ADOPTED

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PARTNER CITY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 11, 2026 **5:00 PM** **2nd Floor Conference Room, City Hall**

Members Present:
John Mitchell, Chair
William Schoefmann, Vice Chair
Mari Brunner
Gerald Kuhn
Andrew Madison
Derek Blunt
Gerald Lins

Staff Present:
Meagan McLaughlin, Executive Administrative Assistant

Members Not Present:
Councilor Laura Ruttle-Miller
Eric Weisenberger
Doris McCollester

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 – June 9, 2026

Mr. Schoefmann made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of June 9, 2026. Mr. Madison seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

4. Board Business

A) October Einbeck Visit

I. Send Flight/Travel Info to mmclaughlin@keenenh.gov

Chair Mitchell stated that people who will be traveling to Einbeck in October had a quick meeting at 6 Hilltop Dr. the other day. He continued that he thinks they have a good group of people. He had a couple concerning emails from people who still had questions about some of the material that he and Mr. Schoefmann had already covered. He hopes that gets resolved.

Chair Mitchell continued that as a reminder, anyone who has not yet done so needs to send their travel information to Meagan McLaughlin and him.

Mari Brunner arrived at 5:03 PM.

Mr. Kuhn asked when the next meeting for travelers will be. Chair Mitchell replied August 25, 2026, 6:00 PM, at Black Cloud. He continued that the third meeting will be determined at that time.

B) Pumpkin Fest Participation – Derek and Will

Mr. Schoefmann stated that like last year, they will need to do some coordination to make sure things are getting accomplished. He asked if Mr. Blunt had student volunteers. Mr. Blunt replied yes.

Discussion ensued about buying supplies for the PPC's booth at Pumpkin Fest. Mr. Blunt stated that the PCC should plan to buy the same as what they bought last year, because the numbers were perfect. Chair Mitchell asked if the PCC should discuss the amount of financing needed, and approving funds. Mr. Schoefmann replied that first, he wants to get an idea of what the prices are from a couple of different places and assess the situation. Mr. Blunt replied that by the next meeting, he would be able to look at the numbers from last year and put together a request. Ms. Brunner stated that the October meeting probably will not have quorum, due to PCC members traveling, so they would have to approve the funds at the September meeting. Discussion continued about whether the September meeting would be likely to have quorum and how to handle that. Mr. Blunt stated that he thinks it would be reasonable to plan on spending what the PCC spent last year plus 20%.

Ms. Brunner made a motion to authorize the PCC member who will be buying supplies to spend up to 20% more than what the PCC spent last year for Pumpkin Festival supplies. Discussion continued. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he wants to look at the numbers first, before supporting a motion. He was not prepared for that today. Discussion continued about who would be available to help with Pumpkin Fest. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he, Mr. Blunt, and Ms. Brunner will be able to manage this like they did last year. He continued that they will have help from Mr. Weisenberger, Ms. McCollester, and possibly Councilor Ruttle-Miller. Ms. McLaughlin will help administratively as needed. It is a good team. Chair Mitchell asked them to come up with a list of tasks the PCC can help with, by the next meeting. Mr. Blunt replied that he would put together a list.

Ms. Brunner made a motion to authorize the PCC to spend $100 for the Pumpkin Festival booth registration fee. Mr. Madison seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Blunt stated that he found the Pumpkin Fest figures. He continued that two years ago, the PCC spent $780 on supplies. Last year it was much less, approximately $400. By the September meeting, he will have the full breakdown of what they spent.

C) Help Dance Exchange (10/9 to 10/19, Airport rides) – Eric

Chair Mitchell stated that Mr. Weisenberger is not here to speak to this. He continued that he has not heard from Kristen Leach, so he is not sure what help they are looking for from the PCC. Ms. McLaughlin replied that they had been looking for rides from the airport, but that was back in April, so she assumed they figured that out.

5. Communications

Chair Mitchell stated that he and Mr. Schoefmann had some conversations, via Teams Meetings, with Jürgen Herbst and Wulf Miessling. He continued that it seems like everything is going well. They did some modifications to hosting to mix people up. Those modifications were not based on problems; it just worked better, logistically, to swap people around a bit.

Chair Mitchell stated that the PCC will get an itinerary soon from Einbeck. He reminded everyone that the itinerary is flexible. Mr. Madison stated that it is important for PCC members to remind new travelers that not only is the itinerary flexible, but travelers need to be flexible, too, and respectful. Mr. Schoefmann asked about the document about expectations for travelers. Mr. Lins replied that he was going to circulate that at the next meeting. Chair Mitchell asked him to be prepared to not just circulate it, but present it. Discussion ensued about who will present it. Mr. Madison volunteered.

Ms. Brunner asked what the biggest concern is in terms of expectations. She asked if it is the expectation to host. Chair Mitchell replied that he thinks the PCC has been clear about the expectation for people who travel to Einbeck to then host guests from Einbeck. He continued that he thinks the important expectation to convey is to be a respectful guest. For example, if the host cooks broccoli, you eat broccoli. Guests in Einbeck should participate in what the group is doing and go where the group is going, not go off and do their own thing or stay home just because they want to.

Mr. Kuhn stated that some travelers have mobility issues and would be unable to participate in all the activities, or would need accommodations to do so. Discussion continued about how the PCC and Einbeck hosts have had conversations about that, and everyone understands that is valid and very different from someone "just being obstinate" and saying, "I don't want to do this."

6. Reports

A) Treasurer Report – Eric

Ms. McLaughlin stated that the Treasurer Report is the same as last time.

B) Annual Report Presentation – 9/23 at 6:00 PM, City Hall Council Chambers

Mr. Schoefmann asked if Chair Mitchell is all set to give the PCC's annual report to the City Council on September 23. Chair Mitchell replied yes. He continued that he would talk about the history of their experiences and the history of the exchanges that have started. Mr. Schoefmann added that Chair Mitchell has the supplemental information from MC2 School, too.

Chair Mitchell stated that he has given annual reports to the City Council several times, which the Council has been happy with, but the PCC did not get any more money. Mr. Schoefmann replied that the intent is not to receive additional funds, but to retain the amount they receive. Chair Mitchell stated that he hopes the Council will be moved by the fact that the PCC is doing so much more than they were doing five or ten years ago. Mr. Madison offered to go to the meeting with Chair Mitchell.

7. **New Business**
8. **More Time**

A) Fundraisers

Mr. Kuhn stated that Mr. Blunt had a successful fundraising event. Mr. Blunt stated that the MC2 School group had a successful fundraiser at the Cheshire County Fair, and they were grateful for Mr. Kuhn's help with that.

Mr. Blunt added that he was not here last month to update the PCC on the successful exchange MC2 had in June. It was great, and both sides are excited to continue. However, there is expressed hesitation and concern on the German side due to the United States' administration. German teachers are having trouble finding parents who want to send their children here and there is growing anxiety about going through US customs. Chair Mitchell asked which teachers mentioned those concerns to Mr. Blunt. Mr. Blunt shared their names. Chair Mitchell stated that he will see them on the Einbeck trip and he will talk with them.

Chair Mitchell asked how the support is on the MCS side, and whether it is growing or getting questionable. Mr. Blunt replied that MCS's support and excitement is growing. Fundraising is always a challenge, but they are confident they will have what they need in two years to send the third cohort. Chair Mitchell stated that the PCC probably could not give the MCS School much more money than they are already giving, but he wonders if there are other ways the PCC could support Mr. Blunt and the MCS group. He asked if the PCC could recognize Mr. Blunt or the MC2 School on the trip. Mr. Blunt replied that he thinks so, but he would like to put more thought into it. Mr. Schoefmann stated that it is an important opportunity for the PCC to reach out to the Consulate General in Boston. Chair Mitchell asked if Mr. Blunt could write up something regarding what he would like to hear. They could at least make some sort of proclamation and have the Mayor sign it, to recognize Mr. Blunt's efforts and the other components of the school's efforts. Mr. Kuhn added that that would be especially good for recruiting other students.

I. Cookbook Updates

Mr. Lins stated that for the cookbook he and his wife are putting together, his wife would like PCC members or others to send in some "classic American" recipes, such as BBQ ribs, chicken pot pie, deviled eggs, New England chowder, cinnamon rolls, and so on and so forth. Discussion ensued about potential recipes. Mr. Lins continued that he and his wife have the cookbook organized fairly well, and they have used AI to do the needed German-English translations. They would like to run the translations by Ms. McCollester to check for accuracy. The project is in good shape. His wife believes AI could do all the formatting and printing. Mr. Schoefmann replied that it would cost money. Mr. Lins spoke about how Mr. Kuhn would likely do a better job than AI and would be able to do things that AI could not.

II. Non-Profit 501©(3) Update – Andrew, Eric, and Will

Mr. Schoefmann stated that there is nothing to report for now, but he, Mr. Weisenberger, and Mr. Madison did meet and divided up some tasks.

B) Draft for Requesting Annual Funding – Eric and Will

Mr. Schoefmann asked for clarification on this agenda item. He asked if it refers to the PCC's request to the City for annual funding. Chair Mitchell replied no, the agenda item refers to the PCC developing a matrix of some sort and a process for exchange groups that want to request annual funding from the PCC. Brief discussion ensued. Mr. Schoefmann recalled that Mr. Weisenberger was going to send him something as a starting point, regarding how a non-profit organization goes about a "call for applications." He will reach out to Mr. Weisenberger.

9. Next Meeting – September 8, 2026

Chair Mitchell asked Ms. Brunner if there had been any progress regarding an exchange for dancers who are adults. Ms. Brunner replied no. She asked if he was thinking about for the next time they come here. Chair Mitchell replied that if Ms. Brunner had some thoughts, PCC members who will be traveling to Einbeck could share those thoughts. He asked her to see if there are specifics she could bring up to the PCC next month. Ms. Brunner replied that she does not think she will have anything specific next month, because she has been out of the loop. Chair Mitchell replied that he was just suggesting they try and keep this moving. The modern dance exchange took about two years to get going, so if there is an interest in a dance exchange for adults, this would be a good time to start working on it.

10. Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Britta Reida, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Meagan McLaughlin, Staff Liaison