



October 20, 2020

The Mayor's Sister City Advisory Board meeting was called to order by Mayor Fleetwood at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held remotely using Zoom meeting platform.

## MINUTES

---

**Unless noted, all officially appointed Sister Cities representatives were in attendance.**

Absent: Cheongju, Punta Arenas, Tatyama, Nakhodka (no chair). No quorum for this meeting.

**Staff attending:** Councilmember Hannah Stone, 1<sup>st</sup> Ward; Brooksana Raney, Mayor's Executive Assistant

Current Sister Cities roster can be found on the City website:

[Sister Cities Advisory Board Roster - City of Bellingham, WA \(cob.org\)](#)

---

### Welcome

Ross Grier, BSCA President welcomed Mayor Fleetwood who welcomed all.

---

### Roll Call and Introductions

Since the presence of representatives may be seen on the screen, via the Zoom platform, this was skipped.

---

### Mayor's remarks

- I'm preparing for a great future of the Sister Cities board
  - I recall when I was elected to the City Council and learned about Sister Cities
- I'm interested in international travel
  - Traveled as a child and lived in Oxford, England at age 11/12 and was a foreign exchange student to Mexico and Greece
  - 10 years ago went to Vassa for the memorial of the founding of the city
  - I'd like to visit Mongolia
    - All of Bolor's (Tsetserleg representative) family live in Tsetserleg and there are direct flights from Seattle now
- We received a response letter from the Mayor of Tateyama
  - Many years ago President Grier and I went to the festival that honored the Samurai Diamo
- There are several items gifted to the City from Sister Cities around City offices
  - Understand there is a Samurai suit on display in an office in Public Works
- Mayor asked how the group feels about cultural appropriation and people wearing clothing from other countries and cultures for dressing up
  - This includes for good reason or intention
    - Bolor responded if it is a celebration of a culture that's fine and not appropriation; wearing as a Halloween costume is different

---

## Comments from President Grier

- There are two representatives with terms ending soon
  - Bolor is in November and Steve in December
- The Sister City Advisory Board is a complicated group
  - It is a separate non-profit but all we do is associated with the city
    - It's been an odd mix in the past, and it changes with the administration
  - We are representing the relationships with our Sister Cities
    - Being a formal entity doing government to government relationships it's important to have a close relationship with the City of Bellingham Mayor
- The Sister City Association works on building relationships and awareness
  - Share with the community about our Sister Cities
  - Be a resource for our Sister Cities Serve as a liaison to those interested in the City of Bellingham
  - In past have done marathons and other events
  - We invite our cities to participate in Ski to Sea
  - Cheongju has an elementary program to send students to learn English
  - The mission is word peace
- There are unrepresented cities and people are needed to serve on the board
  - Asking for the City to help find more board members
    - Councilmember Stone asked if Mayor Fleetwood could bring up the openings on the Board and she can also bring it up in her old/new business of Council meetings
- Councilmember Stone asked about the Sister Cities formation
  - President Greer shared that the organization was incorporated and then some bi-laws were created
  - The DC advises not to be a City Commission but be a separate body
  - President Greer stated he felt there's a good description for City chairs bit feels a job description would be helpful
  -
- Councilmember Stone asked the difference between the Association and Advisory Board
  - What are the benefits of this separate advisory board and are there ways for the Advisory board to meet occasionally or as needed
    - President Grier stated it's time to redefine the Sister Cities agreements and figure out how the Association and Advisory Board fit together
    - Mayor's office staff will provide a copy of the City BMC fort the Advisory Board
    - President Grier stated he felt there's a good description for City chairs bit feels a job description would be helpful

---

## Sister Cities Reports

### Punta Arenas

- Chair is absent
- Aslan Brewery will be making their next beer a Chilean one
  - There is communications between that brewery and a very southern tip brewery

### Cheongju

- Chair absent
- Biennale Craft Fair happening next fall
- Mayor Fleetwood will attend the opening (dates to be finalized)
- Bellingham plans to send artwork/craft work
  - Two artists, yet to be determined, will also attend
- There's an opportunity to promote this event here in Bellingham
  - Ideas included doing an exhibit of the chosen artists in Bellingham
  - Lee Sternberger, Executive Director of the Institute for Global Engagement at WWU, was introduced and stated WWU has some connections with Sehome High School as a possible art exchange
- Lee asked if the group could lobby and send a letter to our officials asking to get better visas for students since the Federal administration is putting forth a bill to make these visas shorter
  - President Grier stated the Association doesn't participate in this type of activity.
  - Mayor Fleetwood stated there's nothing that limits the Mayor from writing a letter to our congressional delegation on this topic
    - Mayor Fleetwood asked Lee to send an example letter for him to use
  - Bolor asked about lobbying and activities as in the past the group has not been politically active. Can we do so now if it's in line with a particular Mayor?
    - Mayor Fleetwood said he would like to hear about it and if it's broadly in the scope of the Sister Cities, he will consider all items

#### **Vaassa**

- Chair stated there is no report for this meeting

#### **Tsetserleg**

- The senate just completed their local election
  - Their mayor may be changing and Bolor will report once outcome is known
- Mongolia is reopening
  - No in-country transmissions of COVID
  - Schools are back open
    - 100 scholarships were provided to students in the local community

#### **Tateyama**

- Chair is absent
  - Yoko's counterpart in Japan is back working at City Hall in Tateyama
  - Their mayor of is retiring in January so we will see a new mayor there soon

#### **Pt. Stephens**

- COVID is very low there
- Residents are involved in several marathons and the PacRim sailing regatta event
  - The PacRim event time of year varies on where the event is held
    - It was supposed to be this year in Nakhodka and may be there in Spring 2021
- They are interested in doing a golf event and hopeful to have athletes for Ski to Sea when it returns.
- Mayor Ryan Palmer, who is under 40, is one of the youngest Mayors around.

#### **Nakhodka**

- Chair is vacant

---

#### **Old/New Business**

- It would be nice to send a New Year's message sent to the Sister Cities
  - The Mayor and President Grier sent letters a few months ago

- Brooksana suggested sending quarterly letters to the cities as a pen pal type of experience, in an effort to create more discussion
  - Virtual Mayoral Summit
    - President Grier is interested in doing a virtual, 3D experience between our Mayor and the Sister Cities Mayors
    - Bolor also mentioned Zoom is a possibility
  - Reappointments
    - Bolor is interested in continuing as the chair for Tsetserleg
    - Steve's term as chair for Pt. Stephens is up as of 1/1/2021
      - President Grier asked if he was interested in continuing
      - Steve will let the group know
  - Charles Hapa, Ex-Officio Student Liaison, would be interested in helping on the issue of student visas
    - Perhaps, if still doing a virtual conversation, do a student Zoom
  - We are not sure if Ski to Sea will happen in 2021
  - Colton Lanning joined the meeting to do an introduction of himself
    - He's interested in the board
    - He has exchanged in Japan and is studying Japanese
  - President Grier welcomed him and thanked him for his enthusiasm and interest
    - President Grier invited all to think about what activities they may be interested in having his help or leadership
  - Jeremy Ferrera, of the Peace Grant group, stated they will be meeting to discuss the application.
    - This is part of the Association and helps to fund students.
- 

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM

**Next meeting is scheduled for October 19<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m., via Zoom**