

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

5:00 PM

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

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Mayor George Hansel
Councilor Michael Giacomo
Dawn Thomas-Smith
Mari Brunner
Gerald Lins
Derek Blunt

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Kürt Blomquist
Doris McCollester
Gregg Kleiner, Treasurer

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

Roll call was conducted.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – February 14, 2023

Mayor Hansel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 14, 2023. Councilor Giacomo seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

- A) KSC Music Exchange – Committee agreed it would match \$100 to what we received to cover the other family for dinner. \$100 gift card received from Monadnock Coop – vote to accept.**

Ms. Brunner reported that the Monadnock Coop donated a \$100 gift card. Chair Mitchell asked what the cost of the Saturday night dinner is expected to be, for the Einbeck visitors who are staying at the Marriott instead of host families and will need dinner. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the PCC had agreed to match the \$100. Chair Mitchell suggested \$150 just to be sure it is enough.

Councilor Giacomo made a motion to accept the \$100 gift card from the Monadnock Coop and to support up to \$150 from the Partner City Committee's funds to provide the first night dinner for the Keene State College Music Exchange. Mayor Hansel seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Schoefmann asked if Ms. Mattson will handle the distribution of those PCC funds. Ms. Mattson replied yes, she will get the check and find out from Sandra Howard who to make it out to. Discussion ensued. Ms. Brunner stated that the Finance Department will want the PCC to specify who the check goes to. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell asked who plans on being there. Discussion ensued, and the group determined that Councilor Giacomo, Mr. Kleiner, Ms. McCollester, and Chair Mitchell will be there. Ms. Brunner stated that she can be there if needed. She continued that she thought the dinner was before the meet and greet. Discussion ensued about the timing, and about whether the meet and greet is intended to be for all of the Einbeck visitors or just the ones not staying with host families. Chair Mitchell clarified that it is for all of the Einbeck visitors and host families will pick up their guests from the Marriott. Then the people staying at the Marriott would go to the Coop for dinner.

Mr. Schoefmann asked, regarding the cost of the dinner, whether someone should touch base with Sandra Howard and have her let the PCC know how much dinner cost so they can reimburse her. Discussion ensued about how to best get the PCC's funds, up to \$150, to Sandra/the Einbeck guest's dinner. Chair Mitchell questioned whether they could get the check approved in time for March 25. He asked if he could instead pay the money himself and bring the receipt to the next PCC meeting and then the PCC could pass a motion to reimburse him. Ms. Mattson and others agreed with that plan.

Chair Mitchell stated that he should have done this earlier in the meeting, but he would like to welcome new members Gerald Lins and Derek Blunt to the PCC. He asked everyone to go around and briefly introduce themselves. Other PCC members welcomed Mr. Blunt and Mr. Lins and briefly spoke about their experiences on the committee.

B) PCC Meet and Greet – Einbeck's Choir, Sat., 3/25 at 6:00 PM – Courtyard Marriott

Chair Mitchell stated that he will bring water and cookies. He explained for the benefit of the new PCC members that on Saturday, March 25, the PCC will be welcoming a group of 32

chorale members from Einbeck, who will have just arrived via airplane then bus, and all/any PCC members are welcome to be there. He continued that at the Marriott, the Einbeck visitors who are not staying there will meet their hosts there. Everyone will have a little time to introduce themselves and get to know each other. Ten of the visitors are staying at the Marriott. After the meet and greet, those 10 will have dinner at Monadnock Coop. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Lins offered to bring a light snack to the meet and greet, but needed to check with his wife first to see if she would be able to also attend. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that she can order/buy something for this as well, if someone else is able to bring it to the Marriott, because she is unavailable at that time. Chair Mitchell replied that they appreciate the offer but probably have it covered.

Chair Mitchell asked if anyone else had questions about the meet and greet, before moving on to the next agenda item.

Councilor Giacomo stated that he needs to leave in a minute, and does not have any questions about the meet and greet but has a comment about the “Pumpkin Fest Participation for Next Year” agenda item, which may have been taken off the agenda due to his comments at the last meeting. He continued that he had said that the PCC might not make the cut for being a vendor this year, but he had not realized how long the PCC had been having a food booth at the Pumpkin Festival. The Pumpkin Fest organizers are inviting vendors back based on tenure/seniority, and it sounds like the PCC’s food booth was around for a long time. He will talk with the Vendor Committee about this, which has not yet started meeting. The PCC’s participation this year is not completely off the table. He just does not know how many vendors they will be looking for this year. He asks that “Pumpkin Fest Participation for Next Year” be added back to the agenda items on more time. He hopes to have an update for the PCC soon now that the Vendor Committee is about to meet.

Councilor Giacomo left at 5:20 PM.

C) Discuss Upcoming Exchange with Einbeck in Keene – September 29-October 7, 2023

Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Schoefmann to update the PCC. Mr. Schoefmann put a document on the screen, explaining that there are many things still “TBD,” because the working group for planning the exchange is still in the brainstorming phase. He continued that Ms. Brunner reached out to the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Department and they potentially have a bus available for the PCC to use. Ms. Brunner stated that she could drive the bus locally, but not to Boston/long distances. She continued that driving it requires certain training.

Discussion ensued about who could drive the (25- to 30-person) bus. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he and Ms. Brunner will do the training so they can drive it. Mayor Hansel stated that he might do the training as well. Mr. Schoefmann stated that the bus is reserved for the whole week, and they can narrow it down as they sort out the schedule/programming.

Mr. Schoefmann went through the draft schedule, beginning with Einbeck visitors arriving in Boston on Friday, September 29, and being brought to Keene via bus to meet up with their host families. He continued that September 30 will be an acclimating day. They might go to a local rugby game. Stonewall Farm's event, Oktoberfest, is also that day, and the PCC plans to staff a booth there. They are thinking/talking about how to involve someone from Einbeck as well. Saturday will also have a welcome dinner. The next day, Sunday, will be a "choose your own adventure" day, where Einbeck folks will have various options, such as a bike tour of the rail trail, mountain bike ride, Mt. Monadnock hike, visiting historical sites or museums, and so on and so forth. They are open to other ideas. Ms. Thomas-Smith suggested apple picking/an orchard visit.

Mr. Schoefmann continued that for Monday, the working group talked about organizing a day trip. Possible locations could be the Pioneer Valley, Berkshires, Yankee Candle, Magic Wings butterfly conservatory, MASS MoCA, botanical gardens at Smith College, and so on and so forth. When folks from Keene went to Einbeck, their Einbeck hosts took them around the region and went out of their way to do different things for them, so it would be nice for Keene hosts to do that for their Einbeck visitors, too. Discussion ensued. Ms. Brunner stated that some places might be closed on Mondays. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they will need to divvy up the work of seeing which locations are open and what the costs would be, and researching other information to bring back to the next PCC meeting or the one after, to firm everything up by May or June. Mayor Hansel stated that he will look into the Pioneer Valley idea. Ms. Thomas-Smith suggested they look into discounted tickets/passes via the Keene Public Library.

Mr. Schoefmann continued that Tuesday would be for local activities in Keene, such as visiting local businesses or touring City facilities. Wednesday would be a major or minor day trip. Ideas for locations include the White Mountains, possibly Mt. Washington, Cannon, or Loon, stopping at the Concord statehouse; Boston; Portland; or New York. Thursday would be another local day. There are many ideas; they just have to decide how to go about it, and it depends somewhat on the group of Einbeck visitors, which they are waiting to hear about. Chair Mitchell stated that Einbeck has their group, and Jurgen Herbst will be sending information about the travelers in the next couple of weeks.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Friday morning will be free time for Einbeck visitors to choose activities they wanted to follow up on, shop for gifts, spend time with people, and so on and so forth. The farewell dinner on Friday will be at Councilor Giacomo's home. The departure back to Germany is Friday or Saturday.

Chair Mitchell stated that it all looks very good. He continued that it is great to have the free time on Friday, after people have had the week to get to know each other. Others agreed. Mr. Schoefmann stated that if the PCC is good with this schedule, the working group can tease out the details a bit more and ask the PCC for help as needed.

Ms. Brunner suggested asking if the folks who are coming have any specific requests. Others agreed. Chair Mitchell asked if the working group will meet again before the next PCC meeting. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Chair Mitchell asked if at the next PCC meeting, Mr. Schoefmann can give them a sense of how many meals, if there are any overnights, and an estimate of fees and costs. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Chair Mitchell added that it would also help to clarify which activities Keene hosts would be welcome to participate in. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it will sometimes depend on how many seats the transportation has.

Chair Mitchell asked if the working group has thought about where the welcome dinner might happen. Mr. Schoefmann replied not yet. Discussion ensued about potential locations, such as a Fireworks buffet, someone's home, the high school, Heberton Hall, The Pub, Machina, or another local restaurant.

Chair Mitchell stated that when the visitors are here, they should try to have them on the radio. He continued that it might help to talk about it a month or two in advance, too. Mayor Hansel replied that they could do it anytime. He continued that it would be good to have a couple PCC members on, if they just let him know when they want to do it.

Chair Mitchell asked if Mr. Schoefmann had anything else. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, the working group will probably have more specific asks of the PCC next time. Mayor Hansel asked, what about the day trip location? They should figure that out. Ms. Thomas-Smith asked if they know if the Einbeck visitors have a preference or specific places they want to go. Chair Mitchell replied that they have asked more than once, and Mr. Herbst/Einbeck folks keep saying they will be glad to go anywhere/do whatever. He continued that maybe when Mr. Herbst sends the PCC the travelers' information, they will have a better sense of which daytrip(s) would be the best fit.

Lengthy discussion ensued about the potential daytrip locations, such as the White Mountains, New York, Boston, Maine, and the logistics of transportation, travel times and routes, activities, and so on and so forth. The PCC tentatively decided on planning a Portland/White Mountains trip. Ms. Brunner stated that then the Berkshires could be on Monday, with the optional contra dance that night.

D) PCC Exchange Survey/Facebook Updates

Ms. Mattson stated that Dita Englund, a prior PCC member, filled out the survey with very positive ratings. She continued that Ms. Englund expressed a willingness to participate in some way, so the PCC can keep her in mind. Ms. Brunner replied that maybe she would be able to help coordinate for the contra dance, since it is near where she lives. Discussion ensued about how to contact her. PCC members noted that survey should include asking for people's email address or phone number if they want to be in contact with the PCC.

Ms. Brunner stated that they should do something on Facebook regarding the upcoming exchange, so people know it is happening. Others agreed. Ms. Thomas-Smith stated that the only public event is the concert at the Redfern, so people could be involved that way. Ms. Mattson replied that that is posted, but she thinks they need to do more on the Facebook page to keep people informed. Ms. Thomas-Smith replied that if anyone takes photos at the meet and greet on Saturday, those would be great to post; photos engage people. Mr. Schoefmann asked if Ms. Thomas-Smith can add him to the (administrators) on the Facebook page.

E) Update on Future Exchange Ideas – Student Exchanges and Others

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he needs to talk with the board of the rugby club, and the club needs to talk about what they are hoping to gain and figure out how their purposes for the exchange align.

Chair Mitchell stated that they have not heard back from the woman who had expressed interest in doing a soccer exchange.

Mr. Blunt stated that the student exchange will be happening, and Einbeck travelers booked their flights and will be in Keene from October 9 to 22. The MC2 School will be hosting them. MC2 has raised about 30% of their fundraising goal to book their flights, which they hope to do in August. They have their own division of corporate asks, companies who have supported MC2 in the past, but they would also appreciate any recommendations from the PCC, regarding other businesses to reach out to for student sponsorships. Mayor Hansel replied that he can help with that. He continued that if Mr. Blunt gets in touch with him, he will give him some names. Mr. Schoefmann stated that if MC2 has a specific dollar amount in the long run that they need to make up, they can come to the PCC with that request. Mr. Blunt replied that they are doing a fundraiser on April 1 for the Einbeck exchange, a yard sale/bake sale at 310 Marlboro St. Ms. Brunner replied that she can post about that on Facebook, if Mr. Blunt sends her the details. Mr. Schoefmann asked when MC2 plans to go to Einbeck. Mr. Blunt replied March (2024). Chair Mitchell asked if MC2 is all set with hosting. Mr. Blunt replied yes, they believe so; they have not secured hosts yet but they are optimistic.

Mayor Hansel asked how much money MC2 needs to raise. Mr. Blunt replied the goal is \$10,000 by September, to cover the flights. He continued that they have about \$3,000 so far. They have not yet figured out the expenses for hosting Einbeck travelers in October and are still putting the itinerary together.

5) Communications

Chair Mitchell stated that that he received communications from Mr. Herbst saying that the Einbeck travelers will all fly on the same airplane and arrive (in Boston) at the same time. He continued that Mr. Herbst expects to get in touch just after Easter to let the PCC know about

their travel arrangements, and again, they will send written introductions and photos of the people who will be traveling.

Chair Mitchell asked, regarding the official exchange this fall when Keene will be hosting travelers from Einbeck, if it would make sense for the hosts to meet ahead of time and get to know each other. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann and others agreed that it would be helpful for the hosts to get to know each other ahead of time and be on the same page. Ms. Brunner suggested using WhatsApp to stay in touch with each other as a group. Chair Mitchell asked that the working group that is planning the itinerary for the October exchange, add a meetup for the hosts.

Chair Mitchell stated that Mr. Herbst sent him/the PCC photos of Einbeck's partner city committee. He asked if it is okay with everyone if he takes a photo of the PCC to send to Einbeck. Others agreed.

- 6) **Reports**
 - A) **Treasurer Report**
- 7) **New Business**
 - A) **Discuss Additional Guidelines/Expectations to be added for people from Keene traveling to Einbeck**
- 8) **Next Meeting – April 11, 2023**
- 9) **More Time**
 - A) **Fundraising Ideas/Opportunities**
 - B) **Planning for “Taste of Keene” for next year. Brats and Krauts sales – potential free use of grill and donation for brats and kraut, volunteers**
- 10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 6:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison