

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday July 14, 2015 4:30 PM City Hall, Second Floor Conference Room

Members Present

Tom Link, Chair
Irene Davis, Vice Chair
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Karen Parsells
Antje Hornbeck
Wally Secord
Kathy Frink, Treasurer
Steven Russo

Staff Present

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present

Lilly Hart
John Mitchell
Karen Parsells

Others Present

1. Call to Order

Chair Link called the meeting to order at 4:40 PM.

2. Roll Call –Appoint Alternates (if required)

Roll call was conducted.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting: July 14, 2015

Ms. Thomas Smith made a motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2015. Steven Russo seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Ms. Thomas Smith questioned if Administrative Physician was appropriate terminology for Tom Fisher’s position at the Hospital as stated in the minutes. Chair Link replied that the terminology is fine.

4. Board Business

a) Sharing Community News – media connections –

Ms. Hornbeck stated that a subcommittee has not been created yet. Chair Link suggested discussing the meeting with Mr. Miller from the Keene Sentinel in the sub-committee. He continued, stating that he will send an email to board members who would like to join the sub-committee and asked Ms. Hornbeck the ideal number of participants. Ms. Hornbeck replied, four people including her. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she would join.

Ms. Davis made the motion to accept the Sharing Community New item as informational. Ms. Thomas-Smith seconded which carried unanimously.

b) Subsidies for airfare to Einbeck in October – fund raising discussion

Chair Link stated that he has been in touch with John MacLean and other members of Police and Fire Department who may be interested in going to Einbeck. Chair Link stated that most people are unsure. He continued, stating that those interested would have to pay for airfare on their own. He understood in speaking with the City Manager that time away could be counted the same as attending a conference for 3 or 4 days rather than using vacation. Chair Link stated that airfare is quite expensive and it could be unaffordable to some.

Chair Link stated that both the City Manager and Mayor are paying for the trip on their own. Chair Link stated that he understands that the Partner City is not the highest priority for City Staff and had requested the idea of “subsidies for airfare” be placed on the agenda for further discussion. He continued, stating that many individuals have commented on this being an unfavorable idea. Chair Link stated that Ms. Davis agreed that Committee members have been working hard on this subject and it might not have to happen this year. He continued, stating that Ms. Davis suggested having Police and Fire representatives from Einbeck come to Keene the following year. Chair Link stated that he would like to hear thoughts from the Partner City Committee.

Ms. Hornbeck stated that she is opposed to subsidizing because it sets a precedent and the budget cannot withstand that. She continued, stating that having Einbeck representatives here in Keene first may create a strong initial connection encouraging Keene representatives to try and go over to Einbeck in following years. Chair Link stated that the friendship bonds created here will help build an incentive to go over in following years.

Mr. Russo stated that no one in the City Staff knows anything about the program. He continued, stating that a good start is to educate people more to get them interested. Mr. Russo stated that the Police Department knows very little. Chair Link stated it is not a lack of interest but more a lack of information. Mr. Secord stated that he is against subsidizing. Ms. Frink agreed as well and asked if the union would subsidize anything. Mr. Russo stated that the union would then have to decide who would go.

Ms. Secord made a motion to not subsidize airfare for Einbeck. Ms. Frink seconded which carried unanimously.

c) Fund Raising Event – Stonewall Farm – Promotional Ideas

No update at this time.

d) Police, Fire & Public Works Exchange (*Delegates visiting Einbeck*) – Update

Chair Link stated that Chief Meola held off on the exchange because of the pumpkin festival. He continued, stating that those in Germany have been planning this event for some time because there is a festival of their own occurring at the same time. Chair Link stated that this exchange came up last fall. He continued, stating that anyone who visits Einbeck in the exchange would come back and say it is well worth it. Mr. Russo stated that many people do not know about the logistics of the program as well as where they would stay. He continued, stating that not using vacation time would be huge incentive and he was unaware of this detail. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that building the cultural exchange and creating a set of expectations would create a sense of comfort for interested individuals. Mr. Russo stated that creating a program would be helpful as well to inform interested people.

Ms. Davis stated that this exchange started with a choir group that came to Keene 2 years ago and visited the Fire and Police Department. She continued, stating that delegates from Einbeck discussed another exchange with the Fire and Police Chief. Ms. Davis stated that a program was developed in Einbeck where both Fire and Police delegates would job shadow for about a week and the only expense would be travel. Ms. Davis stated that this came up 2 years ago but Keene did not manage to develop any exchange. Mr. Secord stated that the Partner City Committee should have held a meeting with the Fire Department and Police Department. He continued, stating that individual committee members have to promote it as well. Mr. Secord went on to confirm that it is not the money that is an issue, but the lack of information.

Mr. Russo stated that people need to know more about the program and what can be expected. He continued, stating that many new employees are interested but they also have families making it hard to leave. Mr. Secord stated that the exchange is not a secret but needs promotion. Ms. Davis stated that Einbeck sets up a host family and a program. She continued, stating that the exchange is independent of the festival, but they were combined because of timing. Ms. Davis stated that on Thursday, July 16th the committee has to give a response, which may mean pushing delegates back until Einbeck visits Keene. Mr. Russo asked if Leslie agreed to go. Chair Link stated that she did not respond. Mr. Russo stated that he will reach out to her. Ms. Davis stated that sending one person would not be an ideal exchange.

Mr. Russo stated that Kürt Blomquist, Director of Public Works Department, has also expressed interest in going as well. Ms. Davis stated that she could push the deadline back a few days if necessary. She continued, stating that there are also delegates from Japan and a few other countries that are partner cities. Mr. Russo asked if he can safely say that the City Manager

stated City Staff can visit Einbeck without using vacation time. Ms. Mattson stated that she will confirm this. Ms. Davis stated that easiest way to fly to Germany is from Boston to Hanover. She continued, stating that Keene delegates would be picked up in Hanover. Mr. Russo asked if the City Manager and Mayor still plan on visiting this October. Ms. Mattson confirmed as to today, both delegates are still planning to visit Einbeck. Ms. Hornbeck stated that Mr. Russo stated that there is very little knowledge of the exchange and asked if people from Keene are aware that if Einbeck delegates are invited, host families will have to house and feed them. Mr. Russo replied no they do not. Ms. Davis stated that host families in one country will then be hosted in the other. Mr. Russo stated that many people will assume a hotel is needed. Ms. Hornbeck stated that hosts families do everything and have a full schedule.

Chair Link stated that the friendships being formed are the big pull. He continued, stating that it is not an expectation to stay with host families but it may happen naturally. Ms. Davis agreed that it needs to be expressed and stated that there have not been any problems yet. Mr. Secord stated that there are problems that may come up and after going to Einbeck so many times it becomes a more casual relationship. Ms. Mattson suggested creating fact sheet with some background information. Mr. Russo stated that it would be helpful. Ms. Davis stated that she believed that the City Manager sent out an email in reference to basic details of the exchange. Chair Link stated that he is unsure if that actually happened. Mr. Russo stated that possibly having an annual update would be helpful. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that a fact sheet is great in addition to questions in person. Mr. Russo stated that sometimes it is hard to get everyone together to discuss in person and a sheet would be the best start. Ms. Davis stated that a fact sheet would be great, but not in time for this exchange. She continued, asking if Mr. Russo can ask who is interested. Ms. Davis requested she be copied via email for any questions and names are necessary by tomorrow night.

Chair Link stated that this exchange should have been communicated better. Ms. Davis asked if the committee should reach out to the Fire Department as well. Ms. Mattson stated that Mark Howard has tried. Ms. Davis stated a fact sheet can be sent to them as well. Chair Link stated that a fact sheet will not capture the spirit of the exchange. Mr. Russo stated that this can be done next year. Chair Link stated that he would be happy to create a power point with photos and information. Mr. Russo stated that only facts and details are necessary at this point. Ms. Davis stated that it might be best to ask Albert to have Einbeck delegates come in the following year.

Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that it is inconvenient to ask people to give an answer in a few days. She continued, stating that having the program structurally sound and doing it correctly is important. Ms. Davis stated that the Police and Fire Department were never supposed to go to the festival and there were reservations about it in the first place. She continued, stating that if we do it right and have Einbeck delegates here first, it would be better.

Chair Link stated that he believes the Mayor and City Manager are going as well as Dr. Fisher and his wife. He continued, stating that it will be a small group, but that is OK. Ms. Thomas-Smith asked if anyone from the committee is going. Ms. Davis replied, no. Chair Link stated that he would try.

Ms. Davis made the motion to accept the Police, Fire and Public Works Exchange as informational and to invite Einbeck delegates to Keene for the 2016 year. Ms. Thomas-Smith seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

e) School Exchange – Keene/Einbeck – John

Mr. Mitchell is not present. Ms. Davis stated that Albert Thormann stated that things are going well. She continued, stating that things are not going as fast as the Germans would like, but the agenda will be created by the end of the summer. Chair Link stated that the students from the Technical School in Germany will be coming over and the committee is looking for opportunities for students to work in the town at local businesses.

Ms. Thomas-Smith made a motion to accept the School Exchange item as informational. Mr. Russo seconded which carried unanimously.

f) Band exchange – The Mendelssohn School/Keene

Ms. Hornbeck stated that there is no new information and there will not be until September. Ms. Davis stated that a request was made for a delegate from the band exchange to also visit Einbeck in October. Ms. Hornbeck stated that is unlikely.

g) Facebook page – social media – Lilly & Dawn

No update at this time. Ms. Davis stated that this item will serve as an educational tool as well.

h) Signs for Public awareness of Einbeck/Keene partnership

Chair Link stated that his assignment was to take some pictures but has not completed this task yet. Ms. Frink stated that she found a flyer for banners. Chair Link stated that he is not sure about banners and who maintains them. Ms. Mattson stated that it is the Downtown Banner Club and that she was told it is very labor intensive to put up and take down flags, which may or may not be permanent. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that we talked about a few different options. She continued, stating that it is best to keep the flyer for pricing. Ms. Frink questioned if rent is necessary for banners. Mr. Russo stated that one would have to go through coding for banners and is unsure about rent. Chair Link stated that he will get some pictures for City Council.

5. Communications:

6. Reports:

a.) Treasurer Report – Kathy Frink

Ms. Frink stated that the committee received an appropriation of \$5,000 on July 1, 2015. She continued, stating that between the two accounts there is \$21, 525. 90.

Mr. Secord made a motion to accept the Treasury Report. Ms. Thomas-Smith seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

7. New Business:

Ms. Hornbeck stated that the committee is now low on memberships due to Mr. Secord and Ms. Hart leaving. Chair Link stated that the committee should have 11 people and the Mayor needs to revisit this. Ms. Hornbeck stated that when creating subcommittees more people are necessary. Ms. Davis stated that a big delegation will be hosted in 2016 and the committee needs to prepare.

Ms. Mattson stated there will be vacancies in slot 9 and 11 along with a City Council person. Ms. Mattson stated that the Mayor always appreciates suggestions should the Committee have someone in mind. Ms. Hornbeck stated that she would like someone in the business community. Chair Link stated possibly someone from the Chamber or someone from one of the local businesses. Ms. Davis stated that there is no one from the hospital. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that someone with a development background as well and she will reach out to someone she knows. Mr. Secord stated that for his exchange he agreed to visit Einbeck again in 2017 and plans to go there with the some soccer players. Chair Link stated that he will send out emails for recruitment and recommendations to the Mayor. He continued, stating that the soccer exchange will be left for now and Mr. Secord will advise from afar. Ms. Davis suggested sending out emails to committee members and to have a discussion at the next meeting with bios and suggestions for possible committee members.

Chair Link stated that he appreciates Mr. Secord's involvement with the committee and the soccer exchange was the first event in this partnership. Mr. Secord stated that it has been a great experience.

8. Next Meeting: Next meeting date: August, 11 2015

9. More Time:

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Lana Bluege, Minute-taker

July 14, 2015