

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 14, 2021

5:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room/
Zoom**

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Mayor George Hansel
Mari Brunner
Lena Kridlo
Kürt Blomquist, Ex-Officio

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Dawn Thomas-Smith
Dr. Delene White
Gregg Kleiner, Treasurer

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – November 9, 2021

Mr. Schoefmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of November 9, 2021. Mayor Hansel seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

a) Fundraising Ideas/Opportunities

b) Survey – create Gmail address for sharing (donate button has been created)

Ms. Brunner stated that the link to the PCC's survey is live. She continued that Deb McLaughlin in IT put the survey together for them. She does not know who is checking the survey responses, if there are any – the PCC has not sent the link out to anyone. The idea was to try to collect stories and photos from people, and to have a link at the end for people to donate to the PCC if they want to. She asked the group if they still want to do this.

Ms. Mattson stated that when the survey was sent around during a meeting, there were PCC members who wanted to make edits to the survey.

Discussion ensued, and Mr. Schoefmann suggested they just go for it and start promoting it, since they have been talking about this survey for months. Ms. Brunner read the survey questions aloud for the group to consider.

Mr. Blomquist asked if it is correct that the survey was going to be aimed at folks who have already participating in exchanges. He asked if the PCC has a database of those folks' names and contact information. Ms. Mattson replied that she has a list of names and addresses, but not email addresses. Chair Mitchell stated that he has email addresses for recent folks but may not be able to contact people who participated while they were in high school and have since graduated, since students' school email accounts close after they graduate.

Ms. Brunner suggested they put the survey on social media, asking people who have participated in exchanges to click on the link. Ms. Mattson and Mr. Blomquist agreed. Mr. Schoefmann suggested they set up a Dropbox account so people can share photos. Discussion continued about the PCC Facebook page and how to promote the survey. Ms. Kridlo stated that it would be easier for people to add photos to the Facebook page than to use Dropbox.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Ms. Brunner if the two of them are going to be the ones to put the survey on Facebook. Ms. Brunner replied that she is happy to post it on Facebook if everyone is happy with the questions. She continued that they could also point out to people that there is a donate button on the page, but she does not know how much to push that at people. Mr. Blomquist replied that it is fine to push that.

Chair Mitchell stated that they can post photos, too. He continued that for example, Keene State College (KSC) must have photos from the choir exchange. Mayor Hansel replied that he has friends on Facebook who he knows went on exchanges, so he can invite them to take the survey. He continued that if all PCC members do that, it will all add up to a good portion of the people. Ms. Mattson added that Dr. White shared a list of names with her from the choir exchange.

Ms. Kridlo asked when the last exchange was. Mr. Blomquist replied that there were three in 2019 – a mixed group, the final soccer exchange, and the KSC music exchange. With all three, people from Einbeck came to Keene.

Ms. Mattson stated that she made some edits to the list, and can send that updated list out to the PCC.

Ms. Brunner stated that she will post the survey on Facebook, but she does not know people from the exchanges. She asked if other PCC members can tag people they know. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they can tag Mayor Hansel and others, and it will grow from there.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he created a Gmail account for the PCC. He continued that if they need to transfer ownership of the survey to the Gmail account, they can do that. Ms. Brunner

stated that the survey IT created was created in something that is [not Gmail-related]. Ms. Mattson replied right, because IT does not use Gmail. She continued that there was one that Dr. White did in Gmail. Ms. Brunner replied that she does not have that. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Blomquist suggested they get an official PCC email account through IT, with keenehgov, because he does not think they should use Gmail. He thinks the PCC needs to look at a little more formality, since this is an official City committee and it gets “squirrelly,” regarding RSA 91-A, when you start using Gmail for City committee business.

c) Planning for Possible Keene Delegation to Einbeck – 2nd October of 2022

Chair Mitchell stated that nothing has changed. He continued that Jurgen Herbst sent an email this week. A lot depends on what the health conditions are [regarding COVID-19] and when travel is possible.

Mayor Hansel asked if Mr. Herbst has a date in mind, because people from Keene will need to plan. Chair Mitchell replied that Einbeck had canceled the (previous) Eulenfest only a couple months before it happened. Mr. Blomquist stated that this year Eulenfest would be October 14 and 15, so a group from Keene would potentially travel from about October 13 to 18.

Mayor Hansel stated that he is saying that by about August, Keene needs to make a call on it. Mr. Blomquist replied that normally they start the recruitment in the January of the planned trip, to see who is interested in going. How many people is Einbeck anticipating? Do they include partners and spouses? They need to start making those decisions and then start reaching out. Will they speak with local businesses to see if they want to send representatives? Should they talk with municipal representatives? These are the sorts of questions to figure out. They should start planning in January and then in August, make the decision about whether or not to go.

Discussion continued about the planning process. Mr. Blomquist stated that in 2018 they did not get final commitments from participants until June or July. Chair Mitchell replied that hopefully it will not be like that this time, because people will be excited to be able to travel again. Mr. Blomquist stated that Einbeck likes to know who is coming so they can plan for it. They need to have communication with the Einbeck committee to see what topics they want to cover while people from Keene are there. This committee needs to start thinking about that/the theme.

Discussion continued and ideas included small businesses, breweries, education, economics, or getting ideas from Einbeck. Mr. Blomquist stated that the “theme” could just be restarting the relationship, since it will be almost three years since there has been any interaction.

Mr. Blomquist stated that (former PCC member) Irene used to help the PCC translate its ideas into an email to Einbeck, and then translate what Einbeck writes back. Mr. Schoefmann asked if Ms. Kridlo can translate communications. Ms. Kridlo replied yes.

Mr. Blomquist asked if the PCC still has Albert Thormann's "wish list," which is another place they could start. He continued that it is something to send out to the committee to help generate ideas. Chair Mitchell and Ms. Mattson replied that they have a copy of it.

Chair Mitchell asked who in the PCC is looking to travel to Einbeck. Ms. Kridlo, Mayor Hansel, Ms. Mattson, Mr. Schoefmann, Ms. Brunner, and Mr. Blomquist replied that they would like to go. Ms. Kridlo stated that she is a dual citizen, and is from Frankfurt, which is where people often fly into, and her sister lives in Munich. She continued that she would be happy to show people around.

Mayor Hansel stated that he likes the idea of just reestablishing the relationship and strengthening those links again, rather than doing a specific group.

Chair Mitchell stated that it seems like just from the PCC, they have a group of seven. Mr. Blomquist stated that they have to look and see what the PCC had talked about regarding whether to bring partners and spouses. He continued that the group could be either seven or fourteen, depending. They should also think about reaching out to people outside of City government. He spoke about the importance of engaging with others, such as local businesses and corporations, and how the PCC used to have some corporate sponsorship but has lost some connections over the past few years. Involving businesses would help with the fundraising aspect, and they should be thinking about strengthening connections with KSC. They should see what size of a group Einbeck wants to host.

Discussion ensued about potential local business owners/leaders to engage. Ms. Mattson stated that it is not just economic - education and the arts are important, too.

Chair Mitchell stated that he likes the idea of getting the exchange going again. He continued that Mr. Herbst is asking for photos of PCC members, because the Einbeck folks do not really know who the PCC members are right now. It would be great to take a group photo tonight, here. There is some basic reconnecting Keene and Einbeck need to do.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that maybe by the January meeting, and after some emails with Einbeck, they will have a better idea of things. Mr. Blomquist stated that historically, exchanges have had about a dozen people, which has sometimes included partners/spouses. Mayor Hansel replied that they are thus talking about another six people – three or four plus spouses/partners.

Ms. Kridlo asked why the group size matters. Mr. Blomquist replied that it is because folks in Einbeck find places for Keene visitors to stay, in people's homes, and provide meals and transportation. Chair Mitchell stated that Keene folks do that for Einbeck visitors, too. He continued that a few years ago, Keene got tight with money, and were looking to engage with Einbeck visitors by taking them to museums and various travels. The PCC did some fairly formal, cut-and-dried guidelines about whose lodging and transportation would be covered and whose would not. They should find that and double check what they have committed to. Discussion

ensued about the costs and the expectations of hosts, and the differences between Einbeck and Keene. Mr. Blomquist stated that a challenge is that typically employers in Einbeck are more willing to let folks out of work while hosting visitors than the employers in Keene are. There are exceptions, but in Keene, people are willing to host but less able to get time off work. Mayor Hansel stated that generally three people act as the “main hosts,” which is a lot of work and requires a lot of time off work. Chair Mitchell stated that they have also been fortunate to have people who support the hosts, by transporting Einbeck folks, for example. They need more people like this.

Mr. Blomquist stated that currently they are talking about plans for this upcoming exchange, of people in Keene going to Einbeck, but there is a lot to think about/talk about for when it is Keene’s turn to host. Chair Mitchell stated that he will dig through his paperwork, because he could have sworn the PCC already came up with some things (regarding the exchange guidelines and expectations). Mr. Blomquist stated that he and Ms. Mattson probably have that in digital form and can look for it and send it out to the PCC members.

Chair Mitchell stated that he will email Mr. Herbst and ask how many people Einbeck is thinking about hosting, and what they are thinking this exchange will be about. Mr. Blomquist stated that that email could get the conversation going, and in January, the PCC can suggest that the theme be reconnecting.

Ms. Mattson stated that she has a PCC cultural exchange proposal, from Monadnock Area Artists, and more to look through. Mr. Blomquist asked if she could also send the PCC the “wishlist” from Mr. Thormann’s discussion with the Mayor. Ms. Mattson replied yes. Chair Mitchell asked if she could also email the PCC a copy of the schedule from the last exchange, which would be helpful for them to see. Ms. Mattson replied yes.

Chair Mitchell stated that in January, they will need to know who is willing/able to commit to this. Then that will give them a sense of who else they are looking for.

d) Future Exchange Ideas – YMCA, dance, rugby

Chair Mitchell stated that they will skip this item for now.

e) Discuss Promotional Activities/Media Opportunities to help promote PCC events and exchanges

Chair Mitchell stated that a person in his neighborhood works with a newspaper and offered to do a small story on the PCC. He continued that he says the paper has a good circulation in Keene. He asked if PCC members are interested or think it is appropriate. This person might want to interview someone or put in a short blurb.

Mr. Schoefmann replied that it would be good to do once they have a better idea of what the exchange will be. Mr. Blomquist replied that the story could be about the history of the committee and exchanges. Ms. Mattson stated that she can send Chair Mitchell a paper that former Mayor Lane had her put together. She continued that it is the framework for a story, telling the history.

Ms. Brunner suggested the PCC add more content to their website on the City's webpage. She stated that it currently only has the donation link, the list of members, and meeting minutes and agendas. They could post the link to the survey, the PCC's Facebook page, and the story that Ms. Mattson is talking about. Discussion ensued. Ms. Mattson stated that she was told [IT] had to pare down what used to be on the website because it was too lengthy, and it is possible content was cut back when the City got a new website. She continued that they could put a separate document there. She is willing to look into that.

Mr. Blomquist asked Ms. Brunner and Ms. Mattson to work with the IT Department to add more to the webpage. Ms. Kridlo asked if there is a link to the Facebook page. Ms. Brunner replied yes, there is a link, but they could actually embed the Facebook page so the posts show up on the PCC's webpage on the City's website. Ms. Kridlo asked who posts to the Facebook page. Mr. Schoefmann replied Ms. Brunner, Ms. Mattson, and Ms. Thomas-Smith. Ms. Kridlo replied that she is happy to help with that, too.

5) Communications

Chair Mitchell stated that as he mentioned earlier, the Einbeck committee would like a photo of the PCC's tree and of any members who are willing to be photographed.

6) Reports

a) **Treasurer Report**

Ms. Mattson stated that she has the report, but the treasurer is not here today. She continued that she can say that there have been no changes to treasurer report.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the City's operating budget process begins in January. He continued that the PCC should discuss whether they think the \$5,000 they traditionally request is adequate or if they should discuss asking for additional funding. The Chair would have to follow that through the budget process. They would have to be active through the budget process so the City Council is aware of the PCC and does not necessarily cut back its funding, as it did two years ago. Typically, covering the cost of the exchange when people from Einbeck come to Keene requires at least two years' of appropriations. The PCC should review the costs to see if that \$5,000 appropriation is enough, because in two years they will either have to raise the money up to/beyond the \$10,000 or seek donations and fundraise.

Mayor Hansel replied that it will be a tough sell. He continued that it is something the PCC will really have to prepare a case for. Mr. Blomquist replied that is partly why former Mayor Lane

wanted the document telling the story of the PCC. Discussion ensued about the budget and the process.

Mr. Blomquist asked if there is a Councilor they should encourage to participate. Maybe one of the people who goes to Einbeck in the next exchange should be a Councilor.

7) **New Business**

A) Review Draft of Social Media Post – Holiday Greeting

Mr. Schoefmann suggested the PCC restyle the holiday post from last year. Ms. Kridlo offered to write a paragraph along the lines of ‘happy holidays, happy new year, looking forward to 2022 and the new exchange.’ Mr. Schoefmann asked if she can do it this week and email it to Ms. Brunner. Ms. Kridlo replied yes. Ms. Brunner stated that it would be good to include the photo of the committee that they are going to take after this meeting.

B) PCC’s History for When Exchanges Have Happened

Chair Mitchell stated that Ms. Mattson is working on this.

8) **Next Meeting is January 11, 2022**

Chair Mitchell stated that the next meeting is January 11, 2022 at 5:00 PM.

9) **More Time**

A) Student Pen-pal Ideas – High School 16-18 year olds

B) Holiday Market – Food Festival (June 4, 2022)

Chair Mitchell stated that they can keep the “more time” items on more time. Ms. Brunner replied that they can take “holiday market” off the list, because it will be taken on by a different group and the PCC could have a participatory role. Ms. Kridlo suggested the PCC try and participate in the Keene International Festival, which is in the summer or September and has had a good turnout.

10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant