GREATER DES MOINES SISTER CITIES COMMISSION
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NEXT MEETING FEBRUARY 11, 2020, AT 5:00 PM
MACRAE CONFERENCE ROOM – RICHARD A. CLARK MUNICIPAL SERVICE CENTER

MINUTES
January 14, 2020

Members Present: Lyndi Buckingham-Schutt, Marcus Coenen, Madeline Goebel, Jake Grothoff, Joseph Nolte, Roger Nowadzky, Edgar Ortiz, Ginny Renda, Angie Ritchie, Vidal Spaine, Sherill Whisenand, Hollie Zajicek, Li Zhao Mandelbaum

Members Absent: Doug Lewis, Peggy Patrick, Eleanor Zeff

Staff Present: Joyce Warburton

On Tuesday, January 14, 2020, Chairperson Mr. Nowadzky called the meeting of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission to order at 5:00 PM in the MacRae Conference Room, Richard A. Clark Municipal Services Center, 1551 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBER
The Commission welcomed new member Ms. Lyndi Buckingham-Schutt, who was appointed to the Commission on December 16, 2019, by the City of Windsor Heights.

MINUTES
Ms. Whisenand moved to approve the December 10, 2019 minutes, with the addition of Ms. Ritchie as being present. Mr. Nolte seconded the motion. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORT
Financial report for July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020 was distributed indicating December 2019 and January 2020 expenses of $509.57 for Dr. Zeff’s trip to St. Etienne, France in October; $2,002.68 for Ms. Zhao Mandelbaum for trip to Shijiazhuang, China in November; $1,531.79 to Mr. Nowadzky for the remaining expenses for his trip to Shijiazhuang in November; and $43.60 to American Marking for name badges for four (4) Commissioners. Mr. Nolte moved to approve the financial report. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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

Happy New Year. As the calendar turns the page to a new decade, the City’s calendar marks the half way point of Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

As we straddle the physical year with our City fiscal year, it is to be noted that 2020 is the 35th anniversary of our sister city partnership with Shijiazhuang, China. Thirty-five (35) years ago, Des Moines and Shijiazhuang were approximately the same size in population. The municipality of Shijiazhuang has a jurisdiction which includes a surrounding area that goes beyond the
municipal boundaries of the city. Likewise, the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission attempts to encompass our entire greater Des Moines area, acting together to connect our greater community to the world through our interesting and unique sister city relationships.

Having said that, Shijiazhuang now has a population of over 10 million people. Through recent efforts of the Commission over the last few years to stay connected despite change in demographics, Shijiazhuang has reaffirmed dedication to our connection and an affinity to our community. In November, the Commission’s delegation to Shijiazhuang, as part of a slightly larger delegation representing the State of Iowa, successfully garnered support for suggested projects and programs in both Shijiazhuang and in Des Moines to celebrate this anniversary. You will be a participant in anniversary activities in some capacity.

At the February Commission meeting, the Shijiazhuang Committee will give a presentation to the Commission as to the November delegation’s meetings and plans to implement projects and programs which resulted from those meetings in China. Please look to the Shijiazhuang Committee’s January and February reports for further details. As Commissioners, we have the obligation and the pleasure of acting as a body and individually in participating in the implementation of our sister city relationship programs beyond our specific sister city committee assignments. We get to be cross-cultural citizen diplomats, as well as worker bees. So please pay close attention to anniversary developments from the Shijiazhuang Committee.

Let’s touch base on the rest of our City Committees. One of our goals this year is to establish partnership school arrangements with each of our sister cities. Through his hard work and persistence, Education Committee Chair Vidal Spaine has engaged the Des Moines School District in supporting this endeavor. Expect Olivia Howe, to meet with the Commission again to discuss the progress on this project. So, City Committee Chairs, have you worked with your counterparts to identify those schools and contact persons? Thanks.

Mr. Nowadzky also asked Commissioners to begin thinking about the committee or committees they would be interested in as he integrates new members as he reorganizes the various committees.

COMMISSION VICE CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT
No update at this time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Stavropol Committee
Mr. Spaine shared the following written report:

New Year’s Day is the biggest celebration in Russia, and so most of city hall is on break, and therefore received very little communication with my contacts in Stavropol. Stavropol sent us New Year’s Day cards, which will be made available for our next meeting. (Update: Mr. Spaine shared the New Year’s messages which had been sent to himself and Mr. Nowadzky.)

Kristen Massa (Art Teacher at Walnut Street Elementary School) is in the process of getting certificates for the Stavropol students who sent us their drawings, pending authorization from the city attorney. (Update: The City gave authorization to Ms. Massa for use of the Commission’s logo on these certificates.)

Shijiazhuang Committee
Ms. Zhao Mandelbaum shared the following written report:
Our focus on the Shijiazhuang Committee is the 35th anniversary celebration in 2020. After the holiday season, I have started conversations with the Shijiazhuang Foreign Affairs Office. They would like us to tentatively consider two (2) timeframes for a Des Moines delegation visit: June and September. These two (2) times will be in conjunction with their Tourism conferences, where they will be allocating lots of resources. Therefore, it will be easier to get things done. They will be sending their Mayor or other equivalent official to Des Moines as well. The date has not been determined.

China is about to shut down for Chinese New Year Celebration. All discussions will resume around February 1st.

Ms. Zhao Mandelbaum recommends selecting a June date so that if students are to be included as part of the delegation, they would be out of school. Bacon Fest and Esport Tournament as two (2) events which were discussed during the visit to China in November.

A follow-up report from members of the November delegation to Shijiazhuang is being scheduled for the February 11th Commission meeting.

**Saint-Etienne Committee**

The following written report was shared on behalf of Dr. Zeff:

The sub-committee for Saint Etienne met once in December, and we are beginning to work on our next plan of operation. We are moving ahead on the next phase by establishing ties with the Franco-American organization we were given access to, and by linking the Berkwood Farms and Robert Selby and looking for stronger connections such as environmental or water issues.

As it was the Winter Holidays, there were few people available, but we will get back in touch with them now that the vacations are over. Everything in France closes for the two (2) weeks around Christmas and New Year’s. Our other issue for our committee was the Des Moines City Council elections and now the upcoming municipal elections in March in France.

**Vushtrri, Kosovo**

Ms. Zajicek shared the following information:

Snap elections in October/November remain up in the air because of the new government. They are still trying to form that new government. Their system is unique, as they have multiple parties and must form a coalition with a couple of the top parties because they don’t want any one party to be in full control of the government. They are down to two (2) parties, which are the LVV (Self-Determination Movement Party) and the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo) that will probably form that coalition. I think they have their new prime minister picked out. So, we are hoping in the next month they will have that established. Otherwise, if they don’t form the Coalition by later this month, they will have to go back to elections.

Everything else is going well with this partnership. On January 13th, Ms. Zajicek met with the Deputy Director for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Director for National Security in the NATO Division of the Foreign Affairs Office. They are very interested in moving the relationship forward in a more tangible way. They like the cultural and relationship sides, but now that those are well established, they want to have some tangible business/trade operations going on there. Work has begun on an arms deal. Norwalk has been able to get two (2) Kosovo investors engaged with the new hotel project being done in Norwalk. One is currently the Advisor to the Prime Minister. He is leaving government work
and going back into private business. Between these two (2) men, about $2 million will be invested in this hotel project. This is a very real product of the relationship.

A trip in June is being coordinated by the Consulate of the Republic of Kosovo as Iowa Sister States is dealing with staffing issues at this time. Governor Reynolds is anticipated to be a part of this trade mission trip this year. While there, Vushtrri is planning a dedication of the park that they built called the “Norwalk Park”. It is anticipated that they will also have a ribbon cutting for the 1,250 acres outside of the City of Gjakova, which has been designated as the Kosovo American Economic City. It is hoped that some business owners from the metro would also go as part of the delegation and tour this business park. Kosovo is very serious about moving this project forward.

**Pristina Committee**

Mr. Nowadzky shared the following written report:

> Since the December Pristina report, I have been in communication with The Chief of the Kosovo Consulate office in identifying appropriate schools in Pristina to match and partner with schools to be identified in the Des Moines School District through the Commission’s Education Committee.

> Other recent developments include a possible delegation of mayors from Kosovo coming to Iowa this year, perhaps sooner than later. Details have yet to be confirmed, including whether Pristina will participate in this delegation.

> Lastly, it is anticipated that the Governor of Iowa will be making an official visit to Kosovo in 2020. It is anticipated that Des Moines will be invited to participate in that delegation.

**Kofu Committee**

Mr. Nolte distributed a brochure (see attachment) regarding the Brunnier Art Museau’s series “Contemplete Japan” – January 15 thru July 31, 2020. The museum is located in the Scheman Building at Iowa State University.

**Italy Committee**

Ms. Renda reported Sister Cities International continues to be non-responsive to her emailed inquires for assistance with making a connection with any city in Italy. Ms. Warburton shared that she had also made attempts at requesting assistance, but with no responses either.

**Education Committee**

Mr. Spaine is still waiting for City Chairs to provide school contact information that could be made available to Ms. Olivia Howe, International Baccalaureate Teacher Development Coordinator for Des Moines Public Schools (olivia.howe@dmschools.org).

**OLD BUSINESS**

No Old Business was discussed at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Request to Create Relationship with a City in Puerto Rico**

Mr. Ortiz indicated that Puerto Rico has sustained a series of constant earthquakes that have struck that region this month (January). Mr. Ortiz inquired as to the possibility of creating a sister city partnership with Puerto Rico. Mr. Nolte asked if our sister cities need to be outside of the United States.
**Iowa Sister States’ Request for Home Hosts**

Mr. Nowadzky shared an urgent request from Iowa Sister States asking for help in finding home hosts for an incoming delegation from Ukraine. See their communication below and share it with anyone you think might be willing to host.

Hello,

*We are reaching out because we are in desperate need of home hosts for 3 females and 2 males from January 24-February 1 in the Des Moines and surrounding area. This is a group that we are hosting via the Open World Leadership Center and the US Ukraine Foundation. The delegates are from Ukraine and are here to learn about our healthcare system and health reform. The delegates will have nights and weekends free to spend with you and your family. During the weekdays the delegates will have a program from roughly 8am-4:30pm. If you need help with transportation during the weekday program, ISS is happy to help out.*

*Please consider opening up your home to one of these delegates! We have hosted via this program many times and the groups are always fantastic. It is a great opportunity to learn more about another culture while sharing our own.*

*If you are interested in hosting or have any questions, please contact Monty Freeman at monty.freeman@iowasisterstates.org*

Thank you!

**Kassi Bailey | Director of International Operations**

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**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Nolte and seconded by Ms. Goebel. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be **February 11, 2020 at 5:00 PM** in the **MacRae Conference Room, Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center, 1551 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.**
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