

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 8, 2022

5:00 PM

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

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Councilor Michael Giacomo
Mari Brunner
Kürt Blomquist
Doris McCollester

Staff Present:

Helen Mattson, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Dawn Thomas-Smith
Mayor George Hansel
Gregg Kleiner

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. Chair Mitchell welcomed a guest who has expressed an interest in the committee and is here to observe the meeting and see if this is a group he would like to be involved with.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting: September 20, 2022

Mr. Blomquist made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of September 20, 2022. Councilor Giacomo seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

A) Update – October Delegation – Keene to Einbeck - John

Chair Mitchell reported that he, and everyone he interacted with, had a fabulous time in Einbeck. He spoke of how the trip helped build honest bonds and connections among people. He thinks the trip was a terrific success.

Councilor Giacomo stated that for the future, the PCC needs to establish expectations that are well understood by everyone attending the trip. He continued that he is specifically referring to the need for people from Keene to stay with the tour, when it is a tour people from Einbeck have thoughtfully put together for them, and to not say negative things or veer off on their own. His host family, who organized the Berlin tour, were hurt by conversations they overheard. Discussion ensued about the importance of respecting the time and energy the hosts put in.

Ms. Brunner stated that she had an amazing time on the trip. She continued that her hosts went all out, and showed her an amazing time, which made her think a lot about how hosts in Keene need to do something great in return for people from Einbeck when they come here. She spoke about the potential for further school connections.

Mr. Schoefmann spoke positively about his experiences on the trip as well. He continued that he agrees with Chair Mitchell's point that the PCC needs to work to make the experience special when people from Einbeck come here. He was excited by the headway and the establishment of planned exchanges.

Chair Mitchell stated that he agrees with Councilor Giacomo's concerns, and agrees that they have work to do. Discussion continued. Mr. Schoefmann spoke regarding how meaningful the time in Berlin was to him, and how he was so grateful to the organizers. Mr. Blomquist stated that the PCC has already written guidelines/expectations for Keene hosts, and it would be appropriate for them to write additional guidelines for people from Keene traveling to Einbeck. He continued that the trips to Einbeck sometimes include invited people who are not part of the PCC and are maybe experiencing something like this for the first time. Written guidelines on what to expect would be helpful.

B) Update – Stonewall Farm Oktoberfest - opportunity to participate – past members' availability for Saturday, October 8 - John

Chair Mitchell stated that the PCC is indebted to the spouses of former members who put on an excellent show. He continued that Oktoberfest was a big success, with over 1,000 people. Fred Parsells and his wife worked hard that day, and garnered some support for the PCC. Stonewall Farm welcomes the PCC's participation next year in a prime spot, and they will be able to sell food. The PCC should recognize and remember that they have a lot of support outside of the committee.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that it sounds like it is the first item on the PCC's community events and fundraising calendar that will be created. Ms. Mattson stated that the event was wonderful and she and her grandchildren had a great time. She spoke about how there was good food, but not a lot of food, and long lines, which indicates that the PCC would do well selling food here. Discussion ensued, and Councilor Giacomo agreed with Ms. Mattson's points.

- C) **Discuss Planning “Taste of Keene” for next year. Brats and Kraut sales – potential free use of grill and donation for brats and kraut, volunteers.**

Chair Mitchell stated that they will put this on more time.

- D) **PCC Exchange Survey/Facebook Updates**

Ms. Brunner stated that she shared a post that someone else did. Ms. Mattson replied that she thought the photos came from Yves [Gakunde]. Ms. Brunner replied no, it was someone else’s post. Ms. Mattson replied that they should probably post something on the Facebook page. Ms. Brunner replied that she did not want to be on her own doing it. Ms. Mattson stated that the photos she saw were shared on the Keene, NH site; it is great publicity. Mr. Schoefmann suggested that he and Ms. Brunner draft something together.

- E) **Future Exchange Ideas – Brewery and Rugby and Other New Connections – Will/John**

Chair Mitchell stated that before they get into future exchange ideas, there is an upcoming exchange to talk about – Karen Selzar is coming around March 25, with close to 30 people, for about three days. She has a youth choir and has toured the US several times. He continued that Sandra Howard will come to the December PCC meeting, because she will be helping to host the choir group. She will bring a budget and plan of events to the PCC for discussion, and they will see if the PCC can provide some support. The Parsells family has offered five beds to help with this, and there might be a need for three or four more beds, if the PCC can think of a way to help Ms. Howard, short of spending money on a hotel. He has asked Ms. Howard to share with the PCC what kind of fundraising she has done in the past two months.

Mr. Blomquist stated that the PCC needs to think about what kind of support they can offer in these types of situations – for example, whether the PCC would host a lunch for visitors from Einbeck versus giving cash. Chair Mitchell replied that he thinks that instead of asking for a dollar amount, Ms. Howard will show them the plan and see if the PCC can fill in some gaps. PCC members responded that they like that approach. Chair Mitchell stated that Ms. Howard will be traveling to Einbeck from May 8 to 15, and that is on her – she will hopefully have data on what her plans are – but again, Einbeck Voices will be here a couple months later.

Chair Mitchell stated that in addition, Keene will be hosting an exchange. He continued that while the Keene delegation was in Germany, they offered two dates –June or later in the fall. People from Einbeck have reported that they would like to travel in the fall, which is when they have typically traveled. He will write a rough draft of an invitation and bring it to the December PCC meeting for the committee to review. Mr. Blomquist asked if the Keene Mayor sends that to the Einbeck Mayor. Ms. Mattson replied yes.

Ms. Brunner asked if the visit in the fall will overlap with Oktoberfest. Chair Mitchell replied that they do not know yet. Discussion ensued about the timing and the possibilities. Mr. Blomquist stated that at the PCC's January meeting they will need to start thinking about putting together a schedule of what they need to do, by when. Chair Mitchell replied that they will not send the invitation until they know for sure when people from Einbeck would like to come. He continued that he will make sure that is arranged in the next month. Ms. Brunner stated that it would be great if they could come right when Pumpkin Fest is starting, October 21.

Chair Mitchell reported that pen pals are on. He continued that three (Einbeck) students sent pen pal information back, which has been given to Fuller School. That should be starting on its own.

Chair Mitchell stated that at the December meeting, he expects Sandra Howard to be here, and contacted Elizabeth Cardine asking her to come as well, to report out on her progress with the student exchange. He continued that he hopes she can give the PCC a five- to ten-minute update. It looks like German students would like to come to Keene in October 2023. This will be something the PCC can help with, but hopefully most of it is in kind. Keene students plan to travel to Germany in 2024. It is nice to see this moving again.

Chair Mitchell stated that it looks like the soccer exchange is for 2024. He spoke with the Germans during this trip and they do not believe they could put a team together any sooner than that. According to Wally Secord, the next visit should be Einbeck to Keene. Mr. Blomquist asked if there is a person in Keene working on the soccer exchange. Chair Mitchell replied yes, a person who works part of her day at Stonewall Farm, and they are very excited. She has been working with Mr. Secord, and he has offered to give her a lot of support. She seems to appreciate the scope of the work and she is working methodically. She has a good connection with the indoor soccer facility in Swanzey.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that he did not get much into the brewery side of things, but Albert Thormann can help with that. Councilor Giacomo stated that he chatted with him a bit about it, and Einbeck has a very different setup than Keene, with no microbreweries. Mr. Schoefmann agreed and stated that it is more about getting exposure for people in Keene to the oldest brewery in the world, for a starting point. He continued that Wulf (Miesslering) will help him reach out to the Einbeck, as a middleman. He is drafting an email to one of the club members. There was also talk of people's interest in bicycle tourism, golf, and dance, as other exchange focus points.

Chair Mitchell stated that Karen Salzer is coming here from Germany with her youth choir and has no one to partner with as an exchange counterpart. He continued that she is bringing young people who are singers, approximately ages 12-18. Who could she partner with here? Mr. Blomquist replied that they could ask the KSC choir folks if they know of local youth choirs. Discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he will reach out to Shannon Huntley, who may have someone he could talk to. Mr. Blomquist stated that he wonders if it has yet been determined where the youth choir from Germany will sing here. Chair Mitchell replied that Ms. Salzer has been working on that with Ms. Howard, but Ms. Howard has her own group, The

Voices, so she has just picked this up as doing more than her share. Maybe the PCC should try to work something else for Ms. Salzer with her youth choir, so that they have a partner. He wonders about MoCo Arts. Discussion continued about MoCo and other local possibilities or people to reach out to, such as asking the KHS music department if they know of any resources/groups to connect with.

Mr. Schoefmann asked Chair Mitchell how he wants to divvy this up, so they are not just leaving this hanging until the next agenda. He continued that he can talk with someone in the Lion's Club. Chair Mitchell replied that Corey Cook is his neighbor, so he can ask about his stepdad, and he will try and contact someone at the high school. Mr. Blomquist stated that he will connect with someone at MoCo Arts. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell asked if Mr. Schoefmann has anything more right now. Mr. Schoefmann replied that if people from Einbeck come to Keene in the fall that is ideal for exposing them to rugby, because the season kicks off in September. Mr. Blomquist replied that potentially October 20 to 27 could be the official exchange; they could look at what is going on during that timeframe. Ms. Brunner stated that Boston, MA or Portland, ME would potentially be nice places to bring Einbeck visitors to. Discussion continued. Mr. Blomquist recommended that everyone write their ideas down, so they have them. Chair Mitchell stated that the first step is to find out what dates Einbeck wants for sure. He continued that he can bring that information to the December meeting, and they can work on their invitation letter. After that, what Ms. Brunner is talking about, figuring out the activities and logistics, will be the focus. Mr. Schoefmann added that it could be a subcommittee/working group.

Ms. Brunner asked if the PCC could propose the dates of October 20 to 27 to the Einbeck delegation. Chair Mitchell replied yes. Mr. Blomquist replied that they should keep in mind that (Keene) people will be involved in the other festival (Pumpkinfest), so they need to make sure they have enough people and resources to manage the Einbeck visit. He continued that another question to think about is what they want to emphasize as the exchange idea/theme. It used to be more economically oriented, with people from Keene and Einbeck visiting each other's businesses, for example. Once they determine the theme, they can integrate in activity ideas like going to Portland or Boston. Discussion ensued about past visits that Keene has hosted and potential themes. Ms. Brunner stated that if part of the purpose of the official exchanges are to make connections for potential other types of exchanges, that is helpful – they could do a little bit of rugby, a little bit of dance, and so on and so forth, and try to foster the ideas and connections and see what pans out. Others agreed.

5) Communications

Chair Mitchell stated that he has already shared the communications he has had. He asked if anyone else had communications to share. Hearing none, he moved to the next agenda item.

6) **Reports**

A) **Treasurer's Report**

Ms. Mattson stated that she printed out Mr. Kleiner's report, since he was unable to attend today. She continued that the good news is that the Partner City appropriation account is up to \$12,000. They got a \$7,000 appropriation on July 1, which the City Council voted for. Left in their miscellaneous account is \$18,840.90, which includes the expense for the magical history tour paintings that they gifted to the Mayor of Einbeck.

Ms. McCollester asked how Einbeck received Keene's gift. Chair Mitchell replied that it was a very good experience; the gifts were very well received. Councilor Giacomo stated that the Walldogs murals in Keene were not up when Einbeck last visited, so it will be great to be able to show them to the Einbeck visitors when they come in the fall.

7) **New Business**

A) **Music Exchanges/Sandra Howard – For next agenda (December)**

Chair Mitchell stated that Sandra Howard will be coming to the December meeting, and hopefully Elizabeth Cardine, and he would like to invite Yves [Gakunde, of the Keene Elm City Rotary] as well to give a three-minute update on the work he observed and how that worked out. How the PCC helped facilitate that, and the value of that, should not be underestimated. The Rotary did a lot of work to raise over \$10,000 to help displaced Ukrainians in Einbeck, and Ms. Mattson directed them to the PCC, and within a couple hours, Mr. Gakunde was able to be in contact with the Mayor of Einbeck. Members of the PCC knew the Mayor and even the banker that the money went to. It was very positive, because those connections were already in place and able to be used. Mr. Blomquist stated that Einbeck has a Lion's Club, so another potential connection could be between the Lion's Clubs and Rotary Clubs.

Chair Mitchell stated that something for the next agenda is: some great people went on the trip to Einbeck, and if the PCC is not careful, they might lose track of them when it comes to the hosting process. He wonders if the PCC can come up with some creative ways to maintain connections with those people and maintain their enthusiasm for being hosts/involved with the Einbeck visit to Keene. Mr. Schoefmann suggested a gathering at Chair Mitchell's house. Chair Mitchell replied that if someone could figure something like that out on Facebook, maybe quarterly, he would be glad to host it or someone else could. He continued that it would be great for them all to meet regularly. It has been a while since the PCC had this much on their plate, and it seems like the plate will continue to fill. This is a good thing, but it would be helpful to spend time together more frequently than once a month for an hour. Mr. Blomquist suggested they have an evening follow-up with the people who went, maybe first thing in the New Year, to encourage their continued interest in planning and hosting. Discussion continued.

- 8) **Next Meeting – next meeting is December 13, 2022**
- 9) **More Time**
 - A) **Discuss Keene Sentinel’s James Rinker, digital community engagement journalist – Media Opportunities to help promote PCC events and exchanges**
 - B) **Fundraising Ideas/Opportunities**
 - C) **KSC Music Department – interest in exchange for 2023 (KSC to Einbeck)**
 - D) **Pumpkin Fest participation for next year**
- 10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Helen Mattson, Staff Liaison