

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

5:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference
Room, City Hall**

Members Present:

Mari Brunner
John Mitchell, Chair
Michael Giacomo, City Councilor
Will Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Kürt Blomquist
Delene White

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison

Members Not Present:

Irene Davis
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Gary Lamoureux
Daniel Brown

George Hansel, Mayor

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

Roll call was conducted.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting: December 10, 2019 and Special Meeting Minutes of August 7, 2019

Mayor Hansel made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of December 10, 2019 and August 7, 2019. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

a) Introduction – Mayor Hansel

Mayor Hansel stated that he serves on this committee but has also been going to all the various committees in the City and introducing himself, making sure members know he is available as a resource, and giving an overview of how he sees each committee and its work. He continued that he is invested in the PCC and its work, and he has traveled to Einbeck. This partnership with Einbeck is one of his favorite things that the City does. It has a lot of potential but also requires some work and nurturing. The committee is currently in a phase where they need to make sure the committee members are all putting in effort to make sure this moves along and grows.

Chair Mitchell stated that they share Mayor Hansel's enthusiasm and appreciate his support.

b) Election of Officers – Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer

Mr. Blomquist nominated Mr. Mitchell for chair. Mayor Hansel seconded. Brief discussion ensued, and Mr. Mitchell answered in the affirmative when Mr. Blomquist asked if he would accept the position. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Blomquist nominated Mr. Schoefmann for vice chair. Mayor Hansel seconded. When asked, Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, he will accept. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mayor Hansel nominated Dr. White for treasurer. Mr. Blomquist seconded. Mr. Schoefmann asked what the treasurer's duties are, and Ms. Mattson explained. Brief discussion ensued. Dr. White stated that she will accept. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

c) Introduction of New Members – *Mari Brunner and Mike Giacomo, City Councilor*

Chair Mitchell asked the new members to briefly introduce themselves.

Ms. Brunner stated that she is a Planner with the City, and a Keene resident, and has been interested in this committee for a couple years. She continued that she loves learning about other countries and loves the idea of an exchange program and being a partner city. Her three-week stay in Germany as a middle school student has stuck with her.

Councilor Giacomo stated that he is new to the City Council and is an engineer at Markem-Imaje, and the president of Keene's Young Professionals group. He continued that he traveled to Einbeck two years ago and it was fantastic.

Dr. White stated that she did a three-week exchange in high school through the German American Partnership (GAP), and is currently a faculty member at Keene State College (KSC), teaching German and German Culture classes. She continued that she wanted to be involved in

the committee to see what she could do to encourage the City, college, and Einbeck do something together.

d) Student Exchange – Funding Request – John

Chair Mitchell distributed copies of the calendar that has been worked out for the Einbeck students' upcoming visit to Keene. He stated that it is similar to the one from two years ago but less intense, with fewer activities, due to German students' feedback that they want more free time with their families. This calendar has increased that. It also cut back the expenses significantly – from about \$10,000 to \$7,000. He distributed copies of a budget sheet, and explained how they pared down the budget quite a bit.

Mayor Hansel asked how the dinner is only \$100. Chair Mitchell replied that they have had a lot of food donated already. He gave further information about how costs have been reduced, such as changing the New York City trip to a day trip instead of an overnight one, and about how some of the costs may come down even more. He stated that his request to the PCC is for \$6,400 in support of this program.

Councilor Giacomo asked about the costs associated with the tour and the dance, and Chair Mitchell explained. He also spoke more about how they will look to bring down the costs of school lunches, and how daily snacks are covered through the families making/providing those.

Mayor Hansel asked how many students are coming from Einbeck. Mr. Mitchell replied ten students and two adults. He continued that Keene plans on sending the same number to Einbeck next June or July.

Mr. Blomquist asked for more information about other scheduled exchanges that the PCC has commitments to from a budgetary standpoint, and how much money they have right now in their accounts. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Blomquist stated that it looks like this exchange Chair Mitchell is talking about would be the only one the PCC would be supporting this fiscal year. He continued that the PCC has a remaining balance from past fundraisers. Mayor Hansel stated that he thinks the request for \$6,400 is fine. He continued that Chair Mitchell and others have worked hard to get the costs down and will continue those efforts.

Mayor Hansel made a motion for the Partner City Committee to commit up to \$6,400 to Keene High School's student exchange in 2020. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

e) Planning for Future Exchanges – Irene & John

Chair Mitchell stated that he approached Keene Middle School to talk about the possibility of a middle school cultural exchange with Einbeck, but had no response. He continued that Einbeck greatly supports a 5- or 6-day exchange for middle school students, but he has received no

feedback from the person he spoke to at Keene Middle School, who was initially enthusiastic. He is not sure why it is not following through. He is not aware of other potential exchanges for the future. In two years KHS will plan to bring ten more Keene students to Einbeck and have ten more Einbeck students come to Keene.

Mr. Blomquist stated that future PCC agendas should include planning for the October trip to Einbeck for the *Eulenfest* – for example, how many people to send, and who they should be approaching to see if they are interested in going. He continued that Einbeck folks like to know the names by May or June. If the trip is for Einbeck's re-dedication of the synagogue, they should see if there are interested folks from Keene's synagogue or Holocaust Center. Chair Mitchell stated that they have also talked about sending an administrator. Discussion ensued. Ms. Mattson stated that she will put this on the next agenda.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that it would be good to try and plan and get an idea of what the future exchanges will be and match it up to the PCC's budget and see how it pans out. Discussion continued about the PCC's budget and available funds, fundraising, and the possibility of companies sponsoring trips. Chair Mitchell stated that it is good to look at both sides – gaining funds, and reducing expenses.

Mr. Blomquist stated that for the last exchange, they used a planning document to help them stay organized. He asked if Ms. Mattson could try and find that document for them to look at/use at the next PCC meeting.

Ms. Brunner asked about the various types of exchanges Keene and Einbeck do. Mr. Blomquist replied that they hope to do another sports exchange if they can find several people interested in shepherding it. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the exchanges vary from year to year, depending on who comes, who requests what, and support from this committee. It would be helpful to map that out.

Ms. Mattson stated that somewhere she had created a template/checklist to keep track of details that had been left out. She will try and bring it to the next meeting.

Mr. Blomquist stated that as they start thinking about people who might be interested in traveling to Einbeck, they will need to give them the rules of engagement that the committee has adopted. They will need someone who can communicate efficiently with people in Einbeck. Ms. Mattson stated that Albert speaks limited English. Dr. White stated that she can help with communicating in German and would be glad to be in touch with them. She has been in touch with Sabine in Einbeck.

Ms. Mattson stated that the agenda packet includes Keene's official invitation to the October *Eulenfest*, and Mayor Hansel's response. Chair Mitchell asked what size group they are looking at. Ms. Mattson replied 12, which includes partners. Chair Mitchell asked if any spots are already filled. Ms. Mattson replied no. She listed the people the email went to, and stated that

she is not sure if those people will go. Discussion ensued about possible people to be approached, and how, and by whom. Mr. Blomquist stated that they need to confirm with Einbeck that the re-dedication of the synagogue is definitely going to happen. He continued that meanwhile, Mayor Hansel can approach the Rabbi and the Cohen Center's directors, tell them about this trip and the dates and Einbeck's plans for re-dedication of the synagogue, and see who responds to say they are interested. Mayor Hansel replied that they would be asking for one representative each from the Cohen Center and the synagogue. Discussion continued. Ms. Mattson stated that she will ask Irene Davis to get in touch with Albert. Chair Mitchell stated that he will send a low-key email to Jeurgen Herbst just to check in and make sure the re-dedication in October at the time of the Keene visitors is still what they want to do, and he will talk with Ms. Mattson as soon as he hears back, and Mayor Hansel can work with the contacts.

Dr. White stated that in May she is taking some students to Berlin and a concentration camp memorial, and will visit some friends in Einbeck. She will stop by the museum if it is open and try to find out some information, although she will not be there as a representative of the PCC. Mr. Blomquist replied that she should tell them she is a member of the PCC and they will be very glad to see her.

Mayor Hansel stated that if anyone on the committee is interested in traveling to Einbeck, they should start thinking about it, and indicate their interest at the next meeting. Ms. Brunner asked if the dates are October 9 to 11. Ms. Mattson replied yes, with time on either end as well. Dr. White asked how many committee members generally go per trip. Councilor Giacomo replied that last year, eight out of thirteen were committee members or their spouses. Mr. Blomquist replied that they need clarification of whether spouses are welcome on this trip, as they have been in the past. Ms. Mattson stated that individuals are responsible for their own travel costs.

f) Discuss Promotional Activities/Media Opportunities to help promote PCC events and exchanges – Dawn/Dan

Chair Mitchell stated that March 24 is the dinner at Heberton Hall to welcome the students from Einbeck. He continued that the students would appreciate any or all of the PCC members attending, and someone could say a couple of words. Ms. Mattson replied that usually the Mayor is the one to speak. Chair Mitchell asked for people to email him if they are able to attend the dinner. Ms. Brunner, Mr. Blomquist, Mayor Hansel, and Mr. Schoefmann stated that they will attend.

5) Communications

Ms. Mattson stated that Dawn Thomas-Smith could not be here tonight but sent her a message to read to the committee. She has something to share at the next meeting.

Mr. Schoefmann made a motion to accept Ms. Thomas-Smith's communication as informational. Ms. Brunner seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

- 6) **Reports**
 - a) **Treasurer Report**

Chair Mitchell stated that they will pass on this today.

- 7) **New Business**
 - a) **Discuss coordination of the re-dedication of Einbeck's old synagogue with Keene's next visit**
- 8) **Next Meeting – March 10, 2020**

Mr. Blomquist asked Ms. Mattson to add “mixed exchange” to the next agenda.

- 9) **More Time**
- 10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed by Helen Mattson