



Minutes

CA International & Multicultural Advisory Committee (IMAC) Meeting

August 7, 2019 7:00-9:00 pm

Vision Room (Board Room) @ CA Headquarters

In attendance: Bob Anantua, Magdalena Castro-Lewis, Sue DiPaula, Marcy Gitt, Alex Hursky, Roberto Martin, Valerie Montague, Alice Pham, Gabriel Pomary, Linda Potsiadlo, Arna Rubman, Jean Salkeld, Larry Schoen, Camellia Blackwell-Taffel, Sherman Taffel, Suzanne Waller

CA Staff: Laura Smit

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

2. Chair's Report – Valerie Montague

- Valerie notified the committee that she is resigning as Chair because she accepted a job at CA as the Assistant to the Vice President/CFO.
- She would still be happy to serve as Master of Ceremonies at events if we need her.
- She will attend some IMAC meetings, but did not want the appearance of any conflict of interest, especially regarding budget issues.

3. Program Manager's Report - Laura Smit

- Laura thanked Valerie for all her support over the past 8 years.
- She informed the committee that she is having surgery on Tuesday, August 13, and will be off for several weeks to recover. Her assistant, Grace Chang, will be at work.

4. Approval of May 15, 2019 Minutes

- There was one point of clarification: on page 3, second paragraph, line 3, it should read "...while U.S. parents prefer their own children to be in high school."
- The minutes were unanimously approved with the above clarification.

5. Elections: IMAC Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary

- By unanimous vote, the following people were elected as officers for FY20:
 - Marcy Gitt, Chair
 - Sue DiPaula, Vice-Chair
 - Alex Hursky and Jean Salkeld, Co-Secretaries
- Valerie and Laura thanked everyone for their willingness to serve.

6. Thank You to Valerie Montague, IMAC Chair from 2011 - 2019

- We all showed our appreciation to Valerie by a round of heartfelt applause and shared a carrot cake.
- Laura did a [slide show](#) with photos from the past 8 years, which was a walk down memory lane showing Valerie participating in various IMAC events.
- Laura and Marcy presented Valerie with several beautiful gifts, including a small crystal globe on a stand that said “Thank You” in the five languages of our Sister Cities and a Chinese bamboo pen holder filled with Hershey kisses, representing the need for sister cities relationships and citizen diplomacy to continue even while the Governments of our two countries may be in conflict. When asked what she liked best about her time as Chair, Valerie replied the CultureFests with the good foods from different parts of the world, and the World Languages Café. She said she was especially proud of helping to develop the Sister City relationship with Tema, Ghana (agreement signed in 2014). She noted that there were no negative surprises during her tenure as Chair and that Laura had made her job easy. Her one disappointment was that CA Board members did not attend many of our activities, despite her numerous invitations to them to do so.

7. Reports on May/June events – Laura

- May 19 – ***Asian American Pacific Islander Celebration***, 2-4 pm, in Centennial Park
The Liyang Sister City Committee had a table at the event, and networked with the Chinese and Korean community.
- June 19 – ***“Let’s Talk”: International Day of Drumming and Healing***, 4-7 pm at the Miller Library
 - Laura reported that the event was organized by a Committee led by Lela Sewell-Williams (Columbia Archives) and herself, along with local African American leaders and staff from the Howard County Library System and the Howard County Historical Society.
 - It was a local Howard County event which followed the outline of the the National 400 Years of African American History Commission, on a day when the same event was happening across the country to commemorate 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619.
 - County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball attended and read a proclamation. State State Senator, Clarence Lam also brought a proclamation. There were ancestral roll calls, a slide show by Bessie Bordenave of the Harriet Tubman Center, stories read by high school students about Howard County slaves, drum performances and a drum circle, and a [“Let’s Talk” Wall](#) on which people could write how they felt, what they wanted to know, and make suggestions on how African Americans and the country can continue to heal.
 - Photos of the ***“Let’s Talk”*** event are [here](#).

8. Budget Request to CA Board – Marcy Gitt, taking over as the new Chair

- Marcy noted that CA Director of Community Services, Michelle Miller, wants our budget request by September 6.
- After some discussion, the committee voted to request funding for 5 scholarships of \$2,000 each to enable financially challenged high school students (or adults) to participate in cultural exchanges.
- The money in the Alex Waters Fund at the Community Foundation of Howard County, used for this purpose has been dwindling as there have been no new donations to the Fund since 1990. This led to a brief discussion of the need for additional fund-raising.
- Marcy proposed creating a subcommittee to administer the scholarships as there will be many logistics to work out. Volunteers to be on that subcommittee included Sherman, Magdalena, Roberto, Alex, Jean and Arna. There will ideally be a representative from each Sister City subcommittee to advocate for applicants for programs in the cities they represent..
- Marcy also proposed creation of a sub-committee for fundraising. Suzanne volunteered. Marcy hoped that all the Sister City subcommittees would participate in fundraising as well.

9. Reports from Sister City Subcommittees

- **Cergy-Pontoise, France** - Jean Salkeld, Chair
 - Jean volunteered to represent this subcommittee on the new scholarship subcommittee.
 - She asked if we could piggyback on big IMAC events to do fundraising.
 - Our relations with our counterpart, the CAJA, in France are great but CAJA has no money
 - Jean will find out if CAJA is interested in an adult exchange, perhaps next spring.
 - Jean will schedule a meeting soon to discuss exchanges and fundraising.
- **Tres Cantos, Spain** –Magdalena Castro-Lewis, Chair
 - Laura reported that the high school exchange went very well. 24 American and Spanish students participated in the 2019 Summer high school exchange.
 - Still no word on an adult exchange.
- **Tema, Ghana** – Gabriel Pomary, Chair
 - Rick Leith, Howard Community College (HCC) English professor, and Nana Owusu, director of the HCC Library, traveled to Ghana from April 11-21, 2019 to plan the HCC Ghana Study Abroad Program planned for Spring Semester 2020. They made a presentation about their trip at the last Tema subcommittee meeting. They had met with Faustina Boakye, the Tema Central Library director, to discuss the library's needs as the HCC students going to Tema next year will do service learning with the library, and help organize the books sent to Tema a few years ago.
 - Gabe presented a travel itinerary/contract to Mary Allen, director of International Studies at HCC, which has been accepted, so the spring

break study abroad trip for HCC students is on. Students must sign up for the Ethics - English class for the Spring semester in order to do the Study Abroad Program. Gabe's travel agency now has the contract for the first HCC Study Abroad trip to Ghana.

- IMAC member, Alice Pham, will be going to Ghana from August 14-24 with a small group of adults, and will be visiting Tema.
 - The new mayor of Tema postponed his June trip to Columbia until October. We do not yet know the size of the delegation coming. The Tema subcommittee will be responsible for making arrangements for this visit and will share their plans with IMAC. Official visitors normally stay at the Sheraton Hotel. It is unclear who will pay for the hotel stay this time.
 - Gabe noted that U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was in Ghana last week and she was well received there.
- **Cap-Haitien, Haiti** – Bob Anantua, Chair
 - A group of 6 adults went to Haiti in January 2018 as a pilot for the collaborative leadership program. A trip is being planned for the end of January 2020 to take adults interested in visiting Haiti. Security issues in Haiti are still being assessed by the subcommittee.
 - On August 6, Bob, Laura and Linda Potsiadlo met to discuss implementing a Skype English class for the College of Notre Dame (a private high school in Cap-Haitien) students in Haiti, similar to the class Linda conducted during the 2018 - 2019 school year for middle schools students in Liyang, China. The first step is to assess the strength of the internet and wifi to make sure that Skype sound and video will be good enough to conduct online classes for students.
 - **Liyang, China** – Laura Smit for Hui Dong, Chair
 - Laura reported on the visit of 11 Chinese rising juniors (3 girls and 8 boys) from Liyang to Columbia. They were here from July 4 -11. They spoke fairly high-level English and took English classes at HCC. They were with Chinese-American families for 3 days, then were hosted by 5 non-Chinese families (Caucasian and African-American) for 5 days, with connections to the HCC STARTALK program, which is for American students studying Mandarin Chinese during July. The Chinese students had English class in the morning and field trips in the afternoon organized by Jun Han and Laura. They visited Long Reach High School, the Miller Library, went bowling and visited University of MD College Park, Baltimore and Washington, D.C.. For the second week, a trip was organized by Jun Han (our liaison with Liyang) to New York City, Boston and Niagara Falls. Photos of the visit of the Chinese students are [here](#).
 - Laura also noted that Baltimore and Xiamen, China have been sister cities since 1985. The Chair of the Liyang Committee, Hui Dong, attended an event on August 2, along with Jun Han, Marcy and Laura, in which Baltimore City students reported on their summer trip China as “youth ambassadors,” a concept that they liked and would like to emulate, as the one-to-one month-long exchanges that are done with Columbia's Sister Cities in Spain and France will not be feasible, at least for the first

few years..

10. Plans for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020

- Four charges (proposed objectives) were submitted to the CA Board for FY20. Laura provided a [handout with the four charges and suggested activities for each charge](#). IMAC and the IEMP Program need to come up with programs and events for each charge.
- Under charge 1 “(Promote real and virtual travel opportunities that allow residents to explore and meet people from our sister cities; support development of a hosting database for IMAC and Sister City subcommittee members who are able to host visitors from our sister cities in their homes; and support fundraising events that will allow more youth and adults to travel to our sister cities”), Marcy requested help to develop a database of vetted host families, which would involve background checks, etc.
- Charge 2 is “Assist with developing projects in Columbia’s sister cities that can be supported by our Sister City subcommittees and residents here.”
- Charge 3 is “Collaborate with and support the events and activities of other organizations, building relationships and awareness of immigrant and ethnic communities.” Marcy requested that if we know anyone in any immigrant or ethnic organizations, we could invite them to make a presentation to the IMAC. We also talked about having an IMAC table at the Multicultural Festival at St. Matthews Orthodox Church on October 5 and 6. It was decided that Saturday, October 5, would be the best day. Volunteers to sit at our table include Valerie, Jean, Alice, Laura and Camellia, with Arna as a possibility as well. Laura will check with John Zahor, who is in charge of the Multicultural Festival if we can have a table, and what the cost will be.
- Charge 4 is “Help to create multicultural programs involving and celebrating the cultures of Columbia’s sister cities and the cultural and ethnic communities in Howard County.” We would like to do a 3rd annual Explore Columbia’s Sister Cities event in March or April 2020, but we have to check with the Columbia Mall to see if they will let us do it there again. Laura and Grace are working on scheduling a Chinese cooking class and a Spanish cooking class for the fall.
- If anyone has any ideas on programs and events to fulfill these charges, please let Marcy know.

Upcoming events & programs

- IMAC meetings: 2019 - October 2, December 4; 2020 - February 5, April 1
- World Languages Cafe: August 27, September 24, October 22
- International Book Club: August 14, September 11, October 9

Respectfully submitted,
Sue DiPaula, outgoing IMAC Secretary