

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 7, 2019

5:15 PM

2nd Floor Conference Room,
City Hall

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Vice Chair
Kürt Blomquist
George Hansel,
Dan Brown, Alternate

Members Not Present:

Gary Lamoureux, City Councilor
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Kathy Frink, Treasurer
Irene Davis, Chair
Will Schoefmann
Lilly Hart, alternate

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison

Others Present:

Tiffany Mannion
Michael Giacomo
Rachel Eschle
Danya Landis
Fred Parsells

1) **Call to Order**

Vice Chair John Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:15 PM.

2) **Board Business**

a. **PCC Exchange – Review w/Hosts & PCC the June Keene/Einbeck mixed group exchange**

Mr. Mitchell said that Mayor Lane wanted the group to meet regarding the expectations of host families. Mr. Mitchell discussed his personal trip to Germany and discussed meeting with the Germans who visited Keene and they mentioned they wanted to make sure they had time with their host families and not off site seeing anywhere else but Keene. Kürt Blomquist stated he believed it's important for the host families to have this feedback and are not expected to take the German visitors far away. Fred Parsells stated the host families can give a tour around Keene and that his German visitor enjoyed seeing the town around Keene. Mike Giacomo said we can keep Keene centric but it might be difficult to avoid Monadnock due to its status in this region. Rachel Giacomo stated there was a lot of enthusiasm about the hiking day and that the Germans would encourage more outdoor activities to encourage younger people to visit Keene through the city partnership with Germany. Maggie Rice asked if there was any other feedback from the Germans on the outdoor activities. Mr. Mitchell stated on his personal trip, the Germans expressed interest in younger exchanges, young people activities in general. Mr. Parsells

stated he believes swimming is big in Germany and maybe it could evolve as an exchange to replace soccer. Dan Brown mentioned the Germans have two track events each year and if one of those could marry to our Clarence DeMar Race. Mr. Blomquist said to keep in mind that when the Germans talk about youth exchange programs they are talking about the 14 to 20-year-old range. Ms. Giacomo commented the communication with the Germans wasn't perfect but they were referring to the adult program and more middle age. Ms. Rice mentioned the German couple who stayed with her really enjoyed the outdoor activities and having an outdoor recreation focused exchange would be interesting for both young and older age groups. Mr. Blomquist suggested that recruiting hosts that have active lifestyles would be beneficial in the future. Ms. Giacomo stated hosts don't need to be exclusively interested in an active outdoor recreational lifestyle. Danya Landis asked if we could pair our May is mural month in the exchange with their interest in doing murals around Einbeck.

Mr. Blomquist asked those who hosted what host families should be aware of and what the expectations were. George Hansel suggested getting all the hosts to work together, especially for meals or meal planning. Mr. Giacomo stated we could do joined meals to make it easier. Ms. Giacomo also added a number of the hosts work full time and having hosts that are available most of the time is more ideal. Mr. Mitchell addressed the group and asked if hosts and guests should meet ahead of time. Helen Mattson suggested Skyping. Ms. Rice agreed Skype or meeting ahead of time would be valuable and stated it would also be helpful to learn where other hosts lived so people who live in the same area could get together and guests could walk around and back and forth from other hosts homes allowing them to come and go and control their own time, more freedom, and alleviate the stress of travel. Ms. Landis said communication is key and being clear up front about the hosts schedule. Mr. Blomquist said he liked the idea of sharing responsibility and asked should that be the expectation of the hosts to provide those things. Mr. Hansel said it's important to have two people when hosting, having central points of contact is key. Mr. Giacomo said when he went to Germany the hosts always made breakfast for them. Mr. Mitchell stated we could do a better job at having a more formal handout of what we should, can, and should not do when hosting. Mr. Hansel said it was nice to go there to know what the goal was as a host. Mr. Mitchell stated he hopes we can reciprocate similar standards of hospitality to the Germans. Mr. Blomquist asked if there were any challenges with hosting and if a lack in affluence would be of concern. Ms. Mattson and Mr. Giacomo stated time is essential to being a host. Ms. Landis stated she hosted as she would like to be hosted. Ms. Giacomo said options are always good, offering as much to do as possible, and the language barrier can be an issue. Ms. Rice stated financial constraints can make it hard to host. Mr. Blomquist asked the group if that should be an expectation hosts should be aware of. Ms. Rice stated although it may be difficult to articulate but should be a noted expectation of the hosts. Mr. Giacomo said nothing fancy is needed however and some of the meals would be taken care of by city functions. Mr. Mitchell stated he is concerned the group's expectations of hosting are based on our expectations of what is appropriate. Mr. Mitchell further stated he doesn't want to limit who can hosts based on economic capabilities and suggested that it could potentially be our assumption that the Germans don't understand financial constraints and that talking to a few of the Germans personally would be the best way to determine if

there are any misunderstandings. Mr. Hansel added he was responsible for myself when he was hosted in Einbeck, Germany.

Mr. Blomquist asked if in regards to hosting it was simply education and expectations being set beforehand. Ms. Landis said transparency is key. Mr. Brown suggested taking them to Aldi or any other grocery stores as an experience. Mr. Parcels said the Germans love American BBQ. Mr. Giacomo said the Germans seemed to try and give us the most authentic German experience but not something they necessarily do in their everyday life and we tried to reciprocate that. Mr. Blomquist asked the group what the three things people will need to know about being a host. Tiffany Mannion said it depends on who the people are and what they like. Ms. Rice suggested that people can self-sort with other folks of like lifestyle and personality and for example filling out a paper of checking boxes for both hosts and guests of likes and dislikes or interests and paring matches together which will allow hosts to pick their level of involvement and doesn't exclude people from the hosting experience. Ms. Landis suggested inquiring about allergies, dietary restrictions and information about pets in the home. Ms. Rice also suggested it would be nice to pair hosts and guests with similar interests. Ms. Mannion stated the Monadnock trip worked well but maybe just one or two people could organize it and offered to set up trips regarding art or architecture. Mr. Giacomo stated being available and having a flexible schedule it is a big thing for hosts to know. Ms. Giacomo said she adapted to the schedule with the guests but more detail is necessary, for instance details on picking them up and how much we are expected to accompany them on and what is optional. Ms. Mannion said teachers would be a good option for hosting due to their schedule. Mr. Blomquist stated hourly workers cannot do this program and it's limiting. Mr. Hansel said if we can gang them together it could make things easier. Ms. Rice stated we should arrange a timeline and know that in advance what is going on, I was happy to give rides however I didn't know what was really going and we could assign driving to someone. Mr. Blomquist said we got requested by the group from Einbeck, Germany not to be so scheduled. Mr. Giacomo said the things that are regimented should be communicated but not everything has to be regimented or communicated. Ms. Giacomo stated the schedule is more for the hosts and its used to plan out the day. Ms. Rice said there needs to be busy time. Ms. Mannion shared that one free day would be nice, the guests from Einbeck really enjoyed the orchard hill pizza night. Mr. Blomquist recruiting businesses is part of arranging the schedule. Mr. Mitchell said with the schedule we should not be hearing that it is hard to follow. Mr. Giacomo said we should allot time for American shopping.

Mr. Blomquist asked the committee and previous hosts in the meeting when should hosts be chosen or locked down and be involved with the committee and the schedule. Ms. Mannion said as soon as possible. Ms. Mattson said maybe a year in advance. Mr. Blomquist said when should groups be developed and organizing begin. Ms. Rice shared that a month before they arrive would be a good amount of time and optimally there is a meeting for hosts to get to know each other and plan and get on board with each other and everything that is planned by the city should have transportation provided by the City of Keene. Mr. Mitchell said transportation from the city could be difficult due to money. Mr. Hansel said balance with hosts, committee responsibilities is important, and listing

activities so hosts can sign up to participate. Mr. Giacomo said fortunately for us we were able to afford a van for a brewery trip. Ms. Giacomo said we didn't know how many people were coming because we didn't hear back from people who were interested. Ms. Giacomo continued saying that exchanging contact info for hosts about a month before would be about right, maybe even 6 weeks before that to work out conflicts and work together on coordinating efforts with the Germans. Ms. Landry inquired about if the committee could try to rent cars or vans. Mr. Blomquist said there is revenue from the city government that carries over, fundraising also works, but we are restricted in Keene for funding for official activities. Mr. Blomquist continued saying one of the guests from Einbeck works for a company that supports their exchange efforts but we depend on volunteers. Ms. Landis asked if comparing pricing for vans would be worth it. Mr. Blomquist stated who would be renting the vehicles because there are various legal challenges with driving and so forth. Ms. Rice stated as long as we coordinate volunteers we don't need to rent vans and if we communicate our availability we can work around that. Ms. Mannion said we can text each other and I would have also liked to add maybe a tour of the state house would have been great. Mr. Giacomo responded saying there was feedback about being Keene centric instead of travelling far. Mr. Mitchell stated by making things more clear we can do better as hosts, and we need more participation in both hosting and fundraising.

3) Adjournment

Mr. Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 6:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Claire Kunzler, Minute Taker