



Minutes

CA International & Multicultural Advisory Committee (IMAC) Meeting

May 15, 2019 7:00-8:30 pm

Vision Room (Board Room) @ CA Headquarters

In attendance: Sue DiPaula (Secretary), Marcy Gitt (Vice-Chair), Joan Holloway, Alex Hursky, Roberto Martin, Valerie Montague (Chair), Gabriel Pomary, Linda Potsiadlo, Arna Rubman, Jean Salkeld

CA Staff: Laura Smit, Grace Chang

CA Board liaison: Renee DuBois

1. Welcome - Everyone introduced themselves, their village and why they came to the meeting.

2. Chair's Report – Valerie Montague

- Valerie enjoyed the French cooking class in April and said it was a very nice event. The chef at the Elkridge Furnace Inn could do the Spanish cooking class as well.
- She was the Master of Ceremonies for the 2nd Explore Columbia's Sister Cities event at Columbia Mall in March and it was a great event.
- While Laura was away, she managed the World Languages Café at the Senior Center near the East Columbia Library, which went very well.

3. Program Manager's Report - Laura Smit

- Laura is busy preparing for the Sister Cities high school exchange. Nine American students are going to France and 12 are going to Spain. She distributed the July schedule of events for the French, Spanish and American students after they return to the U.S. She invited all of us to the Welcome party at Columbia Sports Park on July 18.

- She made another plea for a French-speaking chaperone to accompany the American students to France. If no one else who speaks French can go, she will go with the students.

- There was a planning meeting on May 9 in the CA Boardroom to review the mission of the 400 Years of African American History Commission, and to discuss the "Let's Talk – The International Day of Drumming and Healing" event to take place on June 19 from 4 to 7 PM at the Miller Library. This event commemorates the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans in the English colonies in Virginia in 1619 and acknowledges the painful impact of slavery, racial discrimination and racism in the U.S. There will also be a Juneteenth event at Oakland Manor on June 15 to celebrate when Texas freed its slaves (the last state to do so).

4. Approval of March 20, 2019 Minutes

- There were two corrections to the minutes. On page 1 under In attendance, the names of Dr. Camellia Blackwell-Taffel and Dr. Sherman Taffel were corrected. On page 2 under Cap-Haitien, Dr. Blackwell-Taffel's name was also corrected.
- The minutes were unanimously approved with the above corrections.

5. Review of FY19 IMAC Annual Report

- The CA fiscal year runs from May 1 to April 30.
- The committee reviewed the annual report carefully. On the first page under SUMMARY, a space was needed in bullet 3: Signing of Liyang (China) (space) Sister Cities Agreement.... On page 3, the following revisions are needed:
 - bullet E should summarize the Explore Columbia's Sister City Event
 - the item about adult Spanish exchange should be bullet F
 - the item about World Languages Café should be bullet G
 - the item about International Book Club should be bullet H and the spelling of the word "international" should be corrected

On page 4, the French cooking class in April needs to be added. Also on page 4 under bullet 4, we discussed the recommendation that CA provide money to fund scholarships to enable more high school students to participate in the high school exchange program. Valerie pointed out that the CA Board does the budget every two years. She recommended asking for a small amount of money (\$2,000) in the beginning and providing a strong justification for the request.

6. Charges for FY20 – “What IMAC members want to do”

- We reviewed the draft document of Charges to be submitted to the CA Board identifying items to be addressed by the IMAC in FY20. The charges are due to Laura's-department director Michelle Miller on May 16.

- The committee approved charge one. Under charge two, it was suggested to drop the word "new" in "Assist with developing new projects in Columbia's sister cities...". Under charge three, the committee approved removing the four examples of collaboration and support of other organizations' events to leave it more open-ended. It was also suggested that we could reach out to local cultural organizations and find out what topics would make a good forum for discussion. Valerie pointed out that the CA Board might be averse to things that are too controversial or politically charged. Under charge 4, Alex Hursky mentioned that we could explore adding international themes or performances to food truck events at various fire stations in the area. Marcy Gitt wants this committee to be more connected and relevant to the lives of immigrant communities. Joan Holloway wants to celebrate the cultures of all immigrant communities.

7. Reports from Sister City Subcommittees

- **Liyang, China** -Marcy Gitt (trip report)
 - Background information: in September 2018, the official Columbia-Liyang Sister City Agreement was signed. But Liyang had requested that CA sign an "official educational exchange program" agreement between the Liyang Bureau of Foreign Affairs and CA. This signed agreement is needed to facilitate the political and financial support of the Liyang government for high school exchange programs between Columbia and Liyang. An invitation was issued to come to Liyang in April for the international white tea festival and to sign the document. CA paid to send Marcy and Warren Gitt to Liyang, where Marcy would sign the document on behalf of CA as the IMAC Vice-Chair.
 - Marcy and Warren were the only Americans at the tea festival. Everything was organized by title and status so Marcy sat up front with foreign dignitaries

while Warren and Jun Han sat much further back in the crowd. They visited the middle school where Linda Potsiadlo teaches English to the Chinese students via Skype and the students are pleased with her as their teacher. Marcy and Warren also visited the new Liyang History Museum, which did not exist in 2017 when they went to Liyang, as well as the rice wine museum. They were wined and dined in fancy hotels. The signing ceremony went well and gifts were exchanged.

- She noted that there are a few mismatches between our perceptions and theirs. Chinese parents want their children to come to the U.S. at a younger and younger age, while U.S. parents prefer their children to be in high school. We are more likely to plan ahead and they do not seem to give much lead time for visits to the U.S. She believes consulate officials can play a pivotal role with communication and planning challenges. The Consul General in Shanghai is from Columbia, Maryland. The Chinese also seem more economically oriented than we are.
 - Marcy showed us beautiful pictures Warren had taken. She remarked on the cleanliness of the city, the quiet of the electric and hybrid cars and scooters (honking your horn is not allowed), and how recycle-oriented the people are. All in all, she felt very privileged to go.
 - Next steps include following up with German and Irish consular officials who have Chinese sister cities, and creating a database of a network of American host families. A delegation of Chinese Communist Party members wants to come in September and seven high school students may come this summer.
 - Laura will send out a link to the videos that were included in Marcy's slide show because equipment in the boardroom was unable to play them.
- **Tema, Ghana** – Gabriel Pomary, Chair
 - Background: A Ghana Study Abroad Program for a maximum of 20 Howard Community College (HCC) students is planned for 2020 during Spring Break. The trip is being organized by English professor Rick Leith and Nana Owusu, director of the HCC library, who is Ghanaian. Rick and Nana did a site study in Tema from April 11-21, 2019, in part to determine what the Central Library there needs.
 - Gabe presented Nana Owusu's report of the April trip to Ghana. The trip was very successful. The Central Library director Faustina showed Rick and Nana around the library and told them about upcoming renovations. She also explained the library funding, which comes from the Ghana Library Authority, but the staff and the collection are maintained by the Tema Metropolitan Assembly. She wants to promote children's services and would like to use the adjacent facility to create a children's library. The American students going to Tema in 2020 may help with this project.
 - There was an information session on a Ghana trip for adults on May 7. Four people came. As of now, only 5 people are going and they want a minimum of 10 to 15 people so Gabe noted that they have to improve promotion for the trip. The next information session is on May 29. Laura noted that some people believe the trip is overpriced -- the airfare alone is \$1,786.
 - The new mayor of Tema wants to come to Columbia in June. So CA is scrambling to see what can be arranged. We do not know the size of the delegation coming or if they intend to visit Norfolk, VA, another Tema sister city. Laura will call the Norfolk Sister City organization to find out if the new mayor is going there. She will also

contact Frank Asante, the mayor's public relations director, to get more information.

Cap-Haitien, Haiti -Laura Smit for Bob Anantua, Chair

- Haiti is now on the State Department's Level 4 no travel list so the Global Leadership Program (GLP) trip to Haiti this year will not happen.
- Bob is interested in talking to Linda Potsiadlo about setting up an English class with students from his high school College de Notre Dame in Cap Haitien.

- **Cergy-Pontoise, France** - Jean Salkeld, Chair

- As this is a well-established committee, it only meets as needed
- Members of the committee staffed the French table at the Explore Columbia's Sister Cities event at the Mall and it was a great success.
- Jean offered those of us who speak French to perhaps chaperone day trips during the high school exchange on an as-needed basis.

- **Tres Cantos, Spain** –Laura Smit for Magda Castro-Lewis, Chair

- Nothing to Report.

8. Selecting IMAC Meeting Dates for FY20

- The meetings had historically been on the first Wednesday of the month, but were changed to the third Wednesday. We decided to go back to the first Wednesday.
- The meeting dates are: August 7, 2019, October 2, 2019, December 4, 2019, February 5, 2020 and April 1, 2020.

Upcoming events & programs

- Asian American Pacific Islander Celebration, May 19, from 2-4 pm at Centennial Park
- Juneteenth, June 15 at 11 am at Oakland Manor (organized by Howard County Center of African Culture – Mae Beale)
- Howard County "Let's Talk: International Day of Drumming and Healing", June 19, from 4-7 pm at the Miller Library
- World Languages Cafe: May 28, June 25, July 23, August 27
- International Book Club: June 12, July 10, August 14

Respectfully submitted,
Sue DiPaula, IMAC Secretary

Minutes are in draft form - to be reviewed and approved at August 7, 2019 meeting