

MINUTES

International & Multicultural Advisory Committee (IMAC) Meeting August 4, 2021 * 7:00-8:30pm Google Meet Meeting

In Attendance: Bob Anantua, Beckie Chapman, Hui Dong, Marcy Gitt, Farida Guzdar, Alex Hursky, Magdalena Castro Lewis, Roberto Martin, Valerie Montague, Arna Rubman, Jean Salkeld, Laura Smit, Ginny Thomas

Guest: Drew Powell, Rockville Sister Cities Corporation

CA Staff: Grace Chang

Welcome - Laura Smit, IMAC Chair

Laura welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Ginny Thomas as the new CA Board Liaison to IMAC.

CA's Board Liaison's Report - Ginny Thomas

Ginny shared that she asked to be on IMAC to learn more about this committee. She is also the CA Board liaison to the Climate Change and Sustainability Advisory Committee. She advised us to show our presence in the community and to ensure that the CA Board is aware of all our events. She also stressed the importance of letting them know of our budget needs. She values the work of this committee in its mission to highlight diversity and inclusion in Columbia.

Presentation of the Sister Cities Transparency Act - Drew Powell

Drew introduced himself and IMAC Members introduced themselves.

He is the SCI MD State Representative and President of the Rockville Sister City Corporation. He shared that Rockville has the oldest sister city relationship in the US with Pinnenburg, Germany. He described several upcoming Rockville Sister City events, including a Bubble Tea Festival, Dim Sum fundraiser, and a Roctoberfest event.

As the SCI state representative for MD, he has been asked to raise awareness of the Sister Cities Transparency Act, a bill that has passed in the US Senate as part of much larger Innovative and Competition bill, and is now currently in the House of Representatives. The bill allows the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to monitor all sister city relationships with cities of countries that score a 45 or less on the Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index. If passed, the GAO could compel sister cities to produce any of the following documentation: agendas, membership lists, meeting minutes, contracts in commerce and trade or technology, identities of foreign individuals.

SCI, in opposition to the Act, has contacted various congressional members to eliminate this portion of the bill. SCI advises individual sister cities organizations to contact their local congress person and ask to have this bill rescinded or modified. He disclosed that our sister city relationships with Liyang, China, Cap-Haitien, Haiti, and Tema, Ghana would be affected by the passing of this bill. Drew agreed to forward his presentation as well as the link to the organization that produced the ranking of the foreign countries. [Click here for Drew Powell's Presentation](#)

Program Manager's Report - Grace Chang, Program Manager IEMP

Grace Chang is planning a meeting with an ESL teacher in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) to discuss opportunities for the viewing and discussion of the film "Black n Black" at a HCPSS high school.

The World Languages Cafe is scheduled to be back, in-person, beginning September 28 at the 50+ Center at the East Columbia Library. The World Languages Cafe has continued to meet virtually, twice a month, during the pandemic via Meet-Up and Zoom, run by a native Japanese speaker who led the Japanese table.

Approval of the June 7, 2020 Minutes

Motion was passed to approve the minutes.

Upcoming Events - Grace Chang

The planning for The Mall in Columbia 50th Anniversary Celebration scheduled for September 25, 2021 is coming along. Three performers have been secured for the event, including drummers from the Performing Arts Center for African Culture (PACAC), Chinese dance performers from the Howard County Chinese Cultural Center (HCCCC), and a family Mexican band. The Teelin Irish Dance School has not yet responded to our request to perform at the event.

Performers have also been secured for the 50th Anniversary of the Village of Long Reach to be held on October 15-16, 2021, including: drummers from PACAC, Chinese dance performers from HCCCC, and a family Mexican band. Grace is currently trying to find a Salsa dance group to perform dances and to lead a short lesson during the event. IMAC will have a table at the Long Reach Village event, and the Tema Sister City Committee will have a table to sell Ghanaian handicrafts and paintings (see Tema Committee report below).

Review of IMAC Charter

Staff to CA's advisory boards have been charged by President Lakey Boyd to review their advisory committee charters and give feedback for any changes or updates. Grace will send out the current charter to IMAC members for update suggestions for the next IMAC

meeting.

Reports from Sister City Committee Chairs

- **Cap-Haitien, Haiti** - Bob Ananutua

In updating the committee member list, seven members have responded who have continued interest in serving on the Cap-Haitien committee. A committee meeting with interested members will be scheduled soon. Bob reported that Haiti continues to have major issues following the assassination of the President, and ongoing Covid pandemic issues, including \$80 vaccination fees. The World Health Organization has called for a moratorium on wealthy nations to hold booster shots to allow poorer nations to get their first dose. The Build Haiti Foundation is planning its annual fundraiser on September 18 from 6-9 pm at the Horse Spirit Art Gallery in Savage. Admission to the event is \$75. He requested that IEMP forward the event flier in their announcements.

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

Jean announced that she will be stepping down as chair of the Cergy-Pontoise Sister City committee, but that she plans to remain a member of both the CP Committee and IMAC. Laura thanked Jean for all her years of service to this committee, noting that Jean was on this committee when it was called the Sister Cities Committee, and was on Laura's selection committee for the position of Program Manager. Laura reported that she has been in contact with Stephanie Godin, a high school teacher in France and past Sister Cities exchange chaperone, to develop virtual pen pal exchanges for 17 year-olds in her English classes. Laura will follow up with Howard County Public School System teachers to connect students from the two countries.

- **Tres Cantos, Spain** - Laura Smit

Magdalena Castro-Lewis announced that she was stepping down as Chair of the Tres Cantos Sister City Committee due to family and work commitments. Laura Smit agreed to take over the chair position, as she speaks Spanish and has worked with Tres Cantos since 2009 to run the Columbia - Tres Cantos youth exchanges. It is uncertain whether a summer youth exchange will be able to take place in July 2022 due to Covid.

Laura will be working with Grace and teachers at Howard and Oakland Mills High Schools to develop virtual pen pal programs with high school students at Tres Cantos high schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Tres Cantos had expressed an interest in creating a virtual pen pal program at the beginning of 2021. Laura reported that she was waiting to hear from several Howard County Public School System teachers who had expressed interest in the spring before contacting the coordinators at the Casa de la Juventud in Tres Cantos.

Grace said she would also be getting in touch with Kim Banks, head of World Languages at HCPSS, to discuss connecting students here with students in various sister cities, given the strong possibility of not having in-person exchanges in the summer of 2022 due to the pandemic.

- **Tema, Ghana** - Rebecca Chapman

The Tema committee met on July 13, 2021 with 13 attendees.

The committee zoomed eight times in the past year, including a session with Frank Asante, our contact in the Tema mayor's office. Zoom meetings were also held regularly with the Sister Cities International (SCI)-West Africa, including a presentation to the SCI committee on past Tema Sister City activities. Gabriel Pomary, past Chair of the Tema committee, traveled to Ghana this past year where he met with Frank Assante and representatives of a rotary club in Tema and visited Mildred Vanderpuije, the Chair of SCI-Ghana.

Nana Owusu-Nkwantabisa, Tema committee member and head of the Library at Howard Community College (HCC), has helped launch an internet project with college students in Ghana and students at HCC through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). He and a member of the English faculty at HCC are planning a student visit to Ghana in 2023, originally planned for spring 2020.

The committee has had discussions on the following possible future projects:

1. Work with the African Art Museum to present a program
2. Encourage inclusion of one of the Ghanaian languages, Twi, at the World Languages Cafe
3. Continue efforts to find a rotary club in Columbia to work on projects in Tema
4. Explore fundraising opportunities to benefit the Tema Central Library and other projects in Tema

- **Liyang, China** - Hui Dong

The Liyang committee met on July 26 via Zoom to review all activities since February 2020 and discuss possible future events. From September 2020 to June 2021, virtual English classes were held with Liyang Yanshan Middle School. From July to August 2021, a Summer Pen Pal Program was held between 10 students from the Liyang Guanghua High School and 10 high school students from Howard and Montgomery counties.

Next Meeting Dates:

Upon Ginny Thomas's recommendations, the committee decided to meet monthly for the remainder of this year. IMAC will meet monthly on the first Wednesday of each month

on the following dates:

September 1, 2021

October 6, 2021

November 3, 2021

Meeting Adjourned at 8:52 pm.