

City of Keene  
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 13, 2026

5:00 PM

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

**Members Present:**

John Mitchell, Chair  
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair  
Mari Brunner (arrived at 5:03 PM)  
Councilor Laura Ruttle-Miller  
Gerald Kuhn  
Derek Blunt  
Doris McCollester

**Staff Present:**

Nicole Howe, Human Resources Assistant  
Meagan McLaughlin, Staff Liaison

**Members Not Present:**

Gerald Lins  
Andrew Madison  
Eric Weisenberger

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 9, 2025**

Mr. Kuhn made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of December 9, 2025. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4) **Board Business**

A) **Social Media Posts – We have only received photos from one member**

Ms. Howe stated that the PCC discussed this last time. She continued that so far, they have only received photos from Mr. Kuhn’s wife. If anyone else has photos to include in social media posts, they can send them to her and Meagan McLaughlin, who is the PCC’s new Staff Liaison. It would be good to at least have the photos live somewhere in the City’s files. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he will find a way to collect those.

Mr. Kuhn asked if they want photos from past trips/events, too. Ms. Howe replied sure, that would be good. Chair Mitchell stated that he has a lot of photos, but he does not know how to get them to the City. Ms. Howe suggested he bring his phone to vice-chair, Mr. Schoefmann in IT to assist with that.

Ms. Brunner arrived at 5:03 PM.

**B) Pumpkin Festival Review – Sales, Ideas for Next Year**

Ms. Howe stated that the PCC's total profit from Pumpkin Fest was \$1,937.20. She continued that it was a few hundred dollars less than last year's profit – maybe this year they did not do as much shopping around to find the best deals on the supplies they used. Still, it is a good profit.

Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Blunt for his thoughts. Mr. Blunt replied that he thought it went well. He continued that operations-wise, they had three grills going this time, which was great. Whatever the amount was for the supplies they had, it was the perfect amount, because sales ended at 6:00 PM and they sold their final hot dog at about 5:55 PM. They had a good flow of volunteers, and everything went smoothly.

Ms. McCollester asked about the expenses. Ms. Howe replied that she thinks they spent about \$700 on supplies. Discussion ensued about the expenses and the profit and how the numbers compare to previous years. Chair Mitchell stated that there are benefits to having a presence at Pumpkin Fest other than the money, too, such as people getting to know the PCC and learning about the exchanges. Ms. Howe stated that she thinks the PCC has approximately doubled their profits in the past three or four years.

Chair Mitchell asked for thoughts on how to make it smoother next time. Mr. Blunt replied that it would be great to be able to accept credit card payments, but they were not able to get a card reader to work during Pumpkin Fest, due to the overloaded networks. He continued that they would need a wi-fi connection. They probably would have made more money if they could have had card payments. Other than that, operations went very smoothly, including the volunteers, set-up and take-down, and the tent size. Discussion continued. Chair Mitchell stated that the reports he heard were all positive.

**5) Communications**

**A) Holiday Message Received from Einbeck and Sent New Year's Message from Keene**

Chair Mitchell stated that holiday messages were sent and received.

**B) Open House – Mitchell Residence 1/17 at 7:30 PM**

Chair Mitchell stated that his house will be open this Saturday at 7:30 PM, for about an hour, for a low-key gathering. He continued that they have a good community of people and it would be good to try and keep that going. He hopes someone comes up with another gathering in about

four months, so they can keep communicating and coming up with ideas for what the next visit will look like.

6) **Reports**

A) **Treasurer Report – Eric**

Ms. Howe stated that the fundraising account has \$17,777.53. She continued that the general appropriations account has \$18,212.13.

7) **New Business**

Chair Mitchell asked if there was any new business. Mr. Schoefmann stated that Councilor Laura Ruttler-Miller is new to the PCC, and asked if she wanted to introduce herself. Councilor Ruttler-Miller introduced herself and spoke positively about being a part of the PCC. Chair Mitchell and others welcomed her and thanked her for being there. Chair Mitchell and Mr. Schoefmann briefly shared information about the partnership between Keene and Einbeck.

Chair Mitchell stated that the next item of new business is that he met with a couple members of the country club, a manager and a golf manager, and they are very excited about a golf exchange. He continued that they potentially would like to participate in the visit this year. There is interest from people in Einbeck as well, and everything is moving in a positive direction. He has made some progress with the bicycle exchange as well. A well-known person in the local bicycle community is interested in working on a bicycle exchange. It is exciting to have three strong candidates for the upcoming trip.

Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Schoefmann if he has had any luck with a potential soccer exchange. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, although he has tried. He continued that it is tough to organize. In response to Ms. Howe's question, Mr. Schoefmann explained the background of the youth soccer exchange, regarding how it used to be very active, until the organizer retired from it. The PCC has been unsuccessful in finding someone from the Keene area to take over the soccer exchange, despite how eager Einbeck is for it to continue. He has reached out to numerous local groups, organizations, and people, trying to find someone. Chair Mitchell spoke about how it is more complicated to find someone to run an exchange for high school students than for adults, but they are hopeful that they will find the right people.

Chair Mitchell asked, regarding other potential exchanges, if Mr. Schoefmann still knows two brewers interested in a brewery exchange. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he knows just one. Chair Mitchell replied that if anyone else knows a brewer who might be interested, that is something to think about.

Chair Mitchell asked for other ideas for people to consider for upcoming exchanges. Ms. Brunner replied that Kristen Leach does dance exchanges that are mainly children's dance, and she wonders if they should approach someone who does dance programs with adults. She gave examples. Chair Mitchell replied that he spoke with someone who might be interested, and maybe Ms. Brunner can follow up with her.

For Councilor Ruttle-Miller's benefit, being new to the PCC, Chair Mitchell and Mr. Schoefmann briefly explained the current exchanges – the student exchange led by Mr. Blunt of the MC2 Charter School, the youth dance exchange led by Kristen Leach, and the choral singing exchange led by Sandra Howard of Keene State College. Chair Mitchell stated that Ms. Leach reports that she has plans being made for the exchange this year. Ms. Howe asked if they should invite her to attend a meeting. Chair Mitchell asked if it would be possible to have a regular invitation for her. Ms. Howe replied yes. Discussion continued.

Regarding new business, Mr. Schoefmann asked if they can talk about the next trip. Chair Mitchell stated that they do not yet have the invitation from the Einbeck group, but he expects they will receive that soon. He continued that it will be for about 20 people, so the PCC needs to start thinking about how to organize this. Maybe two golfers and two brewers, for example. With five groups of people, they quickly fill 10 spots.

Ms. McCollester asked if they know how many people are interested in this next trip. Chair Mitchell replied no, but they try to prioritize people who are either promoting an exchange or trying to develop one. Discussion continued. Chair Mitchell explained that typically for an exchange, a lead person from Keene and a lead person from Einbeck work together, with the two committees' support, and figure out how to make the exchange happen. He continued that for example, last year with the dance exchange, Ms. Leach got in touch with Einbeck's lead person for the dance exchange, and they together imagined what a dance exchange would look like, and after a lot of planning, a group of Einbeck students went to Keene and vice versa. That is what they hope will happen with golf as well. Maybe a couple people from Keene who are interested in promoting the idea of a golf exchange would go to Einbeck, meet some like-minded people, and start talking about what such an exchange could look like. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell asked if others had thoughts on this year's trip. Ms. Brunner replied that if she goes, her main interest would be the dance community. Mr. Schoefmann stated that during the recent exchange here in Keene, there were conversations about Keene visitors participating more in Einbeck's Eulenfest, which is the fall festival that happens while Keene visitors are there. Mr. Schoefmann gave more information about Eulenfest and continued that the idea would be to somehow participate in the fundraising efforts, as Einbeck's other partner cities do, although the logistics are challenging. If anyone has ideas for how Keene could help with Eulenfest, they can talk about it. Discussion ensued, with ideas such as selling stickers or buttons or something else, or jack-o-lantern carving.

Chair Mitchell asked who, among the PCC members, might be interested in going to Einbeck this year, knowing that they are not making any commitment now. Ms. Brunner replied that she is interested, but if she is going to try and connect with people in Einbeck's dance community, she would need to first connect with some sort of dance group in Keene. She continued that she will work on it. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he would consider going, and his focus would be coordinating Keene's participation in Eulenfest. Ms. McCollester, Mr. Kuhn, and Mr. Blunt stated that they would be interested in traveling, too. Mr. Blunt stated that he would love to help with Eulenfest, and any other educational connections that could be made. Chair Mitchell replied that there is another school in Einbeck that wants to start a connection. Councilor Ruttle-Miller

stated that she and her husband would be interested in traveling, and she has family members who are avid golfers. Discussion continued about who else might go on the trip.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller asked if they know the dates of the trip, if it is generally the same week in October. Chair Mitchell replied that they do not have the official invitation yet with the official dates, but it is generally the second week in October or whenever Eulenfest is. The trip is about 10 or 11 days. Discussion continued.

Chair Mitchell stated that they should elect officers, since it is a new year.

Ms. Brunner nominated John Mitchell for Chair of the PCC and Will Schoefmann as Vice Chair. Councilor Ruttle-Miller seconded the nomination, which passed by unanimous vote.

**8) Next Meeting – February 10, 2026**

**9) More Time**

**A) Fundraiser – Cookbook / Any Other Opportunities**

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Mr. Lins and his wife were spearheading the fundraiser cookbook. He continued that they will have to find out where they are with that. Discussion ensued about how PCC members recall that recipes are being collected from the Germans, but Mr. Lins needs help with some translating. Chair Mitchell spoke about how others can help, too; this is not just Mr. Lins's job. Mr. Kuhn stated that he would be happy to help with the graphic design part if that is helpful. Chair Mitchell replied that that would be great.

Mr. Schoefmann asked if the PCC did fundraising at Taste of Keene last year. Chair Mitchell replied no. Councilor Ruttle-Miller stated that she is on the board of Taste of Keene, and briefly shared more information. Discussion ensued about possibilities for the PCC's participation and how it went in the past, and the need for the PCC to sell something that is non-alcoholic.

**10) Adjournment**

Chair Mitchell asked for "October Visit" to be added to the next agenda, under "Board Business." He continued that he would also like to add "Friends Group" to the agenda. Ms. Howe asked what that is. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the concept would be to have an auxiliary group that could, for example, serve alcohol at a fundraising event for the PCC. It would be like a "booster club."

Chair Mitchell asked if there was anything else to add to future agendas. He asked if they should make the PCC's participation in Eulenfest an agenda item, or if they have too many things going already. Mr. Schoefmann replied that he thinks it could just be part of the discussion of the upcoming official delegation visit.

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:41 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Meagan McLaughlin, Staff Liaison