

**MINUTES of the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission (MSCC) Meeting  
August 20, 2013** (prepared by Betsy Pyle)

**ATTENDANCE:** Commissioners Present: Roz Becker, Betsy Pyle, Liz Finklea, George Lies, Rich Fleisher, Mike Fike. Excused/Absent: Peggy Myers-Smith, Helene Friedberg, Jeff Ryan. Visitors: Zhengjun Wang, Bill Kawecki.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting called to order at 4:18 PM by Roz Becker, Vice Chair.

**VISITORS:** Ms. Becker welcomed Zhengjun Wang back to Morgantown after spending two months in China. He is a PhD student at WVU and President of the Chinese Student Association on campus. Bill Kawecki is a City Councilor and expressed interest in learning more about the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission.

**MINUTES:** The Commission did not meet in July. Minutes from the regular June meeting were distributed via email in advance of the meeting.

Motion by Ms. Finklea, second by Mr. Fleisher, to approve May minutes of the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Friendship City – Xuzhou Delegation in Morgantown:** Mr. Lies reported on the visit of 20 people from Xuzhou in July. He believes it will lead to further exchanges that will go beyond a mutual interest in coal production in our two regions. Annie Zheng who works as a translator for the US-China Center in the WVU School of Agriculture's Dept of Resource Economics worked with the delegation to meet their translation needs and was very effective. They met their goals of learning about how higher education functions in the USA. Commissioners complimented Mr. Lies on the great job he did coordinating their visit and arranging the reception co-hosted by Sister Cities Commission, WVU's Office of International Programs, and Petitto Mining Company at the Arts Monongalia building on High Street.

Another group from Xuzhou also expressed interest in visiting Morgantown. They contacted Bill Byrne because they had met him previously. They are seeking an official invitation from our local government which is needed for them to obtain a tourist-business visa. Bethany Sypolt provided a sample letter from previous Morgantown Mayor Jim Manilla. For any future visit, both the current mayor and city manager must be on board and supportive of extending such an invitation. We need to know more about what their plans are and see a potential itinerary of what they hope to accomplish before and invitations are forthcoming. Dr. Sun at the US-China Center is also an important player in such exchanges because he has facilitated prior exchanges. Commissioners felt it would be beneficial for Mr. Byrne to contact them to see what their goals are before anything proceeds further.

Mr. Fleisher raised the question of what are the goals and objectives and outcomes of a long term Friendship City relationship. Is it more than just hospitality and exchanging visits?

Question was raised about whether Dr. Sun should be encouraged to be a Sister Cities Commissioner. The commissioners said yes if he has the time and interest. Ms. Sypolt reminded us that we have the ability to have a person on the commission that lives outside the city limits, which he does. Mr. Fleisher suggested any discussion of new commissioners be tabled until we know if Peggy Myers-Smith seat was available or not.

**Goals of Sister Cities Commission:** Bill Kawecki asked what our goals were since he was attending his first meeting of our commission now that he is a city council member. Mr. Lies and Mr. Fleisher responded. Guanajuato is our primary focus. We have the longest history with Gto and we want to continue to offer exchanges and a trip for local citizens of the community to travel to Gto at their own expense to experience another culture and get to know the area better. We want the municipal relationship to complement the long history of the university relationship with that city. We have achieved a lot already and have each hosted each other's government officials and exchanged youth ambassadors. We want to offer adults a service opportunity in Gto.

Mr. Fleisher also tried to further articulate our goals. His rough outline included the following: 1. Further establish the identity of the relationship that exists between Morgantown and Gto; 2. Establish partnerships within the two communities for service exchanges; 3. Help our local residents understand Mexican culture better and breakdown negative stereotypes associated with it; 4. Encourage exchanges in education, art, culture, and community service; 5. Promote Morgantown as a multi-cultural city that is open to people from other cultures.

Mr. Lies added that he viewed Gto as a family oriented place where he sees Morgantown as a community oriented place. It is important that Morgantown's reputation is that of a "livable" city that is welcoming to others, and the Sister Cities Commission is a great way to extend a welcome to people from different backgrounds.

**Friends of Guanajuato Social Gathering:** We had planned to hold a self-host social event for Friends of Guanajuato at Mariachi Loco on Sunday August 4<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM. The event was cancelled after the invitation went out due to the fact that many commissioners were out of town and couldn't attend, none of the three local residents who had recently been to Gto in the university's language exchange program could attend, and the 6 visitors from Gto who had been in Morgantown for the previous month either had returned home a few days early or had traveled to New York City over the weekend and would not return in time. An effort to reschedule sometime this fall or winter will be made. Mr. Lies said that he could find out if we have any University of Gto students on campus this fall who could be invited.

**Commission Officers, Budget, Membership, and Communication:** Ms. Sypolt reminded us that we needed to hold elections to select new officers.

Motion by Ms. Becker, second by Ms. Pyle, nominating Mr. Lies to serve as Chair. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Motion by Ms. Pyle, second by Mr. Lies, nominating Ms. Becker to serve as Vice Chair. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Motion by Mr. Lies, second by Ms. Becker, nominating Ms. Pyle to serve as Secretary. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

No new financial resources were allotted to the Commission, but we still have \$1000 available for the business of the commission that was rolled over from the previous year.

Ms. Sypolt also informed the Commission that City Council members Nancy Ganz and Mike Fike had decided to switch their commission assignments so that Mike Fike would now be the Sister Cities Commission member from City Council.

Ms. Finklea stated that the university linkage is very evident on the commission. She raised the question of whether there are Hispanic or Chinese people in the community that want to get involved, and should we encourage them to do so?

Ms. Sypolt also reminded the Commission that she is to receive the agenda for our meetings 5 days in advance so that she can post it in city hall. She also stated that she could update the city website with any information that needs to be posted related to the Sister Cities Commission, and that Susan Sullivan can advise us on what the content should be on the city website for each commission.

**Community Education Materials:** We returned to the discussion about the need to have an “on the shelf” program ready that any commissioner could use to give a presentation to community groups to educate them about the goals of the Morgantown Sister City Commission, and its relationships with Guanajuato Mexico and Xuzhou China. It was suggested that such a presentation could be launched at the Friends of Gto Social Event. Mr. Fleisher, Ms. Becker, and Ms. Pyle have plans to meet to move forward with the Gto portion of this presentation.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**Chinese Student Association Update:** Zhengjun Wang returned from spending a couple months at his home in China. He shared information about the prior and upcoming plans of the Chinese Student Association at WVU and emphasized that the association is a tremendous resource in our community for sharing information about Chinese culture. He made the following points:

1. They attended the WV State Fair and had two tables at the event with crafts and information about Chinese culture. It was the first time for a WVU student organization to have a table at the state fair.

2. Orientation for new Chinese students was attended by Mayor Jenny Selin, Bill Byrne, and Mike Fike. Mr. Byrne is the Chinese Student Association advisor.
3. They have a picnic planned for new students.
4. They will participate in the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Moon Festival in West Virginia on September 15.
5. Their Mid-Autumn Festival is on September 21 and Commissioners are invited.
6. On November 17 the Chinese Acrobat Show will be held in the WVU Mountainlair.

**Other WVU Campus and Community Upcoming Events:**

Mr. Lies and Ms. Finklea noted that the Study Abroad Fair would be held on September 23 and the Community-Campus International Fair would be held on September 27 at the park along the river in downtown.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting will be held on **TUESDAY, September 17th, 2013 at 4:00 PM** in the **CONFERENCE ROOM** of the **Public Safety Building**. (Meeting room has been confirmed.) Additions or corrections? Please email them to Betsy at [betsypyle@comcast.net](mailto:betsypyle@comcast.net)