



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes

SISTER CITIES COMMITTEE

ALD. RUSSELL W. STAMPER, II, CHAIR

**Al Durtka, Sanjib Bhattacharyya, Oscar Tovar, and Bruce
Spann**

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Wednesday, November 6, 2019

10:00 AM

Room 301-A, Third Floor, City Hall

1. Call to order.

Meeting called to order at 10:01 a.m.

2. Roll call.

Member Tovar joined the committee at 10:20 a.m. during item 4, a.

Present 4 - Durtka, Tovar, Stamper, Bhattacharyya

Excused 1 - Spann

3. Review and approval of the previous meeting minutes.

Meeting minutes from September 26, 2019 were approved without objection.

4. Discussion on sister city related events.

a. Holiday Folk Fair (11/22 - 11/24/19)

Member Durtka commented. The Holiday Folk Fair is celebrating its 76th anniversary. The theme for this year is to celebrate, promote, and preserve indigenous language and heritage, which are rapidly disappearing. Sign language and Braille are included. The fair will entail food, dance, music, bands, new demonstrations, special exhibits, entertainment, and a naturalization ceremony on Friday at 2:30 p.m. New aspects for this year include Turkish marbling (painting), Native American beading, traditional dress, Japanese komodo, Balinese dance, and foods identified by their original names. Volunteers will get buttons to tell what language(s) they can speak. There is still opportunity for participants. New cultural groups are always sought, such as the Hmong, Henga, and Ghanaian communities. The International Institute of Wisconsin is the organizer of the whole fair. Members are in possession of promotional materials for the fair, and electronic versions will be forwarded.

Member Bhattacharyya said that he is from India, speaks multiple dialects from India (i.e. Hindi and Bengali), is involved with a local Bengali social club that may be open to participate in the fair, and is familiar with the chess tournament that occurs at the fair.

Member Tovar joined the committee at 10:20 p.m.

Arlisia McHenry, City Clerk's Office, was present and commented. She is organizing a Sister Cities booth exhibit, with this year being the third occasion for the City. The booth format would be mostly the same. A new aspect will be to have flags representative of the sister cities to give away. Common Council staff, committee members, and the Youth Council have been notified to volunteer. Sister city local sponsors will soon be notified to volunteer and contribute display items. Some have already committed. More information will be sent out. There will be two stamps for the purpose of stamping student passports on education day of the fair, which is Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Ger Thao, Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce, appeared and said that there will be participation from the Hmong community in the fair and he will explore contribution of display materials concerning the sister city with Medan, Indonesia.

Nevenka Lutzow Bralic, Federation of Croatian Societies, Inc., appeared and commented. The sister city with Zadar, Croatia will have its own exhibit booth; however, she will also volunteer for the Milwaukee Sister Cities booth. Their booth will focus on science and culture. They are seeking proper contact information with Golda Meir School regarding their water research project.

Chair Stamper said that there should be a press release done regarding the Holiday Folk Fair and sister cities exhibit booth.

b. Meet and greet

Ms. McHenry commented. The plan is to hold the event next May after City elections. The venue space sought is the Irish Center in Wauwatosa. Initial ideas include potluck food, cultural music, and information booths from the respective local sister city sponsors. The event can also include a disc jockey, beer, wine, and a video about the sister cities. This first event should be closed to committee members and the sister city local communities. Subsequent events can expand to other people.

Chair Stamper commented. Everyone should abide by the event date that is set by Ms. McHenry. The purpose of the event is for an intimate gathering of the sister city local communities to network and acquire familiarity with one another. The leaders of the sister city local communities should determine who to invite from their communities to the event, and advance notice of those attendees should be given so that proper preparation can occur to accommodate those attendees.

Ms. Lutzow Bralic provided a disc jockey recommendation.

c. Other

Member Durtka said that there should be more awareness of other peer cities that have the same sister city relationships that Milwaukee has.

Member Bhattacharyya said that there should be more commingling among all sister city communities.

5. Review and approval of annual reports.

- a. *Tarime District, Tanzania (due 8/29/19)*
- b. *Bomet County, Kenya (due 8/13/19)*

Mr. Lee said that no written annual reports for 2019 have been received for these two sister city relationships from the local sponsors, that no one from the local sponsorships could appear today, and that review of these reports were held once already.

Chair Stamper said to hold review of these reports one more time.

Member Tovar moved to hold items 4, a. and 4, b. to the call of the chair. Seconded by member Durtka. There was no objection.

6. Sister city status updates or announcements.

a. Local sponsoring organizations

Mr. Thao said that with regards to the sister city relationship with Medan (Indonesia), the Hmong Chamber is trying to rebuild the relationship and seek new local community leaders. There was a transition in local community leaders. The previous leaders have all departed.

Chair Stamper said that an update should be given at the next meeting on the leadership transition.

Ms. Lutzow Bralic said that they will soon submit an application to renew the sister city relationship with Zadar (Croatia), which is expiring soon.

b. Committee staff

Mr. Lee gave a status update. The Common Council recently approved the termination of the sister city relationship with uMhlathuze, South Africa and the establishment of a new sister city relationship with Tema, Ghana. With that termination, the number of current relationships is at 7. With the new relationship, the number is back at 8. Two relationships have expirations next year - Bomet County (Kenya) in November and Zadar (Croatia) in May. Annual reports for 2019 are still due for the relationships with Bomet County, Tarime District (Tanzania), and Zadar.

Member Bhattacharyya questioned promotion of sister city relationships.

Chair Stamper said that the committee have advocated for a dedicated position to do programming and provide support to the local sister city relationships. A job description is complete, but there has been difficulty to include any kind of City funding for the position. Funding may have to come via the route of fundraising and outside sources. Meanwhile, the committee is open to ideas and has tried to promote the relationships however it can, such as doing a sister cities booth exhibit at the Holiday Folk Fair. There has been conversation with Port Milwaukee to explore exchange opportunities with the sister cities.

Member Durtka added remarks. A long standing frustration has been the termination or disappearance of sister city relationships due to the lack of strong infrastructure and local sponsorship of those relationships. The committee should be more deliberate going forward that a proposed sister city relationship have strong infrastructure and local community support prior to being established.

c. Other

There was no other discussion.

7. Set next meeting date and time.

To be determined possibly in January 2020.

8. Agenda items for the next meeting.

To be determined.

9. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

*Chris Lee, Staff Assistant
Council Records Section
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