

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

5:00 PM

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

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison (arrived at 5:16 PM)
Mari Brunner
Gerald Lins
Eric Weisenberger
Derek Blunt

Staff Present:

Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Gerald Kuhn
Doris McColleston

Jay V. Kahn, Mayor

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 4:02 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting: August 12, 2025

A motion by Vice Chair Schoefmann to adopt the August 12, 2025 meeting minutes was duly seconded by Mr. Lins and the motion carried unanimously. Councilor Madison was absent.

4) Board Business:

A) Exchange Budget – Updates from Will on Trip Cost, Vote on Overall Budget for Trip

The Committee heard agenda items out of order due to time limitations.

Vice Chair Schoefmann reported on Budget needs for the Exchange before requesting a vote on the overall Exchange Budget:

- Wednesday, October 15: Guests arrive in Boston around 3:00 PM
 - Rides from Boston to Keene for 14 people. Ms. Howe said one of the most reasonable local places for catering and creating platters would be Price Chopper.
- Thursday, October 16: Local Orientation Day
 - Refreshments at City Hall. Mayor Kahn offered to help with the City Hall refreshments.
 - Lunch for the guests would be covered at Keene State Dining Commons.
 - Welcome Dinner at The Showroom: \$1,435 quote; \$900 extra for linens, plateware, and serving staff. The drink Budget was \$500, comparable to the prior year at Branch & Blade. The rental fee was not secured yet, but Mr. Weisenberger said it was okay, and he would ask Mr. Murphy to look into it. Vice Chair Schoefmann called this one of the more expensive days.
- Friday, October 17: Visit to NH State Capitol
- Lunch at the Barley House estimated at \$880: \$30/plate and refreshments at \$25/person.
- Saturday, October 18:
 - \$750 for dinner (\$30/plate), and Chair Mitchell said approximately 1/3 would be recouped. He also said he did not need the money in advance.
- Sunday, October 19: Host Activity Day
 - No costs.
- Monday, October 20: Upper Valley Day Trip
 - Saint-Gaudens National Historical Park: \$10/person (Vice Chair Schoefmann pre-booking tickets).
 - The American Precision Museum: \$6/person (Vice Chair Schoefmann pre-booking tickets).
 - Lunch at Harpoon Brewery estimated at \$30/plate and drinks at \$25/person.
 - The Committee briefly discussed who would be available for German translating on Monday, October 20, like Mr. Lins or Ms. McColleston. After a brief discussion, Mr. Lins said he would make a point to be there, stating he would be largely free for those two weeks for help speaking German.
- Tuesday, October 21: Local Business Tours
 - Breakfast with host families and a later start time to reduce costs.
 - Bag lunches packed by host families and a stop at Harrisville General Store, so guests could supplement if they wish.
 - Dinner at Dublin Tap Room. The Mayor arranged three reserved tables with the owner, Doni Ash. Staff would get the menu in advance to translate and make it easier; Mr. Lins said to send menu to him because he knew someone who could translate. Vice Chair Schoefmann thought the estimate might have been high for the offerings.
- Wednesday, October 22: Lake Sunapee
 - Kearsarge Museum: \$15/person (Vice Chair Schoefmann pre-booking tickets).
 - Lake Sunapee Cruise: flat rate of \$1400, but Councilor Madison donated \$500, so the Budget was only \$900 (Councilor Madison making the reservation).
 - Lift Tickets: approximately \$26/person, but someone needed to call and confirm.

- Dinner at either The Flying Goose or another restaurant in Sunapee Harbor for approximately \$70/person (Councilor Madison making the reservation).
- Thursday, October 23: Farewell Dinner at Mr. Lins' Home
 - Will mentioned the committee could purchase a few things from CC&D to take the load off Gerry and Parry Lins who will be hosting a guest from Einbeck.
- Friday, October 24: Guests Depart
 - Parking for three to four vehicles driving guests to Boston. More details were to be discussed at the next Host Meeting. Mr. Lins said he could drive because of arrangements for Sophie and Stefan; discussion ensued briefly with Vice Chair Schoefmann, and Mr. Lins said he would be flexible.

Councilor Madison arrived at 5:16 PM.

Discussion ensued about driving arrangements. Vice Chair Schoefmann explained that only City staff (e.g., Vice Chair Schoefmann, Ms. Brunner, or Yves Gakunde) could drive the City's Parks and Recreation van. On days that would not be possible, Enterprise provided a \$2,000 estimate for a 12-passenger van for entire trip. Vice Chair Schoefmann said picking and choosing a daily rate would cost considerably less. Discussion ensued about Mr. Blunt's School (MC2) vehicle being used during the prior Exchange, which Vice Chair Schoefmann said was nice because the City and school shared the same insurer—Primex. Mr. Blunt said his school leader was on break at this time, but they had drafted a contract for this purpose, and the vehicle might be available some days. Vice Chair Schoefmann said it would be relatively cheaper than a day rental. He would finalize these details as soon as possible.

Discussion ensued about what days staff/Committee members could drive to save on renting a van. The Committee agreed that Wednesday, October 22 (Lake Sunapee) would be the biggest day. Ms. Brunner could drive the Parks and Recreation van on October 17 (Visit to NH State Capitol) and October 21 (Local Business Tours); Mayor Kahn could also drive on both dates. Mr. Schoefmann could drive many mornings. Chair Mitchell would be available almost every day with a 7-passenger vehicle to drive. Ms. Howe would circulate a transportation sign-up sheet after this meeting.

The Committee discussed the total estimated Exchange Budget, which was \$13,500. Vice Chair Schoefmann suggested \$14,000 to account for any changes in gratuity, etc. Although, with some of the van rental issues resolved, he said all the funds might not be needed.

A motion by Councilor Madison to expend \$14,000 from the Partner City Committee's Budget on the October 15–24, 2025 Einbeck, Germany, Partner City Exchange, was duly seconded by Mr. Lins. The motion carried unanimously.

The Committee thanked Vice Chair Schoefmann for his work on the Budget.

B) Exchange Itinerary – Final Review for October 15–24, 2025 – Exchange, Transportation Options, and Costs

- The Committee briefly discussed specific parts of the itinerary the Committee would need help with: Thursday, October 16: Local Orientation Day
 - Cheshire County Historical Society – Mr. Blunt agreed to contact the Historical Society to let them know a group would be visiting. Mr. Blunt said he was not familiar with the exhibition but would inquire.
 - Mr. Schoefmann mentioned the Walldogs murals and providing maps to guests so they could have something to do after lunch in case.
- Friday, October 17: Visit to NH State Capitol
 - Lunch at the Barley House – Councilor Madison agreed to make arrangements at \$20/person, before drinks.

C) Pumpkin Festival 2025 – Final Discussion

Vice Chair Schoefmann reviewed a few final things for the 2025 Pumpkin Festival that the Committee needed to determine:

- Orientation Time – Vice Chair Schoefmann said this was not a big deal. Those involved would come to the tent, walk around to the tower, etc.
- Tent – Vice Chair Schoefmann confirmed the tent. Mr. Blunt said MC2 was involved, and he was fine sourcing grills but was unsure on the tent. Ms. Brunner thought they could use the large Community Development Department tent.
- Kick-Off Time – to be determined.

The Committee thought it was prudent to preapprove funds for the Pumpkin Festival this month, in case there would not be a quorum at the October meeting right before the Festival.

A motion by Ms. Brunner to approve up to \$600.00 from the Partner City Committee Budget on food and supplies for the 2025 Pumpkin Festival was duly seconded by Councilor Madison. The motion carried unanimously.

5) Communications:

A) Keene & Einbeck, Germany PCC Collaborative Concert from Sandra Howard

The communication was not discussed due to limited time.

6) Reports:

A) Treasurer Report – Eric

No report was presented due to limited time.

7) **New Business:**

No new business was presented.

8) **Next Meeting: October 14, 2025**

9) **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Katie Kibler, Minute Taker
September 15, 2025

Reviewed and edited by,
Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant