



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

15

Date November 9, 2020

Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission Annual Report for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020

Moved by _____ to receive and file.

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
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MANDELBAUM				
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CERTIFICATE

I, P. Kay Cmelik City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

Mayor

City Clerk



GREATER DES MOINES SISTER CITIES COMMISSION

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Phone: (515) 283-4141
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August 25, 2020

The Honorable Mayor
and
Members of the City Council
City of Des Moines

RE: Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission’s 2019-2020 Annual Report

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

It is our pleasure to submit to you the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission ("Commission") Annual Report for our last municipal/fiscal year, ending June 30, 2020. We ask that this document be placed on the Council agenda as received and filed, accordingly.

The mission of the Commission is: To enhance the global profile of the greater Des Moines metropolitan area by bridging communities and opening doors with international sister cities for mutual benefit in culture, education, technology, commerce, and economic development. Our sister cities are Kofu, Japan; Pristina, Kosovo; Saint-Etienne, France, Shijiazhuang, China, and Stavropol, Russia.

You will note that the Commission has had an active and productive year as a “working body” of dedicated appointed volunteers. It facilitates, introduces, supports and coordinates with citizens, governments, and community organizations, public officials and foreign affairs departments of our sister cities.

One shining example of our service came earlier this year when we received 5,000 N95 masks and 500 protective gowns donated by our Sister City of Shijiazhuang (China) to support our community in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. The project commenced in March, but was met with several clearing hurdles, we distributed that personal protective equipment to community first responders, hospitals, healthcare workers, and nursing homes by July. Other similar examples of cooperation and communication with our sister cities are highlighted in the attached report.

On behalf of our Commission, I thank Mayor Cownie, City Council Members and the City Administration for your continued support of the Commission as we work as citizen diplomats. Municipal budgets are always tight, and a pandemic makes them tighter. The Commission has been a good steward of taxpayers’ dollars and has made a conscious effort to organize our priorities, reorganize internal structures and to that end, operate as efficiently and effectively, as possible.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Commission,

Roger Nowadzky, Chair

Attachment



The Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission 2019-2020 Fiscal Year Annual Report

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

A phrase once thought coined by the Scots is really of Chinese origin and is a wish that can be interpreted as a curse: “*May he live in interesting times.*” The Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission, as all of the world, has had an interesting year, because we live in “interesting times.” The Commission planned and engaged in a number of major activities. We had a successful year based upon what was accomplished. However, we had additional plans which also excited us yet soon shelved, because of the Coronavirus outbreak in early 2020.

A promising group of new Commissioners joined our ranks with specific talents and skills to assist us in being “a working commission.” Greater Des Moines includes Cumming, Norwalk, Windsor Heights and Johnston. Cumming and Windsor Heights sent us a new Commissioner. Both Cummings and Windsor Heights, along with Norwalk have been active and valuable partners in supporting our mission of connecting greater Des Moines to the world through our sister city relationships. In this regard, a new sister cities commissioner orientation program was developed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission. Training was held with information provided to acclimate our new colleagues to our organizational structure, operation, and culture, as well as informing them of laws and protocols applicable to them as municipal officials and commissioners.

Saint-Etienne France

On July 14, 2019, the Commission collaborated with Alliance Francaise of Central Iowa to co-sponsor our community Bastille Day celebration at the City’s Ding Darling Shelter in Birdland Park of Des Moines. Des Moines’s sister city relationship with Saint-Etienne France has been supported for many years by Alliance, and this was our fourth annual celebration of France’s national holiday. The party/soiree/”bash” included a pétanque tournament (French lawn bowling), music and dancing, a little ceremony, and a lot of food and socializing. There was a prize for the best French dish and the group was addressed by the Honorary Consul of France in the United States. Later in the summer of 2019, Commissioner Eleanor Zeff, Chair of the Saint-Etienne Committee traveled to Saint- Etienne to meet with municipal officials to re-energize the sister city relationship.



Pétanque



Cuisine



The French Honorary Consul



Bastille Day 2019

Stavropol Russia

Art students in our sister city of Stavropol, Russia gifted us with their paintings in an art competition. They have done this in past years for which we are grateful. Their predecessors' paintings have been framed, displayed proudly in the Des Moines City Hall downstairs conference room. The most recent paintings have been digitized for future informational and promotional purposes of our Commission.

Not all Stavropol news was delightful. We were saddened with the passing of Stavropol Mayor Andrey Dzhatdoev. His leadership was greatly appreciated for building and sustaining the wonderful bonds of friendship between Des Moines and Stavropol. Our sister city relationship goes back to the year 1992. Mr. Dzhatdoev's service in Stavropol local government, tracks closely to those years of our cities' relationship.



Stavropol Mayor Dzhatdoev talks with former Iowa Governor Terry Branstad during his final visit to Des Moines

Dignitaries: Welcome to Des Moines

During our municipal year, the Commission members met with foreign dignitaries.

Peoples Republic of China



Left to right: Vice Consul Longyun Gan, Deputy Consul Liming Huang, and Consul Qing Liu, from the Peoples Republic of China Chicago Consulate, met in July 2019 with representatives of Iowa Sister States and the representatives of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission.

Pristina - Republic of Kosovo

Our newest sister city is Pristina, the capital city of the Republic of Kosovo. We had numerous engagements with Kosovo's national and local government officials. The Kosovo Consulate in Des Moines is an active partner in building bridges. We are working together, striving to overcome the COVID-19 obstacles which block connecting people-to-people and community-to-community.



Kosovo President Thaci (Nov.)



Head of the Mission Artan Duraku & Staff



Representatives of Kosovo Local Government Officials in Des Moines in February 2020

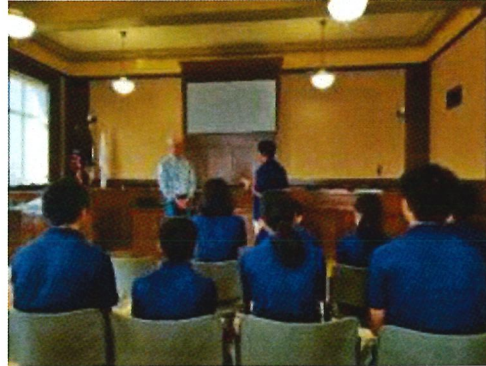
International Students Visit Area Schools

Kofu - Japan

During the year, the Commission had opportunities to meet and interact with students and teachers from some of our sister cities. In August students and teachers from of our Japanese city of Kofu meet in City Hall with Des Moines Mayor Frank Cownie.



Kofu Teacher and Students



Des Moines Mayor Addresses Kofu Students

Kosovo College Scholarship Students Visit Des Moines Metro Area

In September, 28 female college scholarship students from Kosovo, including those from our sister city of Pristina, arrived in the Des Moines area. This is a unique group called “Women in Energy,” a program aimed at increasing women’s economic opportunities in Kosovo’s male-dominated field of energy. These students are studying technology, science, math, and electrical engineering at the Des Moines Area Community College. One evening they were officially welcomed to Iowa and our community. Those in attendance were not only local civic leaders and public officials who shared Kosovo connections, but also included Iowa’s Governor Kim Reynolds and the President of Kosovo Hashim Thaci. The Commission represented the City of Des Moines at the event.



Pristina Student Speaks



The DMACC Women in Energy Welcoming Dinner

Teachers and Students from Shijiazhuang - China Visit in October 2019

In October we welcomed teachers and students from our sister city of Shijiazhuang, China. Students from the Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School participated in the Global Youth Institute in conjunction with the World Food Prize in Des Moines.

Over the last few years, Iowa Sister States has joined the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission in hosting a dinner for these Shijiazhuang students and teachers on their final night in Des Moines. Iowa has a sister-state relationship with Hebei Province and Des Moines with Shijiazhuang, the capital city of Hebei. This a city-to city relationship with Des Moines but Shijiazhuang now has grown to a population of ten million people while Des Moines remains stable at a smaller population.

Editor's Note: Attached to this report is a November article about these students who we hosted. The article appeared in China's only national newspaper, the China Daily Globe, and it interviews them on their Global Youth Institute experience. The article was published just as our Commission delegation embarked for Shijiazhuang.



Shijiazhuang Students Arriving at the Des Moines International Airport in October 2019

Learning Culture At Home--And At School



In November, the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission participated at Des Moines' Bergman Academy's Cultural Night. In addition to setting up our informational table and answering questions about our sister city relationships, we participated in their scavenger hunt, whereby a prize was given upon answering correctly questions about our Sister Cities. The students as well as their parents had fun and learned a bit about our connections around the globe.

Commission Leadership Visits China

The Shijiazhuang - China and Des Moines Relationship Flourishes

In November, the Commission sent an official delegation to Shijiazhuang, China. The year 2020 marks the 35th anniversary of our sister city relationship. The primary purpose of the trip was to meet with our municipal counterparts, face-to-face to discuss suggested events, explore further opportunities, and to start the planning and implementation process for a year of anniversary programs, events, and projects.

The Commission proposed a number of events for Iowa and China. Two grandiose ideas were embraced and supported by the Chinese. One proposed idea was to take Iowa's now popular "Baconfest" to Shijiazhuang, branded as a pork- or barbeque-themed festival, in honor of our 35th Des Moines-Shijiazhuang Sister City anniversary. Another idea was sponsoring an international collegiate Esports tournament in Des Moines in 2020 or alternatively in China, as part of the 35th anniversary celebration. But unfortunately in months, the pandemic would crash the party.



Presenting Proposals to Shijiazhuang



Signing MOU



Shijiazhuang Mayor & Dep. Mayor

Hebei Province - China

Our Des Moines delegation was strategically planned to be part of a greater Iowa Sister States delegation to Hebei Province. Hebei and Iowa have a sister state relationship with Shijiazhuang as the capital city of Hebei and Des Moines is the capital city of Iowa. Other scheduled meetings for the entire delegation included a reception for the delegation at the United States Embassy in Beijing, at the invitation of the U.S. Ambassador to China, former Iowa Governor Terry Branstad.



Commissioner Li Zhao Mandelbaum and Commission Chair Roger Nowadzky with U.S. Ambassador to China Terry E. Branstad and Mrs. Christine Branstad and guests at the U.S. Embassy residence in Beijing in November 2019



The US Embassy Residence in Beijing



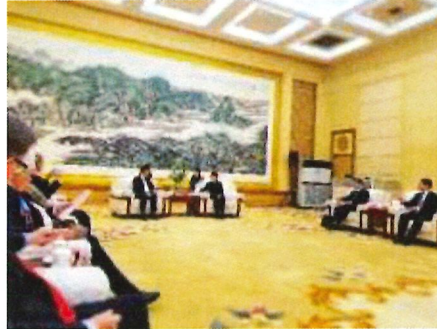
The Chinese Association For Friendship

While in Beijing, the delegation met with the Chinese Peoples' Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. From this meeting, support was garnered for the Commission's 35th anniversary proposals by the Chinese Peoples' Association For Friendship and with the advocacy of the unified Sister States Iowa delegation.

The delegation traveled to Shijiazhuang, where the majority of our Des Moines delegation's time was spent with Shijiazhuang city officials, including the mayor, deputy mayor, and with the top officials in their Foreign Affairs Department. A significant amount of that meeting time was spent with the Commission giving formal presentations of our proposals to the Shijiazhuang Foreign Affairs Department. The Commission rejoined the entire Iowa delegation for meetings and ceremonies with Hebei Province officials and party leaders. Our Commission proposals were embraced at the provincial level as well as the municipal level.



Deputy Mayor



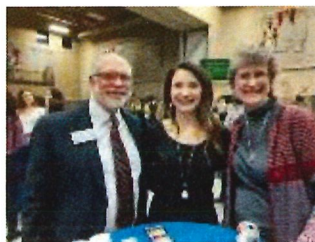
Hebei Provincial Officials



Peking Duck and Chinese Culture

Republic of Kosovo's 12th Anniversary of Independence Ceremony

In February 2020, the Commission was invited by the Kosovo Consulate to participate in the Republic of Kosovo's 12th Anniversary of Independence. The Iowa National Guard headquarters at Camp Dodge held the ceremonies. The Iowa National guard were/are deployed as part of NATO Forces protecting Kosovo because Kosovo does not have a standing army. We bonded with new and old friends. Many of our Commissioners attended this incredible event, proud to honor Pristina, the capital city of Kosovo, which is Des Moines' newest sister city.



The World Keeps Spinning...A Global Pandemic Reaches Iowa 2020

In March 2020, the Commission's operation and programming was turned upside down, with the onset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). We were particularly disappointed in the frustration of our spectacular plans for our 35th anniversary celebratory events with Shijiazhuang, which are shelved but not abandoned. The virus not only stopped us from having physical contact through our programs and with our international partners, but Commissioners and their working committees stopped meeting face-to-face. So we started our pivot to operating in a new "normal" at least for the foreseeable future of 2020. Our interactions are online but interactive and fruitful.



Commission Meetings are on Zoom

But we see this "new normal" as a speed bump, not a roadblock. In fact, community connections in trusted and long-term friendship have brought out the best in us through citizen diplomacy and cultural understanding.



5,000 N95 Masks and 500 Virus Protective Medical Gowns

In the waning days of our 2019-2020 municipal year, our 35th anniversary city, Shijiazhuang, donated to the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission a significant amount of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to help protect our first responders and health care workers as these workers protect our community from COVID-19 in its spread. We are so grateful to our friends in Shijiazhuang! This effort changed so many lives halfway around the world!

FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission are good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. The generosity of the Des Moines City Council appropriations and the participation of our community partners including Cumming, Windsor Heights, Johnston and Norwalk, among others, are not taken lightly. Funds are used to promote the mission of the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission and its ongoing projects. To review the monthly financial statements, please contact Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission Chairperson Roger Nowadzky via Messenger on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/DMSisterCities/>.

Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commissioners

The volunteers appointed by the City Council to serve on the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission enthusiastically embrace their responsibility of promoting our city around the world. The five-year commitment brings a wealth of responsibility—and creativity and hard work. Commissioners serve on “Sister City Subcommittees,” promoting that community relationship across the globe, as well getting to know each other’s strengths and bringing great ideas to the table. They are steeped in knowledge about the community, the worldwide communities we serve, and building solid relationships at all levels. The Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commissioners are:

Lyndi Buckingham-Schutt, Marcus Coenen, Madeline Goebel, Jake Grothoff, Doug Lewis, Joseph Nolte, Roger Nowadzky, Edgar Ortiz, Ginny Renda, Angie Ritchie, Vidal Spaine, Sherill Whisenand, Hollie Zajicek, Eleanor Zeff, Li Zhao Mandelbaum



To reach the Commissioners, visit the Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/DMSisterCities/>. Once there, click on the Facebook image to send a message via Messenger and we will respond as soon as possible.

In Memoriam: Peggy Hoover Patrick

It has been a most memorable year in so many ways. In January 2020, we lost a dedicated colleague, Peggy Hoover Patrick, to a short but courageous battle with cancer. Peggy served as Vice-Chairperson of the Commission and to the very end of her days, was motivated to make change of a global magnitude. She not only was an important cog in our leadership wheel, she became a dear friend to all of us. She is very much missed.



*Peggy Hoover Patrick and Former
Commissioner Darlene Blake*

Moving forward in 2020-2021, we will assess the future and continue to move forward, confident that we can keep the lines of communication open all around the world. If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please reach out to us at www.facebook.com/dmccities

Respectfully Submitted,

Roger A. Nowadzky
Chairperson, Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission

In Iowa, blunt lessons for Chinese teens on world food issues

By LIXUEQING in Des Moines, Iowa | China Daily Global
Updated: Nov 22, 2019



Chinese student Shi Haoyan and local high school student Juliet Warren in a classroom in West Des Moines, Iowa, last month when 10 Chinese students were staying in the state. Gao Tianpei / China Daily

"You know what I had for supper as a 'high income' person? Appetizer, salad, chicken main course with cheese, and even a dessert that tastes like the filling of an egg tart. The caramel on top? It's like heaven!"

Dressed in a black suit and red bowtie, Liu Yixuan, a 17-year old Chinese student, sat on the couch in a softly lit Hilton Hotel lobby in Des Moines, Iowa, leaving voice messages for his mother: "I shared my food with those of 'low-incomes'," he said.

The conversation was soon interrupted by Liu's classmate Li Shizhuo, who had a "low income" meal of water and rice at the banquet.

"I had nearly half his salad; if he doesn't share, I'll make him," said Li, who exchanged some playful punches with Liu.

They were two of 10 high school students from the Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in North China's Hebei province, who had just returned from a "Hunger Banquet" as part of the 2019 Global Youth Institute hosted by the World Food Prize Foundation.

The mid-October event helped the students improve their understanding of world food issues.

More than 200 students from 10 countries and regions were assigned to high-, middle-, or low-income tiers: 20 percent in the high-income group were served a sumptuous meal; 30 percent in the middle-income group got a simple meal, and 50 percent in the low-income one received only rice and water.

Each participant had a "character ticket" based on real people's lives.

"You live in Samoa with your four sons and husband. You own an organic farm, on which you produce coconut oil for export. You recently rebuilt your home, and two of your sons who were living overseas have returned home to help with the family business. Your business earns about \$256 each week," said one "high income" ticket drawn by Huang Zihe, 17, one of the Shijiazhuang students.

"We've long been taking every meal we have for granted," said Huang, "When those 'low incomes' come to your table and beg for chicken or cheese, you feel the hunger that truly exists across the world."

The 10 Chinese students were invited to Iowa by Kenneth Quinn, 77, then- president of the World Food Prize Foundation, who retired this month after 20 years at the foundation. He also was a former US ambassador to Cambodia and holds the distinction of meeting not only President Xi Jinping (when he was vice-president) but his father, Xi Zhongxun, too.

In July, after Quinn visited the students' school in Hebei, a sister province of Iowa, he was impressed by their "terrific English".

For the Iowa event, each student wrote a paper on a challenge related to hunger and food insecurity.

"If you enjoy eating an egg, why bother to find the hen that laid it?" That's what Qian Zhongshu (1910-1998), writer of *The Besieged City*, said when politely declining a meeting with an admiring reader. But Huang Zihe, 17, went to see the hens literally, at a local family farm.

Her "amazing data set" won praise from roundtable expert Ronda Hamm from Corteva Agriscience, a US chemical and seed company.

Although Huang told *China Daily* she wants to pursue a career in publishing, she said she hopes to use the power of words to address issues such as hunger.

Liu Yixuan took his SAT in China this year, hoping to enter the Wharton School in Pennsylvania or New York University, as the latter is "quite near Wall Street." But now he's thinking of a new major.

"I was impressed by a professor in agricultural economics when he inquired ... on my water-saving irrigation research from an economical perspective," said Liu, referring to Joachim von Braun of the University of Bonn in Germany.

The Iowa event, which concluded with a speech by the Food Prize's 2019 laureate Simon N. Groot of the Netherlands, enables students to share their research with international experts and peers.

"I was the only presenter in our roundtable addressing food security problems by scientific method," said Li Shizhuo, who researched solving heavy-metal pollution in agricultural soil.

"Science is like a fist, which cracks down on problems related to food security. However, we still need someone to wield the power to maximize its strength," Li said.

A day before the students left Iowa on Oct 20, in a corner of the Hilton lobby sat a silver-haired man surrounded by 10 Chinese students and their teacher Wang Hong as they chatted and laughed.

That man was Quinn, whom students gave a keychain stamped with their school badge as a souvenir. He gladly accepted and immediately attached it to his car keys with the help of a student.

"I never had a passport or left America till I was 26; you are so far ahead of me," he said.

Huang met Quinn when he visited the school in July. "We all love Mr. Ambassador. Last time he visited our school, he even sang Taylor Swift's hit Shake It Off. He is so lovable!"

Agricultural ties between Hebei and Iowa inspired the expansion of the World Food Prize education program, which started in 1994. Four high school students from Iowa began to go to China for eight-week internships at agricultural institutes, including China Agricultural University, the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science and Peking University.

In return, five high school students and their teacher from Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School have attended the Global Youth Institute in Des Moines every year since 2013, at Quinn's invitation.

"Peace through agriculture starts with young people," Quinn said. "The attitude they have is absolutely critical."

He told China Daily his dream is to have World Food Prize-related programs "all over China in every province", recalling the great legacy between China and Iowa.

While in Iowa, the students stayed with host families and attended local schools. They were frequently asked why their English was "so good".

"Everyone we met in Iowa seemed to want to know everything about China, the food, the people and so on. When we watched TV with our host families, where there were scenes or talk about China, they would pause to ask me if it was true," said Li Shizhuo, who spent five days with a host family who had a son of high school age.

"They want to know what China is really like, and they also want to know how Chinese people perceive the US," Li said.

"When I compare Chinese students who come to the US with my students, they are more similar right now," said John Lin, a teacher at Valley School, which some of the students attended during their stay. Lin moved to the US from China at age 12 and taught Chinese in Iowa schools for eight years.

Note: The China Daily Global is the only national newspaper of China overseas