On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, Chairperson Mr. Nowadzky called the meeting of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission to order at 5:02 PM in the MacRae Conference Room, Richard A. Clark Municipal Services Center, 1551 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.

MINUTES
July 9, 2019

Members Present: Madeline Goebel, Jake Grothoff, Heidi Hendrickson, Doug Lewis, Roger Nowadzky, Peggy Patrick, Ginny Renda, Vidal Spaine, Sherill Whisenand, Hollie Zajicek, Eleanor Zeff, Li Zhao Mandelbaum, Mayor Frank Cownie

Members Absent: Darlene Blake, Kerry Bowen, Edgar Ortiz

Staff Present: Joyce Warburton

On Tuesday, July 9, 2019, Chairperson Mr. Nowadzky welcomed the newest member to the Commission, Mr. Jake Grothoff, who was appointed to the Commission on June 24, 2019 by Mayor T.M. Franklin Cownie to fill vacated Seat 3.

FINANCIAL REPORT
Financial report for July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019 was distributed indicating June 2019 expenses of $2,968.65 for Mr. Nowadzky’s Airline Ticket to Pristina, Kosovo in June 2019; $309.36 to reimburse Ms. Patrick for miscellaneous gift packaging supplies and items for use at the Des Moines Arts Festival (June 28-30, 2019); $40 to reimburse Mr. Nowadzky for registration to the Citizen Diplomacy Summit: Global Effect, Local Impact on June 19, 2019; $561.86 to reimburse Mr. Nowadzky for marketing items and gifts for trip to Pristina, Kosovo in June 2019; and $126 to Shelley Bain for Magnet Gift Sets. Mr. Spaine moved to approve the financial report. Ms. Whisenand seconded the motion. Motion carried.

COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT
Mr. Nowadzky shared the following written report.

This is the first Commission Chairperson Report for Fiscal Year 2019-2020. July 1st started our new municipal year. This month I will be submitting an Annual Commission Report to the Mayor and City Council. I would like to share some of those thoughts with you, the Commission.
In reviewing the Commission’s 2018-2019 fiscal year, I have taken the opportunity to assess our achievements and shortcomings. The beginning of this fiscal year brought a change in Chair leadership with a plan to introduce an internal business organizational structure to the Commission.

We have been mildly successful in creating ad hoc committees to put procedures in writing, to record our history, and to develop marketing and communications.

We terminated a sister city relationship, acquired a new sister city, and are working on revitalizing others. Commissioners have resigned and others have been appointed and are being appointed to carry out the tasks needed to accomplish our Commission’s specific mission.

The first half of this fiscal year was extremely busy. We hosted a mayoral delegation from Shijiazhuang to finalize an agreement for exchanges over the next three years. We also co-sponsored our 3rd Annual Community Bastille Day Celebration.

August 16th marked the 60th anniversary of our sister city relationship with Kofu, Japan. We celebrated with a Des Moines-Kofu Day at the Iowa Cubs game and a reception at the Civic Center. The evening included Mayor Cownie reading an anniversary proclamation and a personal address from Japanese Consul-General Naoki Ito.

Art students in Stavropol, Russia, gifted us with their paintings, which were displayed in the Cultural Center during the Iowa State Fair. Those paintings have been digitized for future marketing and informational and Commission promotional purposes. They have been framed and are currently on display at City Hall. We also participated in the Des Moines Arts Festival with a nonprofit booth focused on projects for children.

A mayoral delegation came from Pristina, Kosovo the last week of November to sign a sister cities agreement with us. We introduced them to several organizations who could be instrumental in Pristina’s progress in being the capital city of the new independent democracy of Kosovo. The visit culminated in a formal farewell dinner at the Renaissance Savery Hotel.

We closed out the physical year of 2018 with an informational meeting on how the travel budget would be managed for the remainder of the fiscal year for synchronization of city committee coordination and planning.

Spring 2019 stirred another flurry of activity with a Commission delegation to Kofu to help celebrate the 500th anniversary of Kofu’s inception as a municipality. Likewise, our Shijiazhuang City Chair visited China to represent the Commission in a trade fair and to meet with representatives of Shijiazhuang and U.S. Ambassador to China, Terry Branstad.

The last week of June, and the end of the fiscal year, saw a Commission mayoral delegation visiting Pristina, Kosovo to work on a plan of action between our cities, and the Commission once again participated in a nonprofit booth at the Des Moines Arts Festival. The Pristina travel report will be forth coming. The festival provided an opportunity to enhance our relationships with other local nonprofits by inviting them to help staff our festival booth in exchange for being able to promote their organizations as well as the Commission. Thanks to all the volunteers, who helped plan, prepare and staff the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities booth at the festival. A special thanks goes to Commission’s Vice Chairperson Patrick, who attended to every detail and perhaps put in as much work as the rest of the Commission combined.

As for Fiscal Year 2019-2020, more subtle Commission progress will continue behind the scenes in acquiring community volunteers for some of the Commission’s city committees and in
establishing strategic alliances with other pertinent organizations, such as Iowa Sister States, Alliance Française of Central Iowa, and the Japan American Society of Iowa. Likewise, another leadership goal was to eventually fill the vacant Des Moines Commission seats by the end of the next fiscal year. These seats are being filled and hopefully will continue to be filled with residents with specific experiences, backgrounds, skill sets, and expertise to round out the Commission and to uniquely contribute to its current and future direction.

We have made great strides in hosting and visiting our sister cities and executing other events in this past fiscal year, but other aspects, especially the internal organizational structure of the Commission, have moved very slowly. There are several reasons for this, and we are hopeful the coming fiscal year will bring greater success.

An area that appears to need great attention is our ability to work together as a team, pursuing the same goals, and keeping the same overall mission in mind. We have all had previous experiences that developed abilities to self-start and move forward on our own. This is important, but more important is the ability to interact cohesively as a body and in smaller cohesive segments such as at a committee level. On the other hand, I am extremely satisfied with the efforts being made to efficiently and effectively focus our monthly Commission meetings. This is due in part to the city chairs providing their reports to our Commission City staff person, Joyce on the Friday before the Commission’s Tuesday meetings for Commissioner review prior to Commission meetings.

Many of you are new to the Commission, being appointed in the last couple of years. This means there hasn’t been time for you to learn all that is needed to know about the Commission, its operation and its protocols, to independently take action representing the Commission without its advice and consent. This, coupled with the organizational changes being adjusted to by all, makes it even more important for anyone to not step out on his or her own, but to join in group discussions and get feedback from others, including Commission leadership before engaging in a task or making independent commitments representing the work or position of the Commission. The Vice Chairperson and I are in constant contact, sharing what is happening with each of our tasks, and more importantly asking and receiving each other’s input and advice in decision-making. Some of you have been very good about checking in with me in the same manner—others not so much. What makes sense in one’s mind takes a different turn with the perspective of another in the chain of command. We need to speak with one voice, and every action we take must fit into a comprehensive strategic plan.

As the Chairperson of the Commission, I am held responsible for everything that occurs on behalf of the Commission. We are representatives of our community as public officials on a City of Des Moines Commission where there is a hierarchy and you, through me, answer to Mayor Cownie and the City Council. What we do is not about us as individuals. It’s about contemplating how our actions will best serve the whole—the whole of the Commission and the whole of the community. I will be addressing these issues more in the future and will begin to incorporate the ideas of servant leadership along with our continued business structure development.

Again, we have had a very active year with a number of major activities and an internal organizational restructuring process to better serve our sister city relationships, to enhance the management of the Commission’s operation, and to better achieve the Commission’s purpose. That process will continue this fiscal year, with some fine tuning to meet the present and future tasks of the Commission. As Commissioners leave and new individuals join the Commission, I will be doing some reshuffling on committee assignments to maximize the skills and talents of Commissioners and to appropriately spread the load of a working commission.
Planning is also being finalized for our first major activity of the new fiscal year. On July 14th, the Commission will be co-sponsoring with Alliance Française of Central Iowa its 4th annual Bastille Day community celebration. Our French connection is through our sister city of St. Etienne. This year, July 14th Bastille Day falls on a Sunday. Not only put the event on your calendar, but invite your family, neighbors and friends to join us. It is a fun event that they will not want to miss. The event is a pot luck dinner free to the public, with food, wine, music, singing, and games. Further details will be provided by the St. Etienne Committee.

Again, please read the Commission Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and committee reports prior to our Commission meetings, in preparation for the meeting. If you have noticed, it has greatly expedited our meetings and has left time for matters needing clarification and discussion.

COMMISSION VICE CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT
Ms. Patrick shared the following written report.

Des Moines Arts Festival. The festival occurred June 28-30. It was a very hot weekend, which I’m sure impacted attendance. We had a goal of folding 700 bookmark bases and cutting out snouts and ears before the festival, which we were able to accomplish in two cutting and folding sessions. Thanks to everyone who met up with us to help. It was fun getting to know a little bit more about each other.

I will have a more complete report in August detailing from beginning preparation to the end of the festival. If you worked the marketing table at the festival, please send me an email summarizing the contacts you were able to make, so I can include them in my August report.

Fiscal Budget. We were successful in making marketing and other purchases out of our general expense budget by June 21st. We now have a limited number of bookmarks containing our mission statement and contact information. We also purchased a 6’ white tablecloth bearing the Commission’s logo, which was used at the festival on our marketing table.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Saint-Etienne Committee
Dr. Zeff provided the following written report.

The St. Etienne Committee met in June. We are continuing to pursue openings for dialogues, exchanges and business contacts. We also have worked on some projects in the Des Moines area to support interest in French culture and in St. Etienne, France.

1. We have written a letter to the business contact which was given to us via the St. Etienne City Council. We should be able to send this letter out soon. Some connections we have suggested including the Berkwood Farms and Ryan Carroll at the Greater Des Moines Partnership.

2. We are continuing to explore the possibility of establishing connections between the Massenet Opera Company in St. Etienne to the Des Moines Metro Opera Company. The Des Moines Metro Opera has some excellent opportunities for visiting artists; and as 2020 will be an anniversary year, there are some special events planned. We are working on letters to send.

3. We have re-established direct contact with the St. Etienne City Council after five years of little contact. While they do not want to be involved with any large events between the two (2) cities, they remain appreciative and interested in maintaining our almost 35 years of continuing relations. We sent them our new power point, which they appreciated.
4. The Des Moines Sister Cities Commission and the St. Etienne Committee is again co-sponsoring with Alliance Française, the annual July 14th Bastille Day celebration at the Ding Darling shelter at Birdland Park, from 4 PM to 8 PM. There will be music, games, food, and a visit from Mayor Cownie. All are welcome to attend. Bring a dish to share, your own drinks, and plastic (not glass) containers and glasses.

5. The St. Etienne Committee also helped staff the Sister City Commission booth at the Arts Festival, June 28-30.

Mr. Spaine reported that he has invited a group of 25 African students (many from French speaking counties) who are scheduled to be at Drake University during this same period of time, and hopefully they will be able to attend the Bastille Day event.

Shijiazhuang Committee
Ms. Zhao Mandelbaum shared that it has been a quite month, likely due to the fact that a large delegation had just been there. She indicated they had previously indicated they were planning to attend the Sister Cities International Conference in Houston in July, but they were unable to obtain the necessary approvals to travel. However, it does appear that Hebei Province will be sending a small delegation to attend. This delegation is planning to be visiting Iowa Sister State in Des Moines on July 18th, and then will travel to the Annual Conference the next day.

Stavropol Committee
Mr. Spaine shared that it has been a quiet month as well, mainly because the schools are closed for the summer and the city is engulfed in an election campaign.

Mr. Spaine reported he had just received 19 new paintings from students (ages 11-17) in Stavropol. Unfortunately, he was unable to obtain space at the Iowa State Fair for this year, but will work to get them displayed for the 2020 State Fair. Mr. Grothoff suggested the possibility of a “pop-up” display at one of the boutiques in the East Village or a similar location. Ms. Goebel also suggested the Des Moines Social Club and Dirt Burger (new vegan restaurant in East Village). Mr. Spaine will confirm that the paintings are intended to be gifted to the Commission.

Mr. Spaine indicated plans for their annual Stavropol Day Celebration have yet to be finalized.

Kofu Committee
Mr. Lewis reported that, with the resignations of Bill Sherman and Shelley Bain, the Kofu Committee will need to reconfigure what they are doing and think through projects, such as the Cherry Tree Planting project.

Mr. Spaine indicated he had been asked during the Des Moines Arts Festival if, as a Commission, a trip would be put together for individuals interested in attending the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, Japan (July 24 – August 9, 2020). Mr. Nowadzky stated this is something that could be looked at in the future, but that a number of issues would have to be worked through first.

Italy Committee
Ms. Renda reported that Mayor Cownie had planned to meet with Mayor Dario Nardella of Florence, Italy while attending meetings in Bonn, Germany in June. However, Mayor Nardella was not able to attend those meetings. Mayor Cownie instead sent another letter on June 19 regarding establishing a relationship with Florence.

Pristina Committee
Mr. Nowadzky shared the following written report.
As I mentioned in my June and July Commission Chairperson reports, we will be doing some shifting of Committee assignments this new fiscal year to adjust to the present and future needs of the Commission in carrying out the Commission mission and program implementation. I will be assessing the Commission needs and will be examining where new Commission members (and old) fit to utilize talents and to fill in gaps where deficiencies appear going forward.

To this end, I will be assuming the functions of Kosovo Committee Chair for a while, in launching our new Pristina relationship, until that chairmanship, which was vacated by Shelly Bain’s resignation from the Commission, is filled adequately. So, the following is the Pristina Committee report. It will be brief. A more detailed Pristina delegation report will be submitted for the August Commission meeting.

The Commission sent our first return delegation to Pristina, Kosovo since the signing of our sister city agreement last November. The delegation trip was from June 23-June 27, 2019. The delegation was composed of Des Moines Mayor Cownie and I as Commission Chairperson. Other potential delegates representing the organizations who met and gave presentations to the Pristina mayoral incoming delegation in November were invited at their own expense, but were not available to participate in the June trip.

The purpose of the delegation was to meet again with Pristina’s mayor and administration to iron out an action plan for programs, projects and delegations involving culture, education, and economic and community development. We met not only with municipal officials, but also with Kosovo’s Prime Minister, the national Minister of Local Government, the US Ambassador to Kosovo, the former Kosovo Consul General, the present Chief of the Mission in the Kosovo Consulate, The United States Chamber of Commerce in Kosovo, small business entrepreneurs, family farmers, international chefs, and Kosovar teachers and students. While the delegation’s trip was short and made shorter by air travel delays and cancellations, the opportunity to connect our communities and nation for our mutual benefit was priceless.

Mr. Nowadzky indicated he would be providing a more in-depth report for the August Commission meeting.

**Vushtrri, Kosovo**
Ms. Zajicek shared the following information:

1. Delegation trip to Kosovo in May was productive. Had a lot of one-on-one time with the president and prime minister to discuss Iowa initiatives including the new Kosovo American Economic City project. Also met with large companies looking to expand into Iowa, local schools and public safety facilities to see how we might help them.
2. City of Vushtrri is building a park in their historic town center called Norwalk Park as a tribute to their U.S. sister city. Norwalk in kind is planning to build a pedestrian bridge as a small replica of Vushtrri’s famous ancient Stone Bridge.

3. Consulate and Prime Minister’s office asked that we help manage a new project called the Kosovo American Economic City (KAEC), a 1,250-acre free-trade zone by Gjakova designated solely for U.S. companies that want to expand into Europe. Offers free land, no property taxes, low labor costs, and a plethora of other incentives.

4. Norwalk hosted Erolld Belegu, Advisor to the Prime Minister, and the Consulate’s new Chief of Mission Artan Duraku at the State of the City Address on June 11. A lot of media coverage which spanned into New York news outlets creating a stir about the KAEC.

5. Paid tribute to Major General Orr during the delegation as the entire country of Kosovo designated the visit as his farewell tour including military ceremonies and streets lined with American and Iowa flags.

6. Iowa has made a national splash with the Kosovo Consulate in downtown Des Moines. It has become the model as two colonels flew in from New Jersey as attachés for their governments because they want to open a consulate for Albania and they want to model it after Des Moines’ consulate.

**Education Committee**

Mr. Spaine stated a couple of City Committee’s still need to provide the requested contact information (for middle and high school levels) that will be shared with Ms. Olivia Howe, International Baccalaureate (IB) Development Coordinator with the Des Moines Public Schools.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Des Moines Arts Festival – June 28-30, 2019**

See Vice Chairperson Patrick’s report above. In addition, Ms. Patrick indicated she has sent emails to all of the non-profits that participated for their feedback on how they felt the event went.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Citizen Diplomacy Summit Report**

Mr. Nowadzky, Ms. Renda, and Ms. Goebel attended the Citizen Diplomacy Summit: Global Effects, Local Impact, which was held on June 19 at the DMACC Southridge Center. At this conference, attendees heard from US State Department Officials, community leaders, and US Ambassadors.

The keynote speakers were Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Organization and Mary Kramer, former Iowa Senator and US Ambassador. Their message was that citizen diplomacy is so important because people from other countries see people in our government not working together and hating each other. Most of the speakers at the summit discussed volunteerism and the use of community resources to accomplish the goals of an organization.

The conference was well organized and very interesting. There were people from all over Iowa and some of them were members of Sister Cities from other cities in Iowa. It was an opportunity to do some networking and to gain insight into ways to build community involvement.

**Adjustment to 2019 Fall Meeting Schedule**

Mr. Nowadzky indicated that an issue has arisen regarding the November meeting date due to his teaching schedule. Commissioners were asked to consider either holding the meeting with Ms. Patrick stepping into the role of Chairperson or rescheduling for another date.
ADJOURNMENT
Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Whisenand and seconded by Mr. Spaine. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM.

NEXT MEETING
The next meeting will be August 13, 2019 at 5:00 PM in the MacRae Conference Room, Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center, 1551 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.