

City of Clearwater

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



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 22, 2020

Virtual Meeting

4:00 PM

Main Library - Council Chambers

Sister Cities Advisory Board

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 20 69, issued by the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis on March 20, 2020, municipalities may conduct meetings of their governing boards without having a quorum of its members present physically or at any specific location, and utilizing communications media technology such as telephonic or video conferencing, as provided by Section 120.54(5)(b)2, Florida Statutes.

Roll Call

Present 6 - Chair Michael Ballard, Vice Chair Pamela Gene Benton, Board Member Candace Hays, Board Member Hoyt Hamilton, Board Member Sallie Parks, and Board Member Lucas Geraldi-Smith

Absent 1 - Board Member Michael Brewster

Also Present – Christopher Hubbard – Cultural Affairs Coordinator, Patricia O. Sullivan - Board Reporter

Awaiting approval

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. Chair Michael Ballard, Vice Chair Pam Benton, and Board Members Sallie Parks, Hoyt Hamilton, Candace Hays and Lucas Geraldi-Smith attended the meeting using communications media technology. Also participating in the meeting were Cultural Affairs Coordinator Christopher Hubbard and Board Reporter Patricia Sullivan. Live participation occurred in Council Chambers at the Main Library.

To provide continuity for research, items are in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

2. Approval of Minutes

2.1 Approve the January 23, 2020 Sister Cities Advisory Board meeting minutes.

Member Parks moved to approve minutes of the January 23, 2020 Sister Cities Advisory Board 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: None.

4. New Business Items

4.1 Welcome Member Brewster to the Sister Cities Advisory Board.

Cultural Affairs Coordinator Christopher Hubbard said the newly appointed local business community representative, Member Brewster, is Chief Production Manager for Monin, established in Bourges, France. He was unable to attend today's meeting.

4.2 Review an update on the 60th Anniversary visit to Clearwater

Mr. Hubbard said the Clearwater delegation visit to Nagano, rescheduled following Typhoon Hagibis, was postponed again due to the pandemic. In November, Nagano will announce their final decision re a February 2021 delegation visit to Clearwater. Should that visit be delayed, 61st anniversary delegation visits to Nagano in October 2021 and to Clearwater in February 2022 could be considered or visits could be postponed until 2025 for the 65th anniversary.

Support was expressed for 61st anniversary visits as long as travel is safe. Consensus was to not postpone exchanges until the 65th anniversary as maintaining the relationship and communications with Nagano was important.

4.3 Review an update on the status of the 2021 exchange programs.

Mr. Hubbard said all 2020 exchange programs were canceled due to the pandemic. In January, staff will check with participants chosen for the 2020 exchanges to verify their continued interest in 2021 programs.

CSCI (Clearwater Sister Cities, Inc.) Representative/Board Member Hays said last April all 2020 Young Ambassadors had indicated interest in traveling to Japan in 2021.

Member Benton said while the 2020 exchange teacher may be unable to participate in 2021, other teachers had expressed interest; Nagano had not committed to 2021 exchange dates.

4.4 Review an update on the progress of Sister City discussions with Bourges, France.

Mr. Hubbard said Bourges, France had elected a new mayor and had a new international relations administrator. While Bourges initially contacted Clearwater re a Sister Cities relationship, Bourges' previous administration's response to Clearwater's communications was tepid. The new administrator expressed interest in restarting conversations. Jean-Charles Faust, the French Honorary Consul in Tampa, has provided invaluable assistance with translations and conversations. Mr. Hubbard will ask Member Brewster if Monin is interested in helping Clearwater establish a Sister Cities relationship with Bourges.

Consensus was that a Sister Cities partnership with Bourges was exciting.

4.5 Review an update on the Young Ambassadors travel scholarship.

Mr. Hubbard reported the City Council had established two \$1,850 hardship scholarships to help low-income middle school students travel with the Young Ambassadors to Japan. He researched eligibility requirements for other scholarship programs. Sample criteria: 1)

low-income family; 2) recent job loss/injury; 3) SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) eligibility; 4) TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) eligibility; 5) free or reduced price lunch eligibility; 6) foster care student; 7) homeless student as defined by Pinellas County School Board; 8) teacher, counselor, coach, or mentor recommendation; 9) minimum 2.5 GPA; and 10) participant in group and club, especially ones focused on international topics, culture, economics, languages and world studies.

Mr. Hubbard said recipients would be required to: 1) reside within City limits; 2) be actively enrolled in middle school; and 3) present a post-trip report to City Council.

Discussion ensued with concerns expressed that teachers or coaches would not know if students qualified for the scholarship unless informed by a student, students eligible for SNAP, TANF, or free/reduced price lunch faced a drastic level of poverty and most likely could not afford the discounted cost of the trip and marketing the scholarship would be difficult. It was suggested that applications could include scholarship information and scholarships could be promoted during International Day and on City and CSCI websites. As teachers and counselors were good information sources, it was recommended that scholarship and program information should be forwarded to all world language teachers. It was reported that Bay News 9 coverage garnered significant attention. It was suggested that scholarship information also could be posted to the School District's Peach Jar. It was suggested that free/reduced price lunch eligibility should be sufficient and SNAP or TANF qualification should not be necessary. It was noted Young Ambassadors were not told that any participants had received CSCI funds.

It was anticipated that unused City scholarship funds would not carry over to future years.

5. Old Business Items

5.1 Discuss potential program expansion for Nagano Sister City program.

Mr. Hubbard provided program expansion ideas for the COVID-19 era: 1) Virtual exchanges – students participate in video calls with groups of Nagano students. City would facilitate by hosting calls at times convenient for both cities. Students would become acquainted ahead of prospective visits through chat and games; 2) Virtual artist exchange – Cultural Affairs hosts a digital gallery of Nagano area artists and Clearwater posts local art; 3) Cultural Learning E-Center – Nagano and Clearwater create reciprocal learning hubs to share educational resources such as promotional videos, tourism, cooking demonstrations, popular attraction visits, etc. The platform would provide Clearwater citizens opportunities to get to know its Sister City.

Discussion ensued with suggestions that Nagano could recommend videos and documentaries on Japanese life, including cooking, gardening, their homes and local sites and Clearwater could reciprocate. It was reported during orientation students assembled photo books about their own lives and shared them with their Nagano hosts as successful icebreakers. It was suggested the books could be shared online as personal expressions. It was stated local Rotary Clubs could share speakers virtually with Nagano and the Tourist Development Council may have video footage of local destinations. It was indicated that similar learning opportunities could be established with Bourges.

Mr. Hubbard will report on his collaboration with Public Communication staff re virtual cultural exchanges.

5.2 Review update on display of Nagano items at Clearwater Historical Society South Ward museum.

Mr. Hubbard said many small trade goods items from Nagano had been relocated to the Clearwater Historical Society South Ward museum. Large items remained at the Main Library until it is determined how best to insure and display them. The City will maintain its loaned collection.

6. Director's Report

Member Hays said of 21 applications, 12 middle school students were chosen to participate in the 2020 Young Ambassadors trip to Japan; the trip was canceled when Japan closed its borders due to the pandemic.

Member Hays said CSCI had no events planned during the pandemic. She said CSCI was involved with the South Ward museum displays and was working with the Clearwater Garden Club to plant a Japanese garden near the museum's outside restrooms.

7. Board Members to be Heard: None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Attest:

Chair - Sister Cities Advisory Board

Board Reporter