

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 14, 2025**

**5:00 PM**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room,  
City Hall**

**Members Present:**

John Mitchell, Chair  
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair  
Councilor Andrew Madison  
Gerald Kuhn (arrived at 5:02 PM)  
Mari Brunner (arrived at 5:03 PM)  
Doris McCollester  
Gerald Lins  
Eric Weisenberger  
Derek Blunt

**Staff Present:**

Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant

**Members Not Present:**

*All Present*

**Mayor Jay Kahn**

**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 – December 10, 2024**

Mr. Schoefmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 10, 2024. Mr. Lins seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**4) Board Business**

**A) Choral Exchange Sponsorship – questions and discussion with Sandra Howard**

Chair Mitchell welcomed guest Sandra Howard and invited her to speak about the Choral Exchange. He continued that the PCC is expecting about 20 guests from Einbeck on October 16 to 25. They hope to

(connect the two groups) somehow. Ms. Howard replied they absolutely (can connect), and she brought the choral exchange's itinerary, so they might identify some activities they could connect on.

Ms. Howard stated that for anyone unfamiliar with this segment of the PCC's work, they have been doing choral exchange since 2012. She continued that the sixth choral exchange will be (this fall). Exchanges have involved community singers, the UCC, collegiate members, and faculty.

Gerald Kuhn arrived at 5:02 PM.

Ms. Howard continued that guests are arriving Monday, October 13. The Tuesday plan involves a greeting from Mayor Kahn, a tour of the Keene Public Library and the Fire Station, a tour with the Historical Society, and a dinner and rehearsal with community ensemble singers. Wednesday will be activities on campus. Thursday will be a tour of the YMCA and use of the pool, a lunch and performance at Covenant Living of Keene, free time and shopping, and contra dancing or folk dancing.

Mari Brunner arrived at 5:03 PM.

Ms. Howard continued that Friday night, the PCC's guests might be interested in attending a performance on campus. She spoke more about the planned activities for the choral exchange guests, including a trip to Bennington (Vermont), a performance at the UCC, a combined international concert, and a gathering at Wilson Pond on campus. She continued that the Wilson Pond gathering would be another good time to merge the two cohorts. Monday is a full day in Boston, and then people will either go to NY or Germany.

Ms. Howard stated that she is pleased to have received about \$7,400 from the Ewing Foundation. She continued that she is asking the PCC for funding for the Wilson charter bus. It is about \$2,000 to hire a charter bus from Keene to Logan Airport in Boston and back. In the past, the PCC has generously offered financial assistance with picking up and returning to the airport. The trip to Bennington, through the Wilson charter bus, is about \$2,000. It would be cheaper to rent six vans from Enterprise. A day trip like that in a small van would be okay, but for coming from the airport with luggage, a big bus is helpful.

Mr. Lins asked how many people they are expecting. Ms. Howard replied about 25. She continued that she has not yet started soliciting host homes, but about eight travelers have told her they have previous relationships and have thus "housed themselves" already. A few people would like to pay their own way and stay in a hotel, per their preference. She is not sure if the (PCC) pays for hotel stays. Chair Mitchell replied that historically, the PCC has thought an "exchange" meant the live-in experience. Ms. Howard replied that she can usually get a discounted hotel rate through the Redfern, which she can offer to the few people who prefer the hotel.

Ms. Howard stated that another potential crossover event with the choral exchange guests and the PCC's guests is an afternoon nature walk with someone from New England Forestry. She continued that that is Friday, October 17.

Mayor Kahn told Ms. Howard about a local high school student who is a local talent, schooled at Apple Hill, who could be worked into the performance. Ms. Howard replied that she will check that out. Mayor Kahn stated that the other thing he wants to add is that Pumpkin Fest is likely to be October 18. Ms. Howard replied that that might be more interesting than a drive to Bennington.

Ms. Howard asked if there are events during the week that the PCC's cohort might enjoy participating in. She continued that knowing ahead of time would help her plan the logistics. Chair Mitchell replied that the PCC is going to start their planning, so they will have a better idea of that as they go forward. He continued that it looks like Ms. Howard has put together an excellent program. Others agreed. Ms. Howard replied that it was put together with input from the choral exchange travelers, to ensure that it matches their interests.

Mayor Kahn asked if it is correct that the charter bus costs \$2,100 twice. Ms. Howard replied yes, the pickup and the return. She continued that that is something for the PCC to consider.

Ms. Brunner stated that she will probably go to the UCC church service, which she enjoyed last time. She continued that if she is able, she would also like to join the Contra dancing. Discussion ensued. Ms. Howard stated that PCC members are welcome to join any of these activities.

Chair Mitchell asked if the PCC had any further questions for Ms. Howard, or thoughts on the funding. Ms. Howe replied that at the PCC's last meeting, they talked about whether Wilson Transportation was being used for a particular reason, or if they could get quotes elsewhere for transportation costs. Ms. Howard replied that she went with Wilson just because it is the contract through the college. She continued that she hopes that leads to a discount, but if folks have recommendations, she is happy to look elsewhere. Ms. McCollester stated that she would be glad to help drive (a few people around town), and others will volunteer for that, too. Ms. Howard thanked her and replied that once she gets the housing put together, she will put out the request for volunteer drivers.

Discussion ensued about transportation options. The Rec Center bus is no longer an option, but Thomas Transportation might be. Chair Mitchell stated that this is something the PCC can look into. He continued that he thinks by the next meeting, they will have an idea of what they can do. Ms. Howard thanked the group and left the meeting.

Mr. Blunt stated that it looks likely that (MC2 School's) student exchange will be in the range of (October) 13 to 25. Discussion ensued about how that is lot of a German visitors at once, and the timing and the events. Chair Mitchell stated that they could have about 60 people here from Germany at the same time. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it would be amazing if they could get everyone in the same place at the same time for something. Chair Mitchell spoke about bringing up the German Consulate General from Boston, and how they will be impacting so many different subcommunities within the city. It is great to have these three good programs happening.

Chair Mitchell asked the PCC if they want to vote on the financial support for the choral exchange. Discussion ensued. Ms. Howe stated that at the last meeting, the PCC decided to support paying for the transportation from the airport to Keene, and \$2,000 was the amount they chose. Discussion ensued about how the transportation costs might not include the Bennington trip, if the group goes to Pumpkin

Fest instead, but they do not know. Ms. Brunner stated that at the last meeting, the PCC decided to pay for the trip to Keene plus the welcome reception. Others agreed and discussion continued.

Councilor Madison made a motion for the PCC to approve a donation of \$2,200 to the Keene State College Choral Exchange. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

### **B) Next Exchange – Confirm Dates**

Chair Mitchell stated that the exchange will be October 16 to 25. He continued that there will be 20 people. The next step is to start blocking out what that time frame will look like. He asked Councilor Madison for an update on what might be the center activity. Councilor Madison replied that he spoke with the person who runs Sunapee Cruises, who said yes, they are still operating at that time and would be able to do a charter. He gave more information about what that would entail. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann asked if Councilor Madison would spearhead this, and Councilor Madison replied yes. Discussion continued about the Sunapee Cruise, a nearby Native American history museum and nature walk, and other possibilities such as an outdoor sculpture park, the American Machinists Museum, a bread museum, a glass blowing place, and more.

Chair Mitchell stated that they also need to plan a welcome and departure. He asked the PCC for their thoughts on that. He mentioned the Blastos Room and the Library annex. Discussion ensued about the possibility of doing a combined event, if there is crossover with the different exchange groups, and potential venues, such as the Showroom. Chair Mitchell asked if Mr. Weisenberger could spearhead looking into the possibility of having the welcome reception at the Showroom, with maybe 65 or 70 people. Mr. Weisenberger replied yes.

Chair Mitchell stated that Mr. Lins has offered to host a departure party. He asked him to speak to that. Mr. Lins stated that he and his wife have a big hillside place, an open area with a barn. He continued that PCC members can come look at the space and see if they think it would work. Discussion ensued, and Chair Mitchell suggested a PCC member go see the space/meet with Mr. Lins and consider this possibility. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, they can coordinate that after this meeting. Chair Mitchell spoke positively about a nice event Keene travelers attended in Einbeck last time, a dinner with picnic tables at an old-fashioned farm, and how nice it was, relaxing with good socializing.

Chair Mitchell stated that when their Einbeck guests arrive, they will meet in the Blastos room for light refreshments, then go home with their hosts. He continued that Mayor Kahn can help them with how he would like to receive them the next day. Discussion ensued about a downtown breakfast and maybe a look at the functions of City Hall and the court, local versus State government, a possible trip to Concord, and so on and so forth. Mr. Schoefmann stated that they should make sure to give at least half a day for outlet shopping. Chair Mitchell stated that he hopes by the next PCC meeting, they can have a report on a welcoming dinner, a report on what they could do for City governance in the welcoming (events), and a report on the departure event.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he would be happy to draft something like he did last time. Ms. Brunner stated that a few PCC members had helped put together a draft schedule last time, to bring back to the group. She asked if that would be helpful again. Chair Mitchell replied that he thinks they are not there yet. He continued that he thinks they should figure out the beginning, the end, and a couple of the big

things in the middle. Mr. Schoefmann offered to look at the choral exchange plans and see if there are possible places of overlap. Discussion continued about possible activities and venues. Ms. Howe stated that at the last meeting, she took notes on the ideas people had, so she can pass out copies of that next time. Chair Mitchell replied that that would be great.

### **C) Fundraising Ideas and Opportunities**

Chair Mitchell asked if anyone had anything new about fundraising ideas and opportunities. Ms. Howe replied that she has, in her desk, something that was left by Helen (Mattson) - beer trays, bar towels, lanyards, and Einbecker items, if that is anything the PCC wants to do something with.

Mr. Lins stated that one idea people were discussing was (creating) an Einbeck/Keene cookbook. He continued that they could sell copies at Pumpkin Fest. Discussion ensued about fundraising at Pumpkin Fest.

Chair Mitchell asked what the legality is of raffles. Mr. Schoefmann replied that after purchasing a raffle license from the City Clerk's Office, you have to get specific tickets and report the winners. Discussion continued, and Chair Mitchell asked if the PCC is allowed to sell items at Pumpkin Fest. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes. Ms. Brunner stated that she would be willing to look into what it would take to get a raffle license. Ms. Howe stated that she could talk with the City Clerk's Office about the official rules. Discussion continued about the raffle possibilities, such as maybe doing a raffle at the welcoming dinner or departure dinner, or at Pumpkin Fest, and about the differences between long-term raffles and same-day raffles. Mr. Kuhn asked about the possibility of doing a 50/50 raffle. Ms. Howe replied no, they looked into that recently and there are some weird rules they ran into.

Mayor Kahn spoke about the Keene International Festival in September, as an event the PCC should think about as a fundraising opportunity. Discussion ensued about the event and the food trucks and food stands that have been there in the past. Mr. Schoefmann brought up the Taste of Keene event, too, and Mayor Kahn brought up the Jumanji Anniversary event.

### **5) Communications**

### **6) Reports**

#### **A) Treasurer Report – Eric**

Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Weisenberger if there was anything the PCC should know about the treasurer report. Mr. Weisenberger replied not to his knowledge. He continued that the general operating account is at \$16,982, and the fundraising account has \$17,506, as of January 8.

Mayor Kahn stated that the City's budget process kicks off sometime this month. Mr. Schoefmann replied yes, later this month. Ms. Howe stated that the PCC typically receives \$5,000 from the City budget. Chair Mitchell stated that he would be glad to go speak about it (at the meeting), if someone tells him when it is. Mayor Kahn replied that that will not happen for a few months. Discussion ensued about the process. Mayor Kahn stated that that will be later in the process, but this front end of the

process is for if the PCC is looking for additional dollars. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he does not think they would be. Councilor Madison replied that he would not advise it.

7) **New Business**

Mayor Kahn stated that due to the Mayor's Youth Council, he has been at the high school a lot and has had conversations with the principal and the superintendent. He continued that Matt Leese, KHS's choral director, indicated an interest in joining the PCC, and he thinks there is a vacancy.

Chair Mitchell asked if there was other new business. Mr. Schoefmann replied that for the next meeting, he will have an update on soccer.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that that he was perusing the Ordinance for the PCC and sees that they are supposed to have an ex officio member from Public Works, Police, or Fire. They do not currently have that. There is a Public Works staff member who speaks fluent German, which might be a good option. If that person is interested, he could talk with Mayor Kahn. Chair Mitchell replied that a couple Fire and Police officers have also expressed interest. Discussion continued.

8) **Next Meeting – February 11, 2025**

9) **More Time**

10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:59 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant