

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

5:00 PM

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

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Gerald Kuhn
Mari Brunner
Doris McCollester
Gerald Lins (arrived at 5:04 PM)
Eric Weisenberger
Derek Blunt, Alternate

Staff Present:

Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Councilor Andrew Madison

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 – January 14, 2025

Mr. Schoefmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 14, 2025. Mr. Kuhn seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

A) Next Exchange – Program Planning/Itinerary

Chair Mitchell stated that the Germans' travel dates have changed. He continued that they will now be coming to Keene from October 15 to 24. He continued that there are 26 travelers on their list, and the PCC had decided that 20 was the limit. He will relay that information to Jürgen Herbst, unless someone feel they should go beyond 20, which he personally does not think

would be reasonable. He gave more information about whose names are on or not on the list of travelers.

Gerald Lins arrived at 5:04 PM.

Discussion ensued about who can host and who cannot, and what the numbers are. Mr. Lins spoke about how he could host two to four guests. Ms. Brunner confirmed that she can host two. Chair Mitchell stated that Councilor Madison is not here, but he believes he can host one. Mr. Giacomo, Mr. Schoefmann, Chair Mitchell, and Mr. Kuhn can each host two. Mr. Blunt stated that he could host one person if the PCC is really in a bind, but he is already hosting a teacher. Chair Mitchell stated that it sounds like they have spots for 13 people so far, and they need spots for 20, so this is something to work on. He continued that typically there are community members who are excited about hosting. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell asked the group to discuss the calendar and activities. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he believes they had decided the cruise would be the culminating event. Discussion ensued about the cruise and which day to schedule it for. Mr. Lins spoke about hosting an outdoor gathering at his house in Chesterfield, NH. Discussion continued about activities. Ms. Brunner stated that by the end of the trip, people will probably want time/opportunity for shopping. Regarding the visit to the capital, Mr. Schoefmann asked if Mayor Kahn is coordinating that. Ms. Howe replied yes, they are all set to take everyone for a visit; they just need a date. She continued that he has connections there and could arrange something with the governor or a senator. Mr. Kuhn noted that the McAuliffe Center (science museum) is also in Concord.

Chair Mitchell asked what other big activities they want to do, so they can plan the smaller activities around those. For example, do they want to go to Boston, the Seacoast, or somewhere else out of town? Discussion ensued. Mr. Lins spoke about Hanover/Lebanon, NH, King Arthur Flour, and other attractions in that area. Mr. Schoefmann spoke about how they usually try to schedule an ice breaker activity early on. Mr. Weisenberger is looking into The Showroom. Chair Mitchell noted that the Redfern reception with the choral exchange is on the schedule as a crossover opportunity, and if they will do another one on Sunday, maybe that is not a great thing for Thursday night. Ms. Howe stated that Mayor Kahn wanted her to relay that he contacted Harrisville Mills, and they have okayed a visit/tour if that is something the PCC is interested in. He also called another manufacturer and is waiting to hear back. Chair Mitchell replied that sometime on Thursday would be available, or Tuesday or Monday. Discussion continued about the timing of activities, and the balance of walking activities with sedate activities, the amount of driving/riding, and how much time to allot each activity. Ms. McCollester suggested fitting in the Cathedral of the Pines sometime. Ms. Brunner suggested scheduling the manufacturer tours for Monday. Others spoke about various museums, the Quechee Gorge, and a nearby antique mall. Mr. Schoefmann stated that someone should look into which days and hours things are open in the Hanover area, and which activities would require reservations. Mr. Kuhn stated that if they keep Sunday as “family day,” which is low key, they could pack in more activity on Monday.

Chair Mitchell stated that this will help the PCC figure out transportation, too. He continued that they will need transportation on Friday, and on either October 20 or 21, and on the 22nd. He hopes that hosts would transport to and from the gathering at Mr. Lins' house. Discussion continued about transportation options, and the possibility of splitting the group up if some people are interested in certain activities but not others. Ms. Brunner asked if they know anything about the travelers' ages and interests. Chair Mitchell replied not yet. Discussion ensued about what is known so far about travelers, and who has been to Keene before; and about getting feedback from the travelers about their interest in certain activities.

Chair Mitchell stated that the trip to Concord can include the capital, the State library, and the Supreme Court, followed by shopping, and getting everyone back to Keene for dinner with their host families. He continued that he assumes the Mayor is going to do the majority of the planning for that day. He asked if Mr. Blunt could do some researching/planning for the Friday, regarding the activities and shopping, and come back to the PCC with information. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell brought up Pumpkin Fest, which the PCC will be selling food at, on Saturday. He continued that Sandra Howard invited folks to a potluck dinner with the choral exchange that evening. He asked if they want to go to that. Discussion ensued about the timing. Chair Mitchell suggested they wait to hear about when Pumpkin Fest ends, and if it ends at a realistic time, then they can aim for (the potluck dinner).

Chair Mitchell stated that Sunday is a home day, and there is a choral concert in the evening. He asked if that is a "choose your own event," or if they should try to coordinate having everyone attend. Mr. Kuhn asked if there has been any communication with the German Consulate (from Boston), because they had talked about that. Chair Mitchell replied that the firmer the PCC has its calendar, the better. Mr. Kuhn replied that Pumpkin Fest or the choral concert are the two potential dates (for the German Consulate to come). Ms. Brunner stated that she wonders if the choral group could push the dinner back a little bit because of Pumpkin Fest. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will ask Ms. Howard.

Chair Mitchell stated that Monday or Tuesday will be the Route 12 day. He continued that he will work on (planning/researching) that, if anyone wants to work with him on that. Mr. Kuhn replied that he can. Ms. Howe asked if whichever day is not Rt. 12 day would be the day for visiting local manufacturers. Chair Mitchell replied that that makes sense. Mr. Weisenberger stated that he can see if either of those evenings work for a tour of the theater and a gathering of sorts. Others replied that the ideal situation would be The Showroom on the 16th for a welcome dinner. Discussion continued. Chair Mitchell spoke about the manufacturing at KSC, and others spoke about the place on Court St.

B) Fundraising Ideas and Opportunities

Chair Mitchell stated that the Community Kitchen is interested in partnering with the community kitchen in Einbeck. He continued that he did some research and made some phone calls and learned that Einbeck does not have a community kitchen; they have a program run by local government, where they collect the food at the civic level and distribute it to families. It is a private process, where food is brought to your house, and no one knows you got it. Thus, they do not see a good connection there (between Einbeck and Keene for this), because Keene's process is overt and theirs is private. However, the PCC has been invited to help the Community Kitchen on October 4. There is a community dinner fundraiser event between 5:30 and 8:30 PM. The Community Kitchen would give a tour anytime during the Einbeck visitors' trip, and they have asked if the PCC could provide some food between 5:30 and 8:30 on October 4. He was thinking brats with curry. Discussion ensued. Chair Mitchell continued that the Community Kitchen will have a large-screen TV and they said the PCC is welcome to put anything on it, to advertise. PCC members could be there to talk with people about what the group does. He noted that the Community Kitchen would like the PCC to be there to talk with people even if they do not bring food. Discussion ensued, and PCC members agreed that it sounds like a good thing to do. Chair Mitchell stated that he will let the Community Kitchen know.

Chair Mitchell stated that Mr. Blunt has been in touch with the radio station. He continued that he will try and do a promotion for his fundraiser and talk about the upcoming visit from the German students. Mr. Blunt stated that there will be a yard sale fundraiser at MC2 School on February 22 and 23. He asked who he could send that information to, for the PCC's social (media). Ms. Howe replied that she does not yet have access to that, but she could try to get access to it. Mr. Blunt stated that MC2 also welcomes donations of items for the yard sale. Discussion continued.

Ms. Brunner stated that last time, they had talked about some folks wanting to do more of the dance stuff. She asked if that is (still happening). Chair Mitchell replied yes, he will put Monday night Nelson contra dance. Ms. Brunner asked if he thinks they would be interested in learning line dancing. Discussion ensued. Chair Mitchell spoke about a man who owns a dance studio in Claremont, and how he has offered space if the PCC wants to bring dancers.

Ms. McCollester stated that they had also talked about how Mr. Lins' wife had an idea about a Keene/Einbeck cookbook. Others replied that they think it is a good idea. Mr. Lins replied yes, but there is no deadline for this; it is just an idea that is out there that could develop. Ms. McCollester replied that she just mentioned it because it is not something that happens overnight. Chair Mitchell stated that the PCC will soon send Einbeck all the information about the Keene hosts, with little biographies. He continued that when they do that, they can add a request for (Einbeck travelers) to bring a copy of their favorite recipes.

- 5) **Communications**
 - A) **Update on Choral Exchange Sponsorship**
- 6) **Reports**
 - A) **Treasurer Report – Eric**

7) **New Business**

Mr. Schoefmann introduced Dylan Murphy, who (works in Public Works). He continued that Mr. Murphy's boss, Ben Crowder, mentioned that Mr. Murphy went to high school in Germany and would be good for the committee. He invited him here to see what the PCC was all about.

Mr. Murphy stated that Mr. Crowder told him the PCC could use a Public Works representative, and yes, he went to high school in Germany. He continued that he is not fluent in German the way he used to be, but it has been 10 years. He is glad to be here.

Mr. Blunt introduced his guest, Camille Branch, a student from MC2. He continued that he thinks they would be hard pressed to find any exchange program in the country whose students are involved in planning, fundraising, and fully fleshing out the exchanges as much as the MC2 students are. He wants a student presence at the PCC, and Camille has been doing awesome work and hopefully will be part of the next exchange. Chair Mitchell and others thanked Camille for coming.

8) **Next Meeting – March 11, 2025**

9) **More Time**

10) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant