

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

5:00 PM

**2nd Floor Conference Room
City Hall**

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
Mayor George Hansel
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Mari Brunner
Gregg Kleiner
Kürt Blomquist, Ex-Officio

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Lena Kridlo
Councilor Michael Giacomo
Dr. Delene White

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM.

2) Roll Call

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting: December 14, 2021

Mayor Hansel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 14, 2021. Mr. Blomquist seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

a) Fundraising Ideas/Opportunities

Ms. Brunner stated that the “donate” button on the webpage is all they have right now. Ms. Mattson replied yes, that is all that is on there that’s new, other than the survey. PCC historical background and committee members are there as well.

Ms. Brunner asked if the Taste of Keene is happening this year. Mr. Kleiner replied yes, June 4th. He continued that he already said the PCC would be interested. He spoke briefly of the

work the [Keene Young Professionals Network] is doing in preparation for the event. Chair Mitchell stated that that there is no question that the PCC is interested in participating.

b) PCC Exchange Survey – review survey responses – Gmail account has been created

Ms. Brunner stated that they have had five responses to the survey so far, and she forwarded them to Chair Mitchell and Ms. Mattson. She continued that most of the response to the survey is coming from people connected to the chorale group from Keene State College (KSC). Chair Mitchell stated that he contacted Sandra Howard at KSC.

Chair Mitchell stated that he has had several calls from people looking for photos on the webpage. Mayor Hansel stated that he tried sharing some photos on the PCC's Facebook page and tried to tag people, but does not know if it worked. Ms. Thomas-Smith replied yes, there were some likes and comments. Discussion continued about activity on the Facebook page.

Chair Mitchell stated that he has quite a few photos from student exchanges. He asked if it is appropriate to share them (online). Ms. Mattson replied that he would have to get permission. Chair Mitchell replied that he would only post photos if he had permission. Ms. Thomas-Smith asked if consent forms for use of photos were signed in the past, when parents registered their children for traveling to Einbeck. Chair Mitchell replied yes, for school use, but there was nothing about the City's use. He continued that he will have to check into this. Discussion continued about consent for photos.

c) Planning for possible Keene Delegation to Einbeck – 2nd week of October 2022

Chair Mitchell stated that he heard from Jürgen Herbst that people from Keene are invited to Einbeck in October and Einbeck plans on hosting them, but Einbeck is not sure it will occur. He will inform the PCC if he hears anything. Einbeck is planning and they just need to wait for the okay that the festival is even going to occur.

Chair Mitchell continued that Ms. Mattson made a nice list of what has happened with previous exchanges. It would be helpful for PCC members to go through those and look at what their days would look like [if they traveled to Einbeck]. PCC members would enjoy doing this, but would be expected to do the hosting as well [when people from Einbeck come to Keene]. They can look at what hosts have done in Keene before and hope to do again. It is a lot of fun but also work.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the PCC started to identify those who are interested in going to Einbeck. He continued that it is now February, and they probably need to formalize that so they can start filling out the delegation. It has been about 10 or 12 people, without spouses. Between now and March they should formalize the list of who from the PCC is going, and then see if there are other people they want to reach out to to see if they are interested.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they also need to think about what the theme of the visit will be. He continued that it could be as simple as reconnecting. He himself has been to Einbeck twice, whereas others would be going for the first time. They might want to let Mr. Herbst know that maybe a portion of the delegation would participate in the “standard” activities that Einbeck hosts share with participants from Keene, while others who have already participated might be interested in something more specific. The PCC members need to put their thoughts together and let Einbeck know what they are thinking. Other times they have waited until August to finalize the list of who is traveling, and it is frustrating to people in Einbeck. They should give feedback to Einbeck in March regarding the topic or theme. Last time they visited with youth programs, and they have also talked about small businesses and other topics; they can look back at their notes. As you can see from the schedules of previous visits, Einbeck hosts will keep people from Keene quite busy. If they want to be not quite as busy, they need to let the people in Einbeck know.

Chair Mitchell stated that they will receive a preliminary itinerary from Einbeck, which will give them some ideas. He continued that if they have new people going, as well as people who have been before, they need to figure out what the balance is (for activities). Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell asked if the Mayor has a number of how many committee members he wants. Mayor Hansel replied no, but he would like the focus to be on bringing people who will help sustain this relationship with Einbeck for the next 5 to 6 years. He continued that that is what it takes. If they do not find a “class” of people who will take this on and own it for the next 5 or 6 years, it will not thrive. He would not just pick someone with a special topic interest who would go on the trip once and then never participate again.

Mr. Blomquist stated that he is not connected to youth sports. He continued that with Wally Secord stepping back and no one else having stepped forward, maybe the PCC can talk about whether anyone knows a person connected to youth sports who could make the introductions in Einbeck and carry this on. Discussion ensued. Chair Mitchell stated that they have no one now; they were very fortunate with Mr. Secord. Mr. Secord did what the Mayor said; he was very invested [in the youth soccer partnership] and made a lot of personal sacrifices to be involved in it. He does not know where they could find another person like Mr. Secord, and he has already looked at the school system as a possibility.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they could maybe find a different youth activity. He continued that there is a lot for them to figure out and they need to be reaching out. He is concerned about the continuation of this partnership. For example, is Chair Mitchell thinking about who will be the next “John Mitchell” from the school district? Maybe that is a person they want to ask to go to Einbeck.

Chair Mitchell stated that they had also talked about reaching out to someone from the Keene YMCA, who would also be a strong candidate. Mayor Hansel replied yes, Dan Smith from the Y would be great. He continued that he, too, is sort of thinking about how he would replace

himself [when the time comes]. That is how [former Mayor] Kendall Lane had thought about it, too, and it seemed to be successful.

Chair Mitchell asked who here is interested in going to Einbeck and can commit to it. Discussion ensued. Ms. Brunner, Chair Mitchell, and the Mayor stated that they will go. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she is not sure. Mr. Kleiner stated that he cannot go this year. Mr. Blomquist stated that he is a potential yes but would not want to take a spot from someone who wants to go for the first time. The Mayor stated that he would like to get another Councilor Councilor to go.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the question of who is committed to the Einbeck trip should go out in an email to the whole PCC so they can think about it and give an answer by March. Chair Mitchell and Ms. Mattson agreed.

Ms. Thomas-Smith spoke of the benefits of youth participating, through schools and/or the YMCA, and thus establishing connections with people in Einbeck early, and sort of “growing up together” with the youth in Einbeck. This would help sustain the partnership. Discussion continued about possible participants. PCC members brainstormed people to reach out to, such as Sandra Howard (chorale groups, KSC), or Elizabeth Cardine (MC2 school). Mayor Hansel stated that he suggests findings those individuals whom they think could carry the torch.

Chair Mitchell asked how many people should be in a Keene delegation. Mr. Blomquist replied that 10 or 12 is what they have done in the past, which ends up being about 15 to 17 people if some spouses come.

Chair Mitchell asked how they can reduce the likelihood of people backing out at the last minute. Mr. Blomquist replied that there is no money commitment [to secure a spot], which means that people have been able to back out at the last minute. He continued that August has been the latest that people could possibly back out, because of transportation arrangements. When people have backed out, they have all given legitimate reasons, and he is not sure what to say about this, because it is not like anyone has paid a down deposit. All they can do is emphasize to folks that this is a commitment. People in Einbeck get frustrated, because they need to know who is coming as they set up the arrangements for hosting. By May or June, they need to have a good feel for who the group is.

Chair Mitchell asked if Mayor Hansel is approaching these other people [they spoke about]. The Mayor replied that he will find a Councilor, ask Elizabeth Cardine, and ask Dan Smith from the YMCA.

d) Future Exchange Ideas – YMCA, dance, rugby

Chair Mitchell stated that they just talked about Dan Smith. He continued that Mr. Schoefmann was talking about rugby, but he is not here tonight.

e) Discuss Promotional Activities/Media Opportunities to help Promote PCC Events and Exchanges

Mr. Kleiner stated that the PCC will be involved with the Taste of Keene event. Ms. Thomas-Smith asked what the PCC's responsibilities are for that. Mr. Kleiner replied that the responsibilities of participants will be the same as last year. He continued that the KYPN has not yet finalized the details of the event; they are waiting to see what the City can give them. Ms. Thomas-Smith asked for more information about the event, and Mr. Kleiner confirmed that it will be an outside event, a Beer Garden, the same as last year. Discussion continued about how it went last year. Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Kleiner to keep them posted on the details of this year's event and what the expectations are of the PCC.

Ms. Brunner asked if that is the only fundraising activity this group normally does, or if there is no normal. Mr. Blomquist replied that there has not been a 'normal' in four years. He continued that they used to do fundraising at the Pumpkin Festival. One year they did a fundraising night at Fireworks restaurant – the PCC held a raffle, and Fireworks donated a portion of its profits from that night to the PCC. There has not been a specific fundraising event other than Pumpkin Festival.

Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that one year they did fundraising at the Keene Music Festival. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, but the Music Festival stopped having food vendors to focus on coordinating the music. He continued that the challenge for the PCC is finding people who want to lead/coordinate a fundraising event. Also, there have not been other events in the past couple years to tag on with. Ms. Brunner had talked about a winter market, but someone has to take charge of that and go through the process of doing it. If the Pumpkin Festival comes back, the PCC could reestablish that activity. He does not see the Music Festival going back to including food vendors. A number of businesses were doing "pick a night for a nonprofit" events, but those were set aside and he is not sure businesses will return to that.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they were successful with raffling off different Einbeck items (at Fireworks that night). Chair Mitchell replied yes, they made more money through the raffles than through the portion of profits from the restaurant. He asked if they can sell or raffle off Einbeck hats, shirts, or other items, along with beer (at the Taste of Keene). Others spoke positively of the idea, and discussion continued about what to have in a raffle. Discussion continued about the success of fundraising at the Pumpkin Festival and the possibility of the Pumpkin Festival returning. Chair Mitchell stated that he thinks there is a good group of people in town who will help the PCC; that is a strength.

The Mayor stated that when it does come time to host [people from Einbeck], the PCC should make an appeal to former people who were involved. Others agreed. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that some have said they would be happy to host again. The Mayor stated that there are some

people he would feel comfortable asking for financial support from. It is tough to do that right now, but maybe when the exchanges start happening again.

Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she has a task for herself – to add the photos she received from Mr. Secord to the PCC’s Facebook page. Mr. Blomquist replied that while they are on the topic of Facebook, it would be great if she could periodically post something that encourages interested people to get involved, and to contact Ms. Mattson for more information. He continued that they can have people who are not on the PCC helping out. They need people to run things down. For example, it would be great if someone from Dan Smith’s community wanted to be doing something and reporting back to [the YMCA]. The PCC should schedule a post for every couple of months to say that the PCC is looking for volunteers for subcommittees, such as program development, exchange development, or fundraising. They could potentially have more people than just the people in this room.

Ms. Thomas-Smith replied yes, as long as they are clear what the ask is. For example, there was someone who was interested in wanting to help and had lots of ideas, but was not able to implement the ideas. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, they need people with ideas and people who can coordinate and implement ideas. They need to let people know that they are looking for people to participate and to come talk with the PCC. For example, people who could develop a dance exchange, or youth sports, youth soccer, or something else. The PCC should try to create some buzz.

Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she absolutely agrees with all of that but just wants to be careful. She asked what exactly the ask would be. To come to the next meeting? Mr. Blomquist replied that the ask would be to contact Ms. Mattson or send a message on the Facebook page. Ms. Brunner replied that the PCC has a new email address that people could contact. Discussion continued.

5) Communications

a) Christmas Card from Einbeck – (Needs Translation)

Ms. Mattson stated that she has the card that Einbeck sent to Keene. She continued that it is in German, and she emailed it out to see if anyone could translate it, but did not hear back. Discussion ensued about how to get it translated and the various technologies. Chair Mitchell stated that he has a translation at home, but did not bring it in today because he thought Lena Kridlo had translated it.

6) Reports

a) Treasurer Report

Mr. Kleiner stated that there are no changes. Chair Mitchell stated that the PCC accepts the Treasurer’s Report as unchanged.

7) **New Business**

a) **Request for Funding Letter to City Manager – For New Fiscal Year 2022/23**

Ms. Mattson stated that she is prepared to bring the PCC's request for funding letter to the City Manager to pass to the Finance Department. She continued that it is a place mark for them. It explains their interest. The City Manager will make a copy and send the original to Finance Director Merri Howe.

Mr. Blomquist stated that they need to look at the calendar and see when the public hearing is. He continued that Chair Mitchell or someone he appoints should come to the public hearing and speak to the request. Chair Mitchell asked him to give him that date. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, he will do that.

b) **PCC's History for When Exchanges Have Happened**

Chair Mitchell stated that Ms. Mattson has handouts tonight so the PCC can look at some of the past exchanges. Ms. Mattson replied that she also emailed it to the committee. She continued that it includes Albert Thormann's wish list. Chair Mitchell stated that it gives a sense of what happens in a normal cycle and what the exchanges are like. It was a busy exchange cycle [recently]. Right when the school closed down [due to COVID-19], there were about 15 students coming from Einbeck and they had to cancel it about three days before they got on the plane. He is sure that will pick right up again. He is hopeful that they will have strong support, with people wanting to get back to traveling. Ms. Mattson stated that in 2019 they had the mixed group exchange from Einbeck to Keene; youth soccer, which was the last one; and the KSC music exchange. Potentially, that could happen again.

Ms. Brunner asked if the youth exchange has to be topical – like soccer or dance - or could it just be a specific age group of students who are interested? Chair Mitchell replied that they had an exchange from the Cheshire Career Center, because Einbeck has a school that is kind of a technical school like that, but the difficulty they have run into now at the high school is that the other exchanges were always a function of a commercial travel group. The teacher went for free, and the students could sign up from a travel organization. That took the burden off the teacher and school, regarding liability and responsibility. He is just speculating, but he thinks that is one reason people do not want to pick up the soccer exchange or student exchange. The school does not want to be the umbrella covering the students and the teacher. It is the same with Mr. Secord. Any person would be putting themselves at a risk when they do that type of exchange. He is not sure how it would work if the City would somehow be the umbrella. Mr. Blomquist replied that part of the challenge with the City doing youth exchanges would be the background checks and things that go with dealing with children. The pressures of that is part of what was starting to get Mr. Secord down. They need an organization to sponsor that component of it. When he went to Einbeck, he went as a person, not a City employee, and used vacation time. This is something the City Manager can look at for the future. Discussion continued.

Ms. Brunner asked if, logistics aside, it would be okay to just have a youth exchange without a topic. Mr. Blomquist replied yes, but usually someone wants to know what the theme is. What are the youth coming to do? For example, if it is the YMCA, they have certain programs, like backpacking or whatever. They are not showing up to just hang out. Chair Mitchell stated that he does not think this would be an impediment. He continued that the theme could be anything. Ms. Mattson stated that when Chair Mitchell did exchanges with students from the high school, there was not a particular theme. Chair Mitchell replied that school was the theme; they went to each other's classes. Mr. Blomquist replied that it was centered around the school in Einbeck that is sort of like the Cheshire Career Center in Keene.

Mayor Hansel stated that almost anything is insurable. It just comes at a cost. He continued that he would hate to see that as an impediment. Mr. Blomquist replied that they have talked about this in the past. Could they assist groups somehow? For example, maybe the PCC could help fund groups' insurance, but not their travel. They have stayed away from funding individuals' travel, because the conversation becomes why fund one person and not another.

- 8) **Next Meeting – Next Meeting is March 8, 2022**
- 9) **More Time**
 - a) **Student Pen-Pal Ideas – High School 16-18 Year Olds**
- 10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison