



## **GREATER DES MOINES SISTER CITIES COMMISSION**

400 Robert D. Ray Drive  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309-1891  
Phone: (515) 283-4141  
FAX: (515) 237-1300

***NEXT MEETING MARCH 8, 2022 AT 5:00 PM***

**MACRAE CONFERENCE ROOM – RICHARD A. CLARK MUNICIPAL SERVICE CENTER**

### **MINUTES**

**February 8, 2022**

Members Present: Lyndi Buckingham-Schutt\*, Joseph Cephas Davis, Todd Jacobus, Brandi Miller, Roger Nowadzky, Suresh Reddy\*, Ginny Renda\*, Angie Ritchie\*, Vidal Spaine\*, Sherill Whisenand, Hollie Zajicek, Eleanor Zeff\*, Li Zhao Mandelbaum\*

\* Attended via conference call: Lyndi Buckingham-Schutt - Medical Concern  
Reddy - Work Conflict  
Renda - Traveling Outside of Iowa  
Ritchie - Medical Concern  
Spaine - Medical Concern  
Zeff - Traveling Outside of Iowa  
Zhao Mandelbaum - Medical Concern

Members Absent: Marcus Coenen, Doug Lewis, Joseph Nolte

Staff Present: Joyce Warburton

On Tuesday, February 8, 2022, Chairperson Mr. Nowadzky called the meeting of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission to order at 5:06 PM.

### **MINUTES**

Mr. Jacobus asked that the Pristina report submitted for the January 11, 2022 meeting be replaced as the incorrect report was forwarded for that meeting. Mr. Nolte moved to approve the January 11, 2022 minutes with that correction. Rev. Davis seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### **FINANCIAL REPORT**

Financial report for July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022 was distributed indicating expenses through January 2022 to be \$18.40 for publication of the December 14 Sister Cities Commission summary minutes in the Business Record. Ms. Miller moved to approve the financial report. Rev. Davis seconded the motion. Motion carried.

### **COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Mr. Nowadzky shared the following written report:

Here we are in February. Sometimes midwinter can be sluggish and/or even the near equivalent to the movie “Groundhog Day.” That is not the case for our Commission and its activities.

Again, we are pleased to announce the revitalization of Friends of Sister Cities. The Friends group is a nonprofit organization with the purpose of supporting the mission and activities of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission. It recognizes that the mission of the Commission takes more resources than the Commission’s municipal budget. In this regard, the Friends will be working with our Kofu City Committee to help fundraise at an upcoming scholarship event planned by our Kofu

Committee. Please read the Kofu report for details, along with their plans for an upcoming virtual mayoral meeting.

We are also reminded that February brings the anniversary of Kosovo's annual Independence Day. Look to the Pristina City Committee report for discussion as to related activities. Also, a peek at our Facebook page will remind you that our friends in our Chinese sister city of Shijiazhuang will be celebrating their lunar new year, and a recipe to help them bring in the year of the tiger.

In this regard, please carefully read the Commission Vice Chairperson's Report. What should all of us and our committees be doing to routinely strengthen the relationship between your sister city and our community? While some may be treading water waiting for a return of safe international travel, the Vice Chairperson's report and the Chairperson's last month's report are instructive of how the Commission can and is powering forward. Again, I thank all of you for your dedicated efforts in citizen diplomacy.

#### **COMMISSION VICE CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT**

Ms. Whisenand shared the following written report:

February is *Heart Month*--and there is a vein of cooperation at the heart of what we are witnessing at the Des Moines Sister Cities Commission. Sister Cities subcommittees are taking root and adding to their membership ranks, highlighting new ideas and solidifying their execution plans. Pristina and Kofu Committees have not missed a beat when it comes to meeting every month (and, in the case with palpitating accuracy, Pristina committee meets every two weeks.) But there is still more to do. Remember, it's the Chinese New Year. It's the Independence Day anniversary month for Kosovo.

Chairman Nowadzky and I are pulling together the coming year's budget, based on those who turned in their strategic plan and financial "wish list." *We needed your starting point to get to the end point.* For those whose cities are lagging in interest to engage with us here in Des Moines, our plan from the homeland is simple (and less expensive). Figure out a way to engage them on social media! Folks, talk to our committee members with Pristina, Kofu, and Shijiazhuang! They are posting on our Facebook, setting up Zoom calls, connecting through *What's App* and other social platforms. All with little or minimal effort. We have scheduled appointments with their cities' mayors and our Mayor and elected officials .... all in the effort to stay in touch. We are still seeking your list of "major holiday happenings" in each city--even if they are not responding. We respond with our courtesy acknowledgements. We build that bridge ... eventually. And finally, we have the Friends of the Sister Cities Commission back up and moving along. We have identified a few interested citizens to serve on the Board of Directors and hope that our current Commission members will hold on through the transition and beyond. So, there you have it. In the heart of Des Moines, we move forward around the world.

Ms. Whisenand added that she is working on bringing the Commission's history document up to date and into a book/e-book format. A big thank you goes to Cumming Mayor Becker and Commissioner (Cumming City Clerk) Ritchie who were of enormous assistance with getting the data collected from a number of previous year's meeting minutes added.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

##### ***Stavropol Committee***

Mr. Spaine shared the following written report:

If you have been watching the news lately, there has been a lot of talk about Russia invading Ukraine, an independent country. Maybe, you have been troubled by the news and also questioned what it means for the City of Des Moines to continue to engage in a Sister City relationship with Stavropol,

Russia. As, it appears that Russia is being a big bully in trying to overthrow an established, sovereign nation in Ukraine. In this report I thought it was time to open a conversation and address some of your feelings and questions regarding this issue. So, I encourage you to ask questions or comment of how you feel about this situation. One thing that we have to keep in mind is that we exist as a Sister City with Stavropol purely on a humanitarian level with our friends in Stavropol. This is a people-to-people relationship and bares no political influence. The Russian citizens in Stavropol have a genuine affection for us here in our beloved city of Des Moines.

This is also quite evident in my numerous trips to Stavropol, as they have welcomed our delegation into their homes, and have enjoyed their gracious hospitality. Also, it is worth mentioning about my continued interaction with the Stavropol administration and to say that I am really encouraged when I listen to them speak passionately about how much they appreciate this friendship. One thing that I am quite convinced of, and I know this to be true because I lived in both Russia and Ukraine, is that the ordinary citizens of Russia want nothing but to live in peace with their neighbors, raise their families, put food on the table, and pave the way for the future generation of Russians. I see our role at this critical time to be very vital and to realize that we want the same desired outcome as our Russian partners. My hope is that this relationship continues and flourishes as we make progress at all levels.

I blame the pandemic for the pace at which progress has slowed down in this relationship. It will be nice when at some time in the near future, we can travel to Stavropol, and vice versa welcome our Russian friends to Des Moines. I am still vigorously recruiting Des Moines Public School (DMPS) students to become friends with Russian students in Stavropol. I believe this kind of relationship has the potential to shed light on our commonalities and help bridge gaps between our two countries. I continue to maintain contact with Stavropol through emails, zoom, and phone calls, and they have been reciprocating.

Let us all continue to endeavor that in the final analysis peace will prevail, realizing that war is never ever the answer.

### ***Shijiazhuang Committee***

Ms. Zhao Mandelbaum reported that with China going into Chinese New Year and also the Shijiazhuang Foreign Affairs Offices being deployed to help out with the Winter Olympics, so everyone is very busy, so no activity is going on this month. Hopefully when both of these finish up, we will be back talking about more exchanges and other activities.

### ***Saint-Etienne Committee***

Dr. Zeff shared the following written report:

In January, two (2) French Chefs from the Saint-Etienne region traveled to Des Moines and Ankeny to work with the students in the Iowa Culinary Institute (ICI) program at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC). Both chefs work in restaurants in France that are rated with two (2) Michelin stars, a very prestigious award. They celebrated the 37th anniversary of the Sister City connection between Des Moines and Saint-Etienne.

I attended one (1) of the three (3) dinners (January 27, 28 and 29) and was recognized as a Sister City Commissioner and one (1) of the early participants in the Des Moines and Saint-Etienne partnership. The Sister City program was also acknowledged as an important part of the development of ICI as a premier training program for Iowa, and other culinary arts students around the country. DMACC's President reaffirmed ICI's importance to its overall curriculum for area students.

Several Alliance Française members were present on January 28 and were acknowledged for helping with translating for the French chefs recently and last year during COVID restrictions when the chefs' offerings had to be all presented online. The Des Moines Alliance Française is very supportive of the Sister City connection with Saint-Etienne and also works with the Commission on The Bastille Day celebration every July 14th.

As Chair of the Saint-Etienne Sister City Committee on the Commission, I also met with Ginny Renda to discuss the issue of finding new Sister City connections and renewing existing ones.

I am enclosing a few pictures from the January 28 French Chefs dinner at DMACC.



Dr. Zeff added that there have been no student trips to Saint-Etienne for two (2) years, but they are looking to make up for that by taking two (2) trips this summer, one in May and the other one in August.

#### **Pristina Committee**

Mr. Jacobus shared the following written report:

1. **Governor Reynolds Trip To Kosovo CANCELLED.** Governor Reynolds had a trip scheduled to Kosovo for February 16-18, 2022, as part of an economic focused trip where she would be visiting four other countries with Debbie Durham, Director of Iowa Department of Economic Development, and others. Governor Reynolds' plan in Kosovo was to renew the State Partnership documents, and meet with President, Prime Minister, Parliament, and others. She was planning to celebrate Independence Day in Kosovo. That trip was indefinitely postponed on January 19, 2022, due to COVID-19 related concerns. The trip has not yet been re-scheduled.
2. **Summer Trip to Kosovo.** There WILL be a delegation visiting Kosovo on June 1-July 8, 2022. Anyone who either plans to attend or wants to be added to the "information distribution list", should reach out to Kim Heidemann, Administrative Assistant to the Kosovo Chief of Mission, at [kim.heidemann@rks-gov.net](mailto:kim.heidemann@rks-gov.net) or (515) 215-0118. Kim will make sure to keep you informed of the

schedule and help coordinate hotels, etc. The skeletal schedule that was distributed by the Kosovo Consulate in early January 2022 is as follows:

- a. Friday, July 1 – Recommended date to depart Iowa (or elsewhere!)
- b. Saturday, July 2 – Arrival in Kosovo
- c. Monday, July 4 – Friday, July 7 – Formal meetings
- d. Friday, July 8 – Official Program ends
- e. Saturday, July 9 – Depart Kosovo
- f. We hope to be able to participate in U.S. Independence Day activities with the U.S. Embassy.
- g. The Kosovo Ministry of Local Government Administration will host a one-day conference for ALL sister city partners, including those from other states and even countries.

3. **Kosovo Independence Day.** Kosovo Independence Day is on Thursday, February 17, 2022. We will CELEBRATE Kosovo Independence Day on **Friday, February 18, 2022, at 6:30 PM at the Kosovo Consulate, 309 Court Avenue, Suite 223, Des Moines, Iowa 50309.** PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR AND PLAN TO ATTEND! Todd Jacobus met with Artan Duraku this morning to talk about the event. We will plan on serving light refreshments. Plan is to invite the Governor's Office, the Iowa Legislature International Relations Committee, Iowa Sister States Board of Directors & Kosovo Committee, all Sister City Committees, and we definitely would be open to inviting others.

4. **Citizen Diplomacy Summit.** Todd Jacobus reminded the Committee about the Citizen Diplomacy Summit & Evening Banquet – both of which will take place on Tuesday, February 22, 2022, Beginning at 8:30 AM at the FFA Center on DMACC's Ankeny Campus, 1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny, Iowa 50023. Register online at: [www.iowasisterstates.org/event-details/citizen-diplomacy-summit](http://www.iowasisterstates.org/event-details/citizen-diplomacy-summit). Cost to attend the summit alone is \$50. Cost to attend the summit and the evening banquet is \$125. Cost to attend only the evening banquet is \$100.

#### **CITIZEN DIPLOMACY SUMMIT SCHEDULE**

9:00-9:20 AM – Welcome/Opening

9:30-10:45 AM – Know Your Impact as a Citizen Diplomat

*(A purposeful dialogue around the challenges, successes, and key strategies of moving Iowa's international relationships forward.)*

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM – Lunch Session: Attracting Business to Iowa

*(How Iowa has become a key player in international relations, attracting businesses, educators, and ambassadors to our State.)*

#### **Breakout Sessions (Choose One)**

1:15-2:30 PM – Welcoming Refugees

*(Iowa's history and future in welcoming refugees and how all citizens can play a part.)*

1:15-2:30 PM – Virtual Diplomacy During the Pandemic

*(Ways organizations have stayed connected during the pandemic; how virtual diplomacy has shaped future partnership building.)*

#### **Breakout Sessions (Choose One)**

2:45-4:00 PM – Diplomacy in Education

*(How to stay engaged with international alumni and the benefits of working relationships with international institutions)*

2:45-4:00 PM – Business Diplomacy

*(Iowa's significant role in international trade and business and the impact of these professional partnerships)*

**General Session**

4:15-4:30 PM – Closing Remarks for Daytime Event

**Evening Session**

6:00-8:30 PM – Banquet and Presentations

Keynote Speaker: David Ignatius, Washington Post

Presentation of Robert Ray Awards

8:30 PM – Closing Remarks for Nighttime Event

5. **Potential COILL Delegation to Iowa October 2022.** Iowa Sister States submitted an application to plan, organize, facilitate, and execute a schedule oriented around the theme of “**Inclusion of Youth in Decision-Making Processes**” for a five-person delegation from Kosovo on October 8-15, 2022. This event will showcase U.S. values and democratic institutions, provide the delegation with an opportunity to engage with elected officials at the federal and state, county, and municipal levels, and provide an opportunity for Kosovo leaders to engage with Iowa leaders involved with and engaged in youth decision making.
  - a. [4-H Youth Development](#)
  - b. [Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Iowa \(BGCCI\)](#)
  - c. [Boy Scouts of America Mid-Iowa Council](#) OR [Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa](#)
  - d. [CHARACTER COUNTS!](#) at [The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center](#)
  - e. [City of Fort Dodge, Iowa](#)
  - f. [City of Johnston, Iowa](#)
  - g. [Clarion Goldfield Dows School District & FFA Program](#)
  - h. [Des Moines Public Schools Youth Diversity & Inclusion Summit](#)
  - i. [Drake University Student Senate](#)
  - j. [Harkin Institute of Public Policy & Citizen Engagement, Drake University](#)
  - k. [Iowa FFA Association](#)
  - l. [Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates](#)
  - m. [Iowa Young Professionals Connection](#)
  - n. [Iowa Youth Congress](#)
  - o. [Lauridsen Skate Park](#)
  - p. [Rotary 6000 Interact](#)
  - q. [Student Government | College Republicans | College Democrats](#)
  - r. [World Food Prize Foundation's Global Youth Institute](#)
6. **Potential COILL Delegation to Iowa December 2022.** Iowa Sister States submitted an application to plan, organize, facilitate, and execute a schedule oriented around the theme of “**Sustainability for Civil Society Organizations**” for a five-person delegation from Kosovo in December 10-17, 2022. This event will showcase U.S. values and democratic institutions, provide the delegation with an opportunity to engage with elected officials at the federal and state, county, and municipal levels, and provide an opportunity for Kosovo leaders to engage with Iowa leaders involved with and engaged in sustaining civil society organizations. We anticipate organizing visits with the following organizations for our Kosovo delegation:

- a. City of Clarion ([link](#))
- b. City of Des Moines Partnership with Krause Group for Downtown Soccer Stadium ([link](#))
- c. City of Fort Dodge ([link](#))
- d. City of Sioux City ([link](#))
- e. City of West Des Moines Partnership with Mid-American Energy Company on “RecPlex” ([link](#))
- f. Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines ([link](#))
- g. Community Foundation of Cedar Rapids ([link](#))
- h. Des Moines Area Community College ([link](#))
- i. Des Moines City Council ([link](#))
- j. FFA Enrichment Center ([link](#))
- k. Freedom of Information Council ([link](#))
- l. Greater Des Moines Partnership ([link](#))
- m. Harkins Institute of Public Diplomacy ([link](#))
- n. Iowa State University Sustainable Agriculture ([link](#))
- o. Iowa State Capitol Visit:
  - (1) Meet with Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate ([link](#))
  - (2) Meet with Iowa Senator Pat Grassley, President of Iowa Senate ([link](#))
  - (3) Meet with Iowa Senator Zach Nunn, Chair International Committee ([link](#))
- p. Kimberley Farms ([link](#))
- q. Principal Financial Group’s Principal Foundation Program ([link](#))
- r. Silt-Sustainable Iowa Land Trust ([link](#))
- s. Stanley Foundation ([link](#))
- t. University of Iowa ([link](#))
- u. Wellmark Blue Shield Blue Shield BluesCare Giving Program ([link](#))
- v. World Food Prize/Ruan Foundation ([link](#))

7. **Connecting With People.** Karla McCollum emphasized that we are working to find more connections to strengthen our partnerships. These COILL programs will do exactly that. We will sustain programs through PEOPLE – not through government. We need to work to develop and solidify relationships.

8. **Rochester Institute of Technology in Pristina.** Karla McCollum reported that she recently spoke with the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Pristina, Kosovo, and learned that the U.S. Embassy in Kosovo is supporting the “Kosovo Bridge Project” [<https://www.rit.edu/kosovo/bridgeproject>] to teach English. ISS will assist with a “pen pal project” for students ages 14-18. The project is intended to help Kosovar students learn vocational English with the goal being to bring these students to the U.S. to study. The Government of Kosovo said that they would support this initiative financially to bring students to Kosovo. The RIT Website says, “Pen Pal Program with Iowa”. Sister Cities is perfect place to start. The platform is called “Edmoto” [[Edmoto Details](#)], which could be monitored by schools,

RIT, etc. The concept is that we create a topic (What are finals like? Do you have a job after school? etc.), and then allow students in Kosovo to respond so they can practice English. Iowa/Sister Cities are Module 1, and there are 10 modules.

9. Relationships to establish between Des Moines & Pristina
  - a. Des Moines Art Center – POC: Jeff Fleming
  - b. Des Moines Performing Arts – POC: Jonathan Brendemuehl
  - c. Des Moines Police Department – POC: Chief Dana Wingert, Deputy Chief Al Tunks
  - d. Norwalk Police Department – POC: Chief Greg Staples, Deputy Chief Kirk Westvold
  - e. Iowa Historical Museum – POC: ?
  - f. Johnston Police Department – Chief McDaniels
  - g. Boy Scouts of America Mid-Iowa Council – POC: Twin Rivers District Chairperson
  - h. Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa – POC: Kate Kimple (Des Moines Office), Kim McCormick (Sioux City Office)
  - i. High School – Sherry Poole, Hoover HS
  - j. Middle School – Kip Coleman, Meredith MS
  - k. Elementary School – Beth Sloan, Moore ES
  - l. Music – Joseph Giunta
  - m. Non-Governmental Organization – Heroinat Memorial M. Community Festivals
  - n. What are additional areas of partnership?

Discussion was held regarding the Pristina Committee's request to provide financial support for this annual event. The decision was made to suspend the Commission's Finance Committee's funding/spending procedure as it relates to this particular funding request due to a process failure. Ms. Miller moved that the Commission contribute \$300 toward Kosovo's Independence Day 2022 celebration. Ms. Zajicek seconded the motion. Motion carried.

#### ***Kofu Committee***

Mr. Nolte shared the following written report:

The Kofu Committee met on January 31 by Zoom. Much work has been done on the event for May. Ricki King was contacted by a woman who was a Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) teacher on the very first Kofu exchange. She offered to speak and bring photos. We have composed a letter for sponsorship requests, and we are now approaching our partners. Joe and Joanne shared that their pastor, Rev. Janelle Osbeck, donated two (2) boxes of Japanese art and decorations that she acquired while growing up in Japan. These pieces are great vintage pieces that Rev. Osbeck is excited can be sold to support travel to Japan. The Committee also discussed how the scholarships will ultimately be distributed. We will work with the school district to distribute the funds we raise, and we hope that Vidal will be able to assist in securing that agreement.

We also discussed the call with the two (2) Mayors. Joe worked with the City to send the attached New Year's Greetings from Mayor Cownie to Mayor Higuchi (*attached at end of minutes*). In the letter, Mayor Cownie invited Mayor Higuchi to a Zoom meeting. Mayor Higuchi has accepted. We are still working on setting a date. At our committee meeting, we created a draft agenda which (thank you Roger and Joyce) Mayor Cownie has approved and which we will now send to Mayor Higuchi. We will keep the Commission informed as the date solidifies, as we hope you will all try to join the call.

Joe met with the Executive Director and Board President of the Japanese American Society of Iowa (JASI). They will be joining the Kofu Committee and helping with the fundraising event. They have a lot of great ideas for entertainment, promotion, and food. They have also invited the Commission to help volunteer a shift or two as we are able for CelebrAsian. More information about that opportunity will come as we learn more.

If I am not at the meeting (I will be in London and I hope that I am sleeping when the meeting occurs, although with jet lag you never know), thank you all for your good work and support! Please let me know if you have any questions.

***Italy Committee***

Nothing new was reported at this time.

**OLD BUSINESS**

No Old Business was discussed at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS**

No New Business was discussed at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjournment, Mr. Nowadzky expressed thanks (on behalf of the Commission) to Ms. Buckingham-Schutt as this was to be her last meeting before relocating to Ames due to a change in employment.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Miller and seconded by Ms. Renda. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:07 PM.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be **March 10, 2022** at **5:00 PM** in the **MacRae Conference Room, Richard A. Clark Municipal Service Center, 1551 East Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway.**



January 18, 2022

The Honorable Yuichi Higuchi  
Mayor, City of Kofu  
ATTN: Mr. Hiroyuki Sano  
Secretary Department, Kofu City Hall  
Main Office 5th Floor  
1-18-1 Marunouchi, Kofu, Yamanashi, Japan 400-0031

Dear Mayor Higuchi:

Greetings to you on the start of a New Year! A new year brings new hope. Hope for an end to the pandemic that is keeping us apart physically. Hope for a renewed call to address climate change, which impacts both of our cities and the world. And hope for more opportunities for shared understanding and learning from each other.

Our hope is also for the year 2022 to bring new excitement and energy to our sister city relationship. With this in mind, the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission's Kofu Committee participated in the Japan America Society of Iowa's annual bell ringing ceremony at the Yamanashi Bell House at the Iowa State Capitol. On December 31st, they rang the bell 108 times at 9:00 AM, the exact start of the New Year in Japan. We have shared the video with your office. Our intent through this ceremony was to symbolically start the year together, renewing our bond as sister cities.

I hope to have the opportunity to join with you on a Zoom call early this year to discuss how our cities can continue to work together to advance our cultural, educational, and economic ties. While I know it will be some time before we can visit in person, I join with the people of Des Moines and our surrounding cities in holding the people of Kofu, and our sister city relationship, in highest regards, and sending our best wishes for a joyful and prosperous 2022.

Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T.M. Franklin Cownie".

T.M. Franklin Cownie  
Mayor

cc: Roger Nowadzky, Commission Chairperson, Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission  
Joe Nolte, Chair, Kofu City Committee