

City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers
100 N. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33755*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 11, 2024

4:00 PM

Special Meeting

Main Library - Council Chambers

Sister Cities Advisory Board

Roll Call

Present 4 - Board Member Lina Teixeira, Board Member Melinda Bacon, Board Member Stephanie Chill, and Board Member Indira Yengera

Absent 1 - Board Member Robert Kantor

Also Present – Amber Brice – Arts and Cultural Affairs Coordinator and Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk

1. Call To Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approve the minutes from the January 25th meeting.

Board Member Teixeira moved to approve the minutes of the January 25, 2024 Sister Cities meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda

Kathleen Beckman thanked the Board for their service. She said there is no information on today's agenda regarding the new Sister City relationship with Ixmiquilpan, Mexico and that there are a lot of upcoming events that could be reported on. She said each Sister City relationship should be addressed on each agenda.

Juan Baxcajay said the Hidalguense community has been in the area for years and has much to offer. He requested City support for the Hidalgo community programs.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Discuss Dates for Delegation Trip to Nagano

Arts and Cultural Affairs Manager Amber Brice said the trip is scheduled for October 8, 2024 through October 18, 2024. Two of those days are full travel days. The advisory board members are invited to attend and may bring a guest at a cost of around \$3,000 which includes, food, travel, and lodging. She said May 3, 2024 is the deadline to let her know who is going. There will be two mandatory orientations for those traveling.

4.2 Discuss Japanese Middle School Exchange Student Trip

The exchange students from Japan visited Clearwater from March 20-26. We would like to thank all the host families for participating in the exchange.

Ms. Brice said ten students and two teachers traveled to Clearwater in March. They toured the library and attended a Phillies spring training game where they were introduced on the field before the game. She thanked the Phillies organization for the great seats and thanked City staff and Board Members who hosted the students and teachers.

4.3 Introduce Clearwater Resident High School Students Selected for the Exchange Trip in Summer

Four high school students were selected to receive a scholarship to travel to Nagano, Japan and represent Clearwater in our annual cultural exchange.

Ms. Brice said scholarships are given to High School students who live in Clearwater, regardless of where they go to school. One of the students chosen for the trip was Board Member Indira Yengera who attends Dunedin High School. One student from Countryside High School and two students from Palm Harbor University High School were also chosen. The chosen students are accomplished individuals and are involved in extra curricular activities. The group will travel June 21, 2024 through July 3, 2024.

5. Old Business Items: None.

6. Director's Report

Ms. Brice said the Board needs to vote on a Chair and Vice Chair.

Board Member Teixeira moved to nominate Doug Kelly and Chair and Stephanie Chill as Vice Chair. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Ms. Brice said the Mexican Consulate in Orlando invited the Mayor to attend a ribbon cutting event. She said the relationship with Ixmiquilpan is still being cultivated and the Consulate keeps her updated on events. She said there was a mural festival in the East Gateway which is highly populated with residents from Ixmiquilpan. Two of the murals are on businesses owned by people from Hidalgo. She said on February 14, 2024, City Management and the president of Sister Cities Inc met with the Japanese Consulate General and their Cultural Attaché. This was their first trip to Clearwater and they were impressed by the number of student and teacher exchanges that have occurred over the years. She thanked Pam Benton for her service, she filled the School Board representative place on the Board and retired in December. She was an integral part of the Board and always helpful with the student exchange trips. Ms. Brice said Ms. Benton helped her understand her role with the sister city relationships when she was first hired.

Ms. Chill said Clearwater Sister Cities, Inc. will hold their annual meeting. This is the meeting where members will discuss the events and activities for the upcoming year. The 9 middle school exchange students have completed two orientations and have two more to go for their trip scheduled June 11, 2024 through June 23, 2024. A fundraiser is scheduled in the Fall, where exchange students will come together and present their experiences and the 2025 exchange trip will be discussed as well.

7. Board Members to be Heard

In response to a question regarding the status of the Ixmiquilpan relationship, Ms. Brice said the partnership is new and staff and the Consulate are still trying to figure out what the relationship will look like. She said this is a Nagano delegation trip year and her office only has so much capacity. She is in communication with the Mexican Consulate representatives regularly. She said community organizations are welcome to report upcoming events and activities at these Board meetings.

Board Member Teixeira said she understands that Ixmiquilpan is anxious to engage the City further and that it is hard to exercise patience. She said the relationship with Nagano has developed over decades. She said Ms. Brice is doing her best and the Ixmiquilpan relationship will not be ignored but expectations need to be realistic.

It was suggested that Juan Baxcajay communicate directly with the Sister Cities, Inc. organization.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Attest:

Chair - Sister Cities Advisory Board

Board Reporter