

**Sister Cities Lawrence
Governing Board Meeting
December 13, 2023, Minutes**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ken Albrecht, Bill Keel, Jan Miller, James Hilliard (virtually), Kathleen Hodge (virtually), Diana Carlin, Sheri Hamilton, Kelly Scholz, Bob Schumm

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lisa Larsen

GUESTS: Sara Lechtenberg-Kasten, Steve Nowak, Phyllis Farrar, Courtney Shipley, Claudia Olea, and Joe Pierron

Keel opened the meeting at 5:39 pm in the Watkins Museum Community Room.

Meeting Materials Provided:

- Meeting agenda
- Financial report
- Website committee report
- Membership report
- November draft minutes
- Hiratsuka report
- Tocopilla brief

Announcements and Guests

- Stephen Klein announced a meeting of the Friends of Lawrence and they are planning for the return of the KU Summer Institute in 2025
- Sara Lechtenberg-Kasten, Courtney Shipley, and Phyllis Farrar were present as guests.
- The Sister Cities exhibit on the second floor of the Watkins is now open. Keel and Albrecht attended the opening.
- The city approved \$8000 for 2024 and Bart Littlejohn will be the designated representative.

Approval of November 2023 Minutes

- Miller moved and Albrecht seconded approval of the November minutes as submitted. Approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report—Hamilton

- Accounts are as follows: Intrust Checking--\$19,869.46; Intrust Savings--\$46,376.92; Scholarship--\$30,237.88; Trip Fund--\$1869.62. Total--\$98,353.88
- Hilliard submitted a revised report for the Hiratsuka.
- The Rotary scholarship check was received as was the second half of the city allocation.
- The fees for online processing are \$495.
- We earned \$1113 in interest; only budgeted \$100.
- The credit cards all have a zero balance and are not in use.

- Scholz will assist with the audit and reconciliation of the 2023 books.
- We are still looking for an accountant; options were discussed. Hamilton will prepare a scope of work.

Scholz moved and Miller seconded approval of the financial report. Passed unanimously.

ANNUAL MEETING

- Hilliard will be announced at the meeting tonight as the Representative for Friends of Hiratsuka.
- There will be a bylaws vote and then we will elect a new position of membership director and will eliminate the treasurer's position. Schumm noted that we need to have someone liaison with the bookkeeper and provide fiscal responsibility. Scholz suggested that the vice chair be considered to serve that function and complete any financial transactions that the bookkeeper cannot do and would be the liaison. A new position would be vice chair/treasurer. The change will be presented at the annual meeting.
- The following language is proposed for the bylaws to incorporate the position change to Vice Chair/Treasurer and the new position of Membership Chair: Article VI Officers, Section 5.2:

The Vice-Chair/ Treasurer shall assume the duties of Chair in his/her absence and assume such duties assigned from time to time by the Governing Board. The Vice-Chair/Treasurer shall also be the custodian of all funds of Sister Cities Lawrence and be responsible for oversight of the bookkeeper/accountant contracted to provide services to the Governing Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Membership Committee—Farrar

- 3 new memberships were added this month – One Family and 2 Individuals
- Total membership at present: 38 Family, 11 Individual = total of 85 people
- The Zeffy account for online payments is set up. The form was tested with four memberships, with no problems reported. The payment and donation links were updated on the website today.
- There is a new option to automatically renew membership each December 30th, using the Zeffy payment system.
- Zeffy generates an instantaneous payment confirmation letter from us to be used for tax purposes.
- The option to donate (or not) to donate to Zeffy for their service is explained on the form.

Website Committee—Farrar

Updates to webpages since last meeting

- Posted minutes of Governing Board meetings for July, September, and October.
- Posted "News" on 12/8 about students at Weber-Schule in Eutin talking to International Space Station. A 2023 exchange student and a host family parent were involved.
- Posted "News" on 12/13 about today's annual meeting.

Analytics report for past 30 days:

Visitors

Reporting period	November 2023	October 2023
(30 days)	Nov 8-Dec 9	Oct 10-Nov 8
Total Visits	266	326
Highest day	19	28
Lowest day	3	4
Avg daily visits	8.8	11
Total Page Views	480	683

Public Relations Committee-Miller

- Miller reported that she will issue a news release about the new officers and the exhibit at the Watkins.

Financial Aid Committee—Keel

- Hilliard reported that there is one application and the scholarship application was revised with a new date for this year. It will be changed on the website.

Fundraising Committee

- Carlin will check with the city for availability of the Carnegie Building on April 21.

Chaperone Committee—Hodge

Hodge reported that she needs to do new training as part of the chaperone background check process.

FOI (Friends of Iniades) –Schumm

- Schumm reported that the mayoral election for the unified government under Messolonghi was completed and Schumm sent the new mayor a letter of congratulations. A response was received indicating a continuation and strengthening of the relationship. Schumm informed Dimitra Pitsikou, our liaison, about the letter. Schumm will have our mayor send a congratulatory letter. Schumm may visit in June after the Eutin trip.

FOH (Friends of Hiratsuka)—Hilliard

- Hilliard reviewed his written report.
Friends of Hiratsuka Annual Meeting Report
- The Friends of Hiratsuka met December 3, 2023, from 1:00-2:00 pm in Meeting Room C of the Lawrence Public Library. Attendees were Hilliard, Kevin Boatright, Carol Shankel, Patsy Moody, Bob Moody. 2023 activities were reviewed as follows:
- A summary of the past 2023 Delegation trip was presented by James Hilliard (Friends of Hiratsuka Chairperson). Several topics were discussed mainly focusing on the need for better communication with the membership. We discussed the possibility of more frequent Hiratsuka related updates to our membership. During a brainstorming session it was suggested that

expand our emails and communication to include former members as well as current members. We also discussed focusing on parent involvement as a way to foster more “program buy in.” Possibly creating a “Parent Day” with the purpose of generating more delegation interest within the host family and long term sustainability. We also discussed the possibility of changing the schedule for the Hiratsuka Delegation to be available for a City Commission Meeting.

- It was noted that there has been a significant change in how we arrange transportation when hosting the Hiratsuka delegation. In the past Hiratsuka would provide transportation (Charter Bus) for one day while visiting Lawrence. An agreement was made with our 2023 Hiratsuka youth section leadership concerning transportation. All transportation will be covered by the hosting city. Another change in our hosting agreement relates to medical and emergency (Covid , etc.) responsibilities in each hosting city. New agreement states each hosting sister city will provide emergency medical insurance and accommodations for the visiting delegation.
- There was extensive discussion about our Sister Cities system currently used to capture trip and membership payments. It was reported that our Sister Cities board has been looking into a new system” Zeffy” that does not charge a percentage of the collected fee. James will follow up and report back to the membership.
- Selection of Sister Cities Board Representative
- James Hilliard was nominated and unanimously confirmed to continue as the Sister Cities Board Representative. It was noted that James indicated that he would serve one more year with the goal of turning over the seat to a “Less Mature” member for the second year of the tenure.
- Appointment of Trip Coordinators. Currently there are vacant positions for inbound and outbound trip coordinators. We discussed the need to identify willing people. We also discussed the need to post position descriptions on our website. There was much discussion concerning the need to have a central electronic depository local for important Hiratsuka documents (position descriptions, chaperone responsibilities, trip planning and procedures).
- Future Events. Due to the COVID pandemic our 30th Anniversary celebration that was held virtually. It was mutually decided that Lawrence will host a Hiratsuka Adult delegation in October 2025 and Hiratsuka will host a Lawrence Adult Delegation in October 2026. This will coincide with our 35th Friendship Anniversary.
- Nine students have been selected for the 2024 Hiratsuka Student delegation. Six girls and three boys. Schools represented are Free State, Lawrence High, Bishop Seabury and Liberty Memorial Middle School. Application responses were low but somewhat expected. This year we had difficulty distributing information within the schools and relied heavily on our website application process and a few internal school volunteers.
- Trip chaperones pending successful background confirmations for the 2024 Trip will be David Cornelius (a pre-pandemic chaperone) and Katie Trumble (a previous student delegate 2014,2016 and 2017). Both chaperones have been submitted to Kathleen Hodges for background investigations.

- Albrecht reported that 2024 is the 35th anniversary. The delegation is being put together. The dates are confirmed for the last week of June to arrive June 24th. The delegation will be there for the opening night of the opera festival on the 28th. There will be four musicians as part of the delegation and there will be two concerts.

Old Business—Potential New Sister City: Tocopilla, Chile

- Keel reviewed the process for adding a new sister city. We have to change the bylaws to provide for adding a new city, the city commission has to approve it, the mayors of the two cities have to sign an agreement (ideally in one of the cities), and it is reported to Sister Cities International.
- Lechtenberg-Kasten thanked the board for its assistance in the process. There is a Friends committee that demonstrates community support.
- Olea represented the Friends and noted that many members of the community were wanting a Spanish-speaking country as a sister city. She is Chilean and her children participated in our exchanges and have hosted.
- There was a baseball seminar between Lawrence and Tocopilla representatives that was successful and demonstrates how technology can be used as part of the connection.
- Schumm moved that we send a positive request to the Lawrence City Commission to form a sister city with Tocopilla, Chile, Hamilton seconded. Passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m. ??moved and ??seconded.

The next meeting is January 10, 2024, at 5:30 pm at the Watkins Museum Community Room.

Submitted by

Diana B. Carlin, secretary