

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

5:00 PM

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

Members Present:

John Mitchell, Chair
Councilor Andrew Madison
Gerald Kuhn
Doris McCollester
Gerald Lins
Eric Weisenberger
Mari Brunner

Staff Present:

Nicole Howe, Executive Assistant

Members Not Present:

Derek Blunt
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair

1) Call to Order

Chair Mitchell called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

2) Roll Call – Appoint Alternates (if required)

Roll call was conducted.

3) Approval of Last Month's Meeting Minutes - October 14, 2025

Mr. Lins made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 14, 2025. Councilor Madison seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) Board Business

A) Review of October's Keene/Einbeck Exchange with Hosts

Chair Mitchell asked what the PCC had to say about the October visit. Mr. Lins stated that overall, based on the feedback he has heard and his own perception, he thinks everything went well and everyone had a great time. He continued that the only things that “went sideways” were not that bad. Mr. Kuhn replied that the only thing that “went sideways” was the Rt. 12 trip, where they did not end up going to Saint Gauden’s and there was some weather, but they handled it well. He continued that it speaks well of the PCC that they were able to make the changes they needed to make.

Chair Mitchell stated that it seems like many people in town noticed the big contingent of German visitors. He continued that three different people approached him to ask how to get on the list to go to Einbeck. Mr. Weisenberger replied that someone asked him that today, too. Chair Mitchell replied that they need to be careful with how they respond to these requests, because they have a template for how to choose travelers. He continued that they are looking for people who would be interested in joining the PCC and/or hosting Einbeck visitors, too, not just going to Germany. That is the discussion they need to have with people who are interested. It is not just a tourist experience. They will get deeper into that as they go, but it is great that people are excited about this.

Councilor Madison stated that he thinks the October visit went very well. He continued that he cannot think of anything that went seriously wrong. He was not around for all of the days, but the days that he was part of went well. Even when the weather was not great, they were able to pivot. Discussion continued about how the boat ride was great, as was the unplanned taco night at Councilor Madison's house and the unplanned following night at Chair Mitchell's house, which were fun times for people to let down their hair. Councilor Madison stated that his big takeaway from this year's visit was that they could save money and build better connections by doing more of these informal gatherings at people's houses.

Discussion ensued about how much fun the taco night was, as well as the following night, and how much everyone bonded and created good stories and memories for the future. Mr. Kuhn stated that allowing unplanned time together makes it possible for people to get to know each other better, as opposed to chasing a schedule and riding a bus. Councilor Madison replied that one of the guests commented to him that that is kind of what the Germans like about the people in Keene – unlike Germans who are strict, regimented, and scheduled, Americans are more casual, wanting to show up at someone's house and see where the night goes, which is a nice break from the normal rigidity. Ms. Brunner replied that she heard similar thoughts from another Einbeck guest, regarding how the Keene hosts were "not as stressed out" as them. Councilor Madison spoke about how when the choice was between a trip to the Cohen Center or a walk to the Elm City Brewery, the vast majority of Einbeck visitors chose the brewery. He continued that he thinks they like these fun, impromptu events.

Mr. Lins stated that he thinks the PCC should have more of these informal dinners at people's houses. Others agreed. Chair Mitchell stated that they should remember this when they start to plan for the next visit. He continued that he supports the idea of a nice, formal welcome, and a formal farewell dinner like they had at Mr. Lins's house, but it would be great to add a night or two of something like what taco night was. The boat ride was great, but he did not spend a lot of time talking to a lot of different people, whereas at taco night, he talked to everyone. Different events will give different returns. Having an ice breaker like taco night early on really helps. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell stated that they received a message from Jürgen Herbst and Wolff. He continued that Einbeck is potentially looking to host up to 20 guests next year. The Einbeck committee has had a

big uptick in interest, with more people coming to their meetings, and more people offering housing. That is all very positive. The PCC will need to do a little bit of work on how to select people to go Einbeck, or what their interest is in promoting it. In the past, they have always tried to include people who (A) were workers and (B) wanted to expand the exchange somehow. For example, Kristen Leach who started the dance exchange. There has been talk about bringing some brewers, and there has been interest from the country club. The PCC will explore these ideas and interests.

Chair Mitchell stated that he expects Einbeck to send Keene an official invitation in the next month.

B) Exchange Survey? Social Media Posts?

Chair Mitchell asked if there was anyone who could speak to this. Ms. Howe stated that it looks like the PCC had done a survey for the German visitors in the past. She asked if they want to survey them again. Chair Mitchell replied that he does not think they need to. He continued that they have heard that the Germans are happy and everything went well, and the key indicator is that they are having more people show up to their Einbeck committee meetings. Councilor Madison agreed. Ms. Brunner stated that it would make sense to survey the people who hosted, to see how things went from their perspective. Chair Mitchell agreed, and asked if Ms. Brunner could make that survey. Ms. Brunner replied yes, she can draft it and send it to Ms. Howe.

Ms. Howe stated that at one point, she had access to the Facebook page and could probably get access again, if anyone has photos they want her to post. Ms. Brunner replied that the survey could include asking hosts for photos they are willing to share. Ms. Howe replied that the photos on social media and the website are very outdated, so it would be great to have some updated ones. Mr. Weisenberger asked who has access to post. Ms. Howe replied that she thinks it is just her. Ms. Brunner replied that she and Mr. Schoefmann have access, too. Mr. Weisenberger replied that he would be glad to help. Discussion continued about the WhatsApp groups, who has access, and what content and photos they have. Ms. Howe stated that anyone can email her photos they want to share, and she will keep them in a drive.

C) Pumpkin Festival Review – Sales, Ideas for Next Year

Mr. Weisenberger asked how they ended up doing with Pumpkin Fest sales. Councilor Madison replied that he thinks they sold out, and they made more money than last year. Ms. Howe stated that they do not have the official number yet, because they are still tracing some stuff down; there are several receipts that still need to be added. Chair Mitchell stated that he thinks there might also be a few bills they need to send out, for some of the activities from the exchange.

Mr. Weisenberger stated that he heard positive feedback about the bratwurst they sold, although someone suggested that the group consider having the Germans make the sauerkraut or use a recipe to make their own. Discussion ensued about how that would be more expensive, a lot of work and time, and is not necessary. Mr. Lins stated that customers' decision to buy the bratwurst would not be based on whether the sauerkraut was homemade. He continued that such homemade sauerkraut

could be a separate item for sale, if they really wanted to do that, but he does not know how much it would sell. Ms. McCollester stated that they could use bottled sauerkraut and doctor it to taste like real German sauerkraut. Mr. Kuhn stated that for the past two years, their workers have been high school students, so it needs to be something they have the capacity for. Others agreed.

Ms. McCollester asked when they will know how much they made at Pumpkin Fest. Ms. Howe replied that by next month, they should have the tallies and totals for Pumpkin Fest and for the exchange. Ms. McCollester replied that she might not be here, because her term on the PCC expires this month. Other PCC members encouraged her to consider signing up for another term, even if it means resigning before it is officially up, because they value her participation. Discussion continued.

5) Communications

6) Reports

A) Treasurer's Report – Eric

Chair Mitchell asked if Mr. Weisenberger had a report today, or if that would be next month. Mr. Weisenberger replied next month.

7) New Business

8) Next Meeting – January 13, 2026

Chair Mitchell stated that the next meeting is January 13, 2026. He continued that he hopes that date works for everyone, including Ms. McCollester.

9) More Time

A) Fundraiser – Cookbook/Any Other Opportunities

Chair Mitchell asked if there was an update on the cookbook. Mr. Lins replied yes, he has been receiving many submissions. He continued that he needs to go through all his emails and messages, to collect and print the submissions. It is a little disorganized right now, and he wants to make a list to make sure he has everything that everyone sent him. Then, he and his wife will start in on it, and they might want Ms. McCollester's help with some translations. Brief discussion ensued.

10) Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Nicole Howe, Staff Liasson