

**MINUTES of the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission (MSCC) Meeting
January 15, 2013** (prepared by Betsy Pyle)

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners: Pam Hodge, Roz Becker, Betsy Pyle, Rich Fleisher, Liz Finklea, Bill Byrne. Excused: John Gaddis, George Lies, Peggy Myers-Smith. City of Morgantown: Bethany Sypolt. Visitors: Susan Sullivan, Zhengjun Wang.

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order at 4:11 PM by Pam Hodge, Chair. Ms. Hodge welcomed two visitors to the meeting. Zhengjun Wang is Vice President of the Chinese Student Organization at WVU and, because of our Friendship City of Xuzhou in China, his group is interested in the work of the Commission. Susan Sullivan is the media relations specialist for the City of Morgantown, and she was invited to the meeting to share her ideas for increasing awareness of the Sister Cities program.

MINUTES: The corrected minutes from the regular November meeting were distributed via email in advance of the meeting. (The Commission did not meet in December.)

Motion by Mr. Byrne, second by Mr. Lies, to approve November minutes of the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

OLD BUSINESS REGARDING EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS:

Election of Vice Chair of the Commission: At the last meeting Ms. Myers-Smith notified the commission of her need to relinquish the position of Vice Chair of the Commission.

Motion by Ms. Hodge, second by Ms. Becker, nominating Bill Byrne to serve as Vice Chair of the commission. Motion carried by unanimous consent after he agreed to serve if elected.

Ms. Hodge then offered Mr. Byrne the opportunity to chair the balance of this meeting.

OLLI Class on Guanajuato (Gto): Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) has scheduled the MSSC class on Gto for Friday February 8, 2013, from 10 AM to 12 Noon. Ms. Becker and Mr. Fleisher agreed to make the presentation and Ms. Pyle agreed to assist with preparation and attend if possible. Ms. Becker confirmed that AV equipment will be available in the classroom so that slides of the city can be shown. This class could serve as the beginning of an educational campaign to inform residents of the city more about our Sister City and the goals of the program.

Proposal to Request Amendment to Ordinance Creating Morgantown Sister Cities Commission (Regarding Residency Requirement): Commissioners discussed the existing requirement that all members of the Morgantown Sister Cities Commission reside within the city limits of Morgantown at the November meeting and noted that many residents of the greater Morgantown community, for example in the Cheat Lake area or south of town, identify strongly with Morgantown and community initiatives such as the Sister Cities program. Mr. Byrne drafted a proposal to amend the article of the

ordinance related to the present residency requirement that all nine commissioners be residents of the City of Morgantown to state that a majority of commissioners be residents of the city. This would allow a broader cross section of the metropolitan Morgantown community to participate in the work of the Sister Cities Commission; others could be residents of the greater Morgantown area. Mr. Byrne stated that the matter would be considered at the City Council Committee of the Whole meeting on Tuesday January 29, 2013, at 7 PM. He asked for commitments from some commissioners to attend that meeting to address Council about the proposal.

This proposal supports that idea that Morgantown is an "inclusive city" and that we look outward, not inward; the city has an international perspective and is interested in understanding other cultures. A minimal amount of city funds are committed to the commission so in fact the city benefits from residents of the greater Morgantown area being involved in the work of the commission.

Report on Dinner with the Chinese Student Association: Mr. Lies, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Fleisher, Ms. Becker, and Ms. Finklea attended a dinner with the officers of the WVU Chinese Student Association on Thursday January 10, 2013, at Peking House restaurant to have a discussion about China and its presence in the university community and in the City of Morgantown. Dr. Sun did not attend as he was traveling. At the dinner and during the regular monthly meeting of the commission, Zhengjun Wang extended an invitation to members of the commission to attend their Chinese New Year celebration on Saturday February 9, 2013, at 6:30 PM in the WVU Health Sciences Center. Members of City Council also are invited. There will be a dinner and cultural presentations. Ms. Hodge and her husband and Mr. Byrne and his wife attended last year and said it was a very interesting evening with about 500 people attending.

Mr. Wang also offered to give presentations to City Council or to other groups in the community to increase understanding about China and its culture in our global society. Mr. Fleisher suggested that Grace Atebe in the WVU Office of International Students and Scholars could help to find outlets for such presentations. This office also sponsors multi-cultural programming on campus with brown bag lunches. We should also try to identify students from Guanajuato that are part of the WVU Latin American Student Organization (LASO) to make presentations as well.

Meeting Schedule: The commission held this January meeting on the third Tuesday, rather than the second Tuesday as in the past, because the university was not be back in session yet. All commissioners present agreed that it would be better to meet on the third Tuesday rather than the second Tuesday on a regular basis. Ms. Pyle agreed to notify the Public Safety Building conference room scheduler of this change.

NEW BUSINESS:

Friends of Guanajuato Winter or Spring Social Gathering: Discussion of this topic was tabled for the next meeting due to time constraints and the need to hear from Susan Sullivan.

Promotion and Educational Programming in 2013: We need to develop a strategy for an education campaign with coordinated programming to raise awareness around our city that emphasizes the international interests and existing connections of our city with other locations around the world. Ms. Hodge suggested that we should embark on such a campaign in association with the visit of a delegation from Guanajuato or another location with links to our commission. Ms. Becker suggested that we could offer theme trips to locations of interest – for example for teachers, doctors, persons interested in the arts, etc. Mr. Byrne mentioned that another theme focus of interest would be service trips such as those offered by some churches or civic organizations such as Rotary Club. Mr. Fleisher stated that his past trips to Guanajuato had established connections with both a special education school and an orphanage, both of which are located in the city of Gto. We also need to develop a way to use the colorful postcards with four different views of Guanajuato that Nancy Fiator donated to the group as part of this educational campaign.

The commissioners asked Susan Sullivan for her ideas on what else could be done locally to motivate the community to take more interest in our international connections. She first offered her regular media outlets to us which include Channel 15 (the public service channel); press releases to the local media including television, radio, and newspapers; and social media outlets such as the city's Facebook page. She said that she can produce video segments in which she interviews members of the Sister Cities Commission about our goals etc. that can be used on Channel 15.

Because all this was new to her, she had not had time to carefully think about what we are trying to accomplish but she did offer a spontaneous suggestion that came to mind. She suggested that a series of posters could be generated that make use of many eye catching photos that show common scenes from our Sister City and our Friendship City to show cross cultural comparisons of everyday life. For example – in grocery stores around town show photos of grocery stores in China and Mexico and pose a questions such as “What’s in YOUR grocery cart?” compared to those in the other countries. Similar situations could be set up around a mall, movie theatres, schools, visits to parks, a gym, a pool, churches, etc. A series of photo based posters might generate more interest in the places with which we have established connections among several different “communities” within the greater Morgantown area (for example, religious communities, recreational communities, educational communities, entertainments communities, etc. Designing such posters might be challenging, but perhaps we could enlist the aid of WVU students in graphic design or other programs that are looking for projects to do either for classroom assignments or to broaden their portfolios. Ms. Finklea suggested that she could contact Eve Fulks who directs the graphic design program to see if she has students who might be able to help us.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 5:13 pm.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting will be held on **TUESDAY, February 19, 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