

**City of Keene**  
**New Hampshire**

**PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, April 14, 2026**

**5:00 PM**

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

**Members Present:**

John Mitchell, Chair  
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair  
Mari Brunner  
Councilor Laura Ruttle-Miller  
Eric Weisenberger  
Gerald Kuhn  
Andrew Madison  
Doris McCollester  
Gerald Lins

**Staff Present:**

Meagan McLaughlin, Executive Administrative  
Assistant

**Members Not Present:**

Derek Blunt

**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: February 10th, 2026**

Mr. Madison made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of February 10, 2026. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**4) Board Business**

**A) Exchanges**

***i) Golf***

Chair Mitchell stated that he visited the golf course today, and the person the PCC had been talking to is no longer working there. He continued that he was introduced to new director, who does not think anything can happen on their end until October. He thinks maybe the next time the Germans come to Keene, the golf community might have more interest. Chair Mitchell

continued that at the moment, Councilor Ruttle-Miller is the PCC's golf group. He can talk with her, outside of the meeting, about what he knows so far about golf from the German side.

*ii) Bicycle*

Chair Mitchell stated that he has met with a couple of people and has made no progress. He continued that it is not an easy connection. He welcomes other PCC members' thoughts.

*iii) Brewer*

Chair Mitchell asked Mr. Schoefmann if he had anything to report about a brewer exchange. Mr. Schoefmann replied no, he is waiting to hear back from people.

*iv) Dancer/Musician*

Chair Mitchell stated that he spoke with Kristen Leach. He continued that she will try and come to the next PCC meeting. She says everything is ready for October 9–20, and they are excited. He also spoke with dance people in Einbeck, who are also excited. They hope Keene can help again with transportation from Boston to Keene for the dancers coming from Germany. It coincides with the PCC's visit to Germany, so it would essentially be on the people who would not be traveling. Most of the people at this table will be on the trip to Einbeck. He asked for people's thoughts on whether the PCC can help with this, and how they should proceed. Discussion ensued. PCC members suggested Ms. Leach see if some of the exchange hosts or board members could help with transportation. Chair Mitchell stated that if the PCC could help, it would be nice; it is something to think about.

*v) Runner*

Mr. Schoefmann asked if there was any news about the running exchange idea. Councilor Ruttle-Miller replied that there is someone she will invite to the May meeting, a woman who coordinates local running groups, who had voiced interest when she (Councilor Ruttle-Miller) talked about Einbeck with her in February. Chair Mitchell asked if this person is familiar with Einbeck, and added that she can look online to see the running events that Einbeck holds throughout the year.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that Einbeck really has an interest in a soccer exchange and is pushing for that, but the PCC has really come up against a wall. They have tried to find someone from Keene to invigorate the soccer exchange, and have not found anyone. If anyone has a last-ditch effort or idea, it is something to think about. Discussion ensued about someone that Mr. Schoefmann and Mr. Madison will reach out to. Chair Mitchell explained the difficulties the PCC has had in finding someone to lead the soccer exchange, because it requires more than just a passion for soccer – it is about the ability to provide the superstructure, including the insurance and the responsibility of working with youth.

**B) Eulendorf Participation – Pumpkin Carving, Pumpkin/Apple Tarts, Pumpkin Soup, Sliders (Input from Einbeck meeting?)**

Mr. Schoefmann gave an overview of Eulenfest, the Einbeck festival that occurs during the PCC's October visit. He explained that Einbeck's other partner cities participate in Eulenfest by fundraising for a local cause, while the Keene PCC has just enjoyed it as tourists, so they would like to pitch in with a fundraiser as well. They need to figure out what type of fundraiser to do.

Discussion ensued about what other partner cities have done for Eulenfest, and the PCC's ideas for what Keene could do. Mr. Madison stated that it needs to be something easy, because the other partner cities are coming from several hours away by car, whereas Keene is coming from a several-hours flight, which Einbeck understands. They would not be able to bring NH pumpkins to carve, for example. Discussion continued with ideas of what to make and sell, such as pancakes and NH maple syrup, pumpkin pie, or maple whiskey; and about how volunteering at the booth will also involve chatting with people about Keene and NH.

Chair Mitchell asked for three PCC members to meet sometime between now and the next meeting, to plan the specifics of the Eulenfest participation. Mr. Madison noted that they need to come up with something that involves the PCC transporting the least amount of stuff on the plane, to acquire as much in Germany as possible. Chair Mitchell stated that tomorrow, he and Mr. Schoefmann will be talking with the Einbeck chair and vice chair, and they can ask them questions about logistics and infrastructure of the booth.

### **C) October Visit – Firming List of Attendees**

Chair Mitchell handed out "biography" forms for PCC members who are or might be traveling to Einbeck to fill out, asking them to get it done as early as possible because it is extremely helpful for the Einbeck folks to have them. He continued that even people who have been to Einbeck multiple times should fill one out. It helps the new people on the Einbeck committee get to know the travelers and their interests, and helps them create the itinerary.

Mr. Schoefmann reminded people who do not yet have passports to start the application process. Chair Mitchell clarified that everyone is purchasing their own individual airline tickets; they are not doing a group purchase. He continued that tickets are expensive right now and likely to get even more expensive. Travelers are responsible for that cost, but once in Einbeck, they are hosted and transported by folks in Einbeck. The following year, the Keene people who traveled to Einbeck then host people from Einbeck when they come to Keene, and are expected to do an exceptional job in providing for their guests. Probably next year's hosting will be a little bit different than in years past, because the PCC is looking to have more family social events at people's houses, as opposed to mainly out-on-the-road events and restaurants.

Chair Mitchell asked to go around the table and get a count of who will be traveling to Einbeck in October, so they can start putting together the list of travelers for October 7 to 17. Discussion ensued. PCC members said whether they were a "no," "soft yes," or "hard yes," and whether a family member would be traveling with them.

Mr. Madison gave thoughts on people to reach out to, for potential exchanges, such as coffee roasters and bakers. Discussion ensued. Chair Mitchell stated that he had a casual conversation

with the Mayor about the idea of two City Council members going on the trip. Discussion continued, and PCC members also talked about how it would be good to have a representative from each Rotary Club. Chair Mitchell stated that the number of travelers is already up to about 14. He continued that the optimum group size is about 18 to 20. Discussion continued about opening it up to one more City Councilor, which would mean three government representatives – two Councilors and the Mayor, if Mayor Kahn is going. Ms. Brunner spoke about how in the past, when multiple Councilors have traveled, they have been Councilors who were already PCC members. If they were just randomly chosen Councilors, how would they choose?

Discussion continued about the number of travelers and the makeup of the group. Mr. Lins stated that for any travelers who are not PCC members, it should be clear to them that they are expected to host Einbeck visitors when they come to Keene. He continued that you have to “have some skin in the game.” Councilor Ruttle-Miller replied that that is the first time she has heard that information since joining this committee, so that is indeed important for people to know. Discussion continued about how if someone is unable to host guests at their house, they are expected to pitch in with helping in other ways. Hosting is fun and rewarding, not something scary.

Chair Mitchell stated that he agrees with Ms. Brunner’s point and they will keep that in mind when working with a City Councilor. He continued that it would be good to have someone from the Fire, Police, and/or Public Works Departments, too. Discussion ensued about previous trips with Fire and Police Officers and the lasting friendships with Einbeck counterparts.

#### **D) MC2 Update – Exchange Details**

Chair Mitchell stated that last they heard, Mr. Blunt said that preparations for the MC2 exchange were right where they should be, and he thought the fundraising was coming along well. He continued that that is a good sign. It is the PCC’s goal to help foster the first few visits of an exchange, and then hopefully the organizer takes it over and might come back to the PCC when they need a hand. Mr. Blunt is doing great.

#### **5) Communications**

##### **A) Kerstin Hillebrecht – Einbeck Dance Exchange Presentation and Email Request**

Chair Mitchell stated that Kerstin Hillebrecht has sent several emails and she and others in Einbeck are very excited. He continued that they have received extra funding. The dance students coming to Keene is a well-received program in Germany. They will be in Keene while the PCC is in Einbeck.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller stated that since she will not be going to Einbeck in October, she could help with whatever is needed here in terms of transportation/picking people up, and being the liaison here. PCC members thanked her. Chair Mitchell stated that it would be great for Councilor Ruttle-Miller to help with some sort of official greeting, such as a tour of City Hall. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Schoefmann asked whether Mr. Blunt/MC2 was planning on doing fundraising at Pumpkin Fest. Chair Mitchell replied that they will have to ask Mr. Blunt. Discussion ensued about how the PCC will miss Pumpkin Fest this year, since it coincides with their trip to Einbeck. Discussion continued about flight timing and rates, and about how it used to work to save money by getting group rate tickets, but how the airlines no longer give that option.

**6) Reports**

**A) Treasurer Report**

Mr. Weisenberger stated that the fundraising account remains steady at \$17,777. He continued that the general appropriations is at \$16,705, which reflects the \$2,100 MC2 donation.

Mr. Lins made a motion to accept the treasurer report. Mr. Schoefmann seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**7) New Business**

Chair Mitchell stated that new business to discuss would be the PCC giving financial help to the MC2 exchange and dance exchange, but none of the representatives from those exchanges are here today, so maybe that is for next month's agenda. He continued that the PCC typically helps those exchanges each season, and maybe they should discuss it.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that a while ago, the PCC talked about having a schedule for organizations to come to the PCC to request funds, so the PCC is not blindsided by requests. He continued that most people end up coming on the same schedule with their requests, due to the schedules of their programs, but the idea of the PCC creating the schedule is something for PCC members to think about between now and the next meeting. Councilor Ruttle-Miller asked if the PCC gets many requests. Mr. Schoefmann replied that depending on the year, it could be three or four per year. Discussion ensued about how sometimes the requests are rather substantial, and how the PCC's ability to help may be affected by whether Keene is hosting Einbeck guests that year, and so on and so forth, so it helps the PCC with financial planning if they know when requests are coming. Discussion continued about how the PCC could decide on the amount of money to give each organization, and the idea of creating and clarifying the PCC's guidelines for requests.

Councilor Ruttle-Miller asked if the PCC would ever contribute funds toward the cost of anyone's flights to Einbeck. Mr. Schoefmann and Chair Mitchell replied no, the PCC has never used any of its money, whether fundraised or from the City, for any adults' travel costs. Discussion ensued about how there is a public misperception some people have that the PCC members use tax dollars to travel to Germany, so the PCC draws a hard line in the sand on this. Travelers pay for their own flights.

**8) More Time**

**A) Fundraisers**

**i) *Cookbook Updates – Compilation (Input from Einbeck Meeting?)***

Mr. Lins stated that a couple of hours before the meeting, he sent the group a grid of where the cookbook project is at with recipes, who contributed them, whether they are in both German and English, and so on and so forth. Discussion ensued about translating recipes to German. Mr. Lins asked people to let him know if they think certain categories of recipes need more entries. He continued that it would be helpful to have more recipes from people in Einbeck. Chair Mitchell replied that he and Mr. Schoefmann will mention that tomorrow when they talk with the Einbeck committee. Ms. McColleston stated that she is glad to help as needed. Mr. Lins stated that it would be great to have at least a prototype of the book to bring to Einbeck with them in October, and maybe they could sell it at Pumpkin Fest this year, if it is ready.

Ms. Brunner stated that she noticed that most of the recipes contributed so far are German, even the ones submitted by Americans. She asked if that is what they are going for, or if they want more non-German recipes. Discussion ensued about possible American dishes to contribute recipes for.

**ii) *Taste of Keene – Vending Beer/Non-Alcoholic Drinks, Raffle, Info Booth***

Councilor Ruttle-Miller stated that the Taste of Keene website is a little confusing, but it seems like vendor forms are due around the end of April or beginning of May. She continued that “nonprofit water vendor” forms are due May 1. Discussion ensued about due dates. Mr. Schoefmann asked if anyone recalls what the PCC had talked about doing. Discussion ensued about how attempting to sell water might not be worth the effort, since many other nonprofits will be doing that, and the weather makes a difference. Mr. Schoefmann asked if the group wants to participate in the Taste of Keene this year. Mr. Madison replied that he thinks maybe not this year, but maybe in the future. Others agreed.

Mr. Schoefmann stated that the only thing he would say is that if MC2 has an interest in vending at the event in the name of their exchange, he would be happy to help with that. He will reach out to Mr. Blunt. He personally is not up for leading anything regarding prepared food. Discussion ensued about whether nonprofits are even allowed to make/sell food there, or if only restaurants can do that. Mr. Madison stated that nonprofits are only allowed to sell water.

**9) Next Meeting: May 12th, 2026**

**10) Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,  
Meagan McLaughlin, Executive Assistant