin. He added that having locally owned Polish businesses in Milwaukee can greatly aide first and second generation Polish speaking residents here in the City for which he can relate to in his own experience as a first generation Hmong citizen here in the City.

Ald. Stamper inquired about the role of the Polish American Congress with the Polish community, the main contact for the Polish community in the Milwaukee metro area, and how Ms. Gibelev came to Milwaukee.

Ms. Gibelev responded. She was involved in an exchange program in law school and ended up staying in Milwaukee. The Polish Center in Franklin, Wisconsin is a main place for the local Polish community to go to. The center offers many services for the Polish community. The Polish American Congress is one branch under the Polish Center.

Ald. Stamper added further comments. Perhaps a signing ceremony can happen at the Polish Center. He is receptive of a delegation being extended to go to Lublin, and perhaps Mr. Durtka can assist in coordinating a delegation.

Dr. Donald Pienkos commented on the Polish American Congress. It is a national organization established in 1944 during World War II on behalf of restoring a free and independent Poland as well as democracy through humanitarian and lobbying efforts. The congress played a major role in bringing Poland, the Czech Republic, and

Hungry into NATO alliance as an ally, which started in Milwaukee in 1994 during President Bill Clinton's tenure. The local division of the congress is united with all other congress divisions, the Polish Center, and other Polish groups. The local division, along with support from Ald. Jose Perez, recently helped restore the Kosciuszko monument and the Basilica of St. Josaphat building in Milwaukee. The local division is also involved with Polish Fest and the International Institute of Wisconsin.

Some gifts, Lublin information, and a support letter from President Dr. Krzysztof Żuk of Lublin were submitted to the committee from Ms. Gibelev. Ald. Stamper read into the record the support letter.

Ms. Barta moved to extend a formal application to the Polish American Congress Wisconsin Division for a sister city relationship with Lublin, Poland. There were no objections.

Ald. Stamper spoke on the next procedural steps. The committee will reconvene to review a completed application, once submitted. If approved by the committee, the matter will go before review and approval via a resolution by the Community and Economic Development Committee and Common Council. Once adopted, the resolution would need to be signed by Mayor Tom Barrett. The agreement would then be created followed by a signing ceremony in Milwaukee when both mayors from both cities are able to meet. The relationship becomes official once the agreement is signed by both mayors.

Dr. Donald Pienkos extended an invitation to committee members to attend a Polish Independence Day dinner at the Polish Center on November 6, 2016.

Meeting recessed at 10:59 a.m.

Meeting reconvened at 11:05 a.m.

4. Discussion relating to establishing a sister city relationship with Tarime District, Tanzania.

Individual appearing:

Christine Thompson Mosore, Mosorec International Foundation

-Review of Sister City Agreement

Members reviewed draft agreements in both the English and Kiswahili languages between the City of Milwaukee and District of Tarime.

Mr. Vang moved approval of the agreement drafts as presented. There were no objections.

-Coordinating Signing Ceremony and Delegation Visit

Ald. Stamper said that the signing ceremony has been scheduled for Monday, November 7, 2016 at 2 p.m. in the Common Council Chambers in Milwaukee City Hall. The delegation and Tanzanian local community are invited. There should be ethnic foods for the reception, if possible, to accommodate guests. The delegation should tour the City.

Ms. Thompson Mosore said that the Tarime delegation and its mayor have no

objections to the scheduled date of the ceremony and will be present. There are 11 people currently in the delegation, and they will be in Milwaukee for one week from the middle of the first week in November to the middle of the second week in November. Ceremony guests may include local residents from Milwaukee, Chicago, and Chicago. Her foundation will orchestrate tours and host the delegation. Members should share ideas on the places to highlight and visit for the delegation. There is no Tanzanian community center to serve as a venue. There may be interest to have some entertainment during the ceremony, such as a dance performance. A meet and greet session prior to the ceremony would be great for the delegation. She will leave to visit Tarime tomorrow and will share with the delegation there the information discussed today.

Ald. Stampers replied that the delegation should visit downtown, museums, cultural centers, Historical Black Society, Juice Kitchen, Northwestern Mutual, and Miller Coors. He added that he can be contacted via email to give further details and contacts. He can help set up some tours such as with Miller Coors. A dance performance is welcomed to be included as part of the ceremony.

Mr. Durtka said that the destinations chosen should match the places that the delegation wants to visit.

Mr. Lee said that the ceremony schedule follows a typical program with speakers, mayoral comments, exchanging of gifts, signing of agreements, photo session, and a small reception afterwards. If capacity should become an issue, an alternative venue can be sought. The Council Chambers can comfortably host perhaps 50 guests. Entertainment and further small details of the ceremony and its program can be further worked on and fine tuned going forward.

Ms. Thompson Mosore said that the mayor of Tarime District extends an invitation for a delegation from Milwaukee to visit Tarime. Air travel time to Tarime is about 21 hours.

Members replied that they are open to be part of a delegation to Tarime, would have to plan accordingly, and check their schedules once the trip is confirmed to see if it is feasible to be part of the delegation.

Mr. Vang said that the previous committee chairman has arranged and been part of many delegations to Africa.

5. Discussion reviewing the sister city relationship with Carora, Venezuela.

-Review of Notice from Peace Action WI on Discontinuing Local Sponsorship

Ald. Stamper said that there is notice from Peace Action WI referencing its non interest in sponsoring the sister city relationship further and its support for another organization to maintain the relationship.

Mr. Dawson said that through his recent conversation with Danny Pneuman, who was highly involved in the relationship with Peace Action WI, the organization no longer is able to contact or get responses from key persons, including the Venezuelan consulate in Chicago, regarding the relationship. There has been no activity with Carora and the organization since 2015, and the organization has not been administrating any activity for the relationship since 2015. Venezuela is in an economic and political crisis, and engaging with the country would be difficult at this time.

Members discussed that terminating the relationship would be the best interest for the City due to inactivity and the problematic situation in Venezuela.

Mr. Durtka moved to recommend termination of the sister city relationship with Carora, Venezuela due to inactivity, lack of sponsorship, and the crisis situation in Venezuela. There were no objections.

Mr. Lee said that the committee recommendation would procedurally be followed by adoption of a resolution to terminate the relationship through the Common Council process and then a notification letter to be sent to the Mayor of Carora.

Ald. Stamper said for Ms. Fletcher to work on the resolution and letter.

6. Discussion on the Sister Cities Committee relative to its goals, purpose, and activities.

-Review of Member Recommendations

Ald. Stamper made initial remarks. The committee has discussed recommendations at the previous meeting regarding making improvements to the committee and its activities going forward. The committee should discuss initial goals to complete in the short term as a first step that will lead to completing long term goals.

Mr. Durtka said that one goal is to reintroduce the City's presence and its sister city relationships to Sister Cities International (SCI). He was the only one to attend the recent annual SCI conference and vote, on behalf of the City and the committee, to electronically elect the board of directors of SCI and by law changes there. Anticipated are new initiatives from SCI due to new chairmanship from the SCI board. Also anticipated are more SCI activities taking place with the National League of Cities.

Mr. Durtka said another goal is to look at how other cities are relating to their sister cities. There could be a statewide sister city annual meeting held in Milwaukee where the committee can be involved and meet other sister city program representatives from other parts of Wisconsin to have conversations about success and difficulties of each other's programs.

Ms. Barta concurred about establishing the City's presence within SCI nationally and within the state locally.

Mr. Durtka said that there is a current problem of the committee being aware of SCI activities. Information should come from the Mayor's office to the committee chairperson. Due to recent changes in the committee, SCI information has not been properly channeled as such. There needs to be determination of who is responsible to be the source of information on SCI activities and updating the City's sister city information to SCI.

Mr. Vang said the committee needs to determine how to administer the program further and be more proactive to make sister city relationships have a presence locally and nationally.

Ald. Stamper questioned the suggestion of hosting the next SCI conference in Milwaukee.

Mr. Durtka said that the next SCI annual conference will occur in Virginia Beach for 2017. He will find out and report back to the committee on the next opportunity to bid to host a conference.

Ald. Stamper said that Paul Upchurch from VISIT Milwaukee should attend the next committee meeting to discuss the capacity for the City to host an annual SCI conference. The purpose to host the conference is to bring more awareness of the City's sister city relationships and program to its citizens locally and outside.

7. Agenda Items for the Next Meeting.

Ald. Stamper said that the next meeting agenda items should include review of the sister city relationship application for Lublin, Poland, if submitted; review of sister city annual reports from local sponsors that are due; discussion with VISIT Milwaukee on hosting an annual SCI conference; discussion on the short term goals of the committee; and an update on coordinating the signing ceremony with Tarime District, Tanzania, if necessary.

8. Set Next Meeting Date and Time.

The next meeting date and time was not set.

9. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.