

International Relations Committee

Meeting held May 10, 2023

A meeting of the International Relations Committee is held this day commencing at 3:30 o'clock p.m. in Room 522a, there being present the following members:

Councillor Angelo Marignani, Chair
Councillor Renaldo Agostino
Councillor Fred Francis
Councillor Ed Sleiman
Jerry Barycki
Ronnie Haidar
William Ma

Absent:

Lubna Barakat
Saiful Bhuiyan
L.T. Zhao

Also present are the following resource personnel:

Milan Vujanovic, Senior Economic Development Officer
Sandra Gebauer, Council Assistant
Karen Kadour, Committee Coordinator

1. Call to Order

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 3:30 o'clock p.m. and the Committee considers the Agenda being Schedule A attached hereto, matters which are dealt with as follows:

2. Declaration of Conflict

None disclosed.

3. Adoption of the Minutes

Moved by Councillor Fred Francis, seconded by Councillor Renaldo Agostino,
That the minutes of the International Relations Committee of its meeting held
March 8, 2023 **BE ADOPTED** as presented.
Carried.

4. Presentation – Request for a Sister City Agreement with the City of Arlington, Texas

Sheri Capehart, Program Director for Arlington, Texas Sister Cities, Bruce Payne, Manager of Economic Development for Arlington, Texas and Michael Jacobson, President and CEO of the Greater Arlington, Chamber of Commerce are present via Zoom video conference. The Committee members view two videos highlighting the educational and medical institutions, arts, entertainment, businesses, GM Plant, sports facilities and attractions in Arlington, Texas. Ms. Capehart refers to the many synergies with the City of Windsor.

In response to a question asked by the Chair regarding the main industries in Arlington, Michael Jacobson responds the main industries are automotive and aerospace.

Councillor Francis refers to the GM Plant in Arlington, and asks how many employees work at the Plant. The delegations respond there are 4,600 employees working at the Plant (three shifts a day, 6 days a week).

In terms of diversity and the demographics in Arlington, Sheri Capehart responds that there are a large number of folks that are Hispanic, African American, Vietnamese and Asian. She adds that they have one Sister City in Bad Konigshofen, Germany and advises they celebrated their 70th Anniversary in 2021.

Ronnie Haidar refers to the EV Battery Plant happening in Windsor and asks about the Wallbox EV Charging Plant in Arlington and what the response has been.

Bruce Payne states the Wallbox EV Charging Plant is designed so everything happens in one area (130,000 square foot factory) and is integrated with computer software. The plant is designed to produce over one million units by 2030 and will serve multiple segments of EV charging.

Councillor Ed Sleiman asks the delegations to expand on the reasons for twinning with the City of Windsor. Sheri Capehart responds because they have only one sister city which was born out of humanitarian relief, the City of Arlington is interested in twinning with a city with like interests, such as educational components, economic development, and to allow for student exchanges to experience cultural differences outside of their country.

The Chair invites the delegation to ask questions of the Committee.

Bruce Payne asks for an overview of the International Relations Committee including the role of the committee and information relating to the number of Sister Cities.

Councillor Fred Francis responds that the City of Windsor has 12 Sister Cities and the Committee consists of City Councillors and members of the public. The relationship with the Sister Cities has always been “people to people” and because Windsor is so

ethnically diverse, an ethnic community would reach back home to their families, resulting in relationships with China, Japan, Poland, England, France, Italy, Macedonia, El Salvador, Mexico, Germany and South Korea. The relationship with our Sister Cities is based on aspects such as “people to people”, humanitarian, cultural, sports, educational, economic and adds that once the people are bonded together, the relationship tends to last decades.

Bruce Payne asks why the City of Windsor does not have a Sister City in the United States.

Councillor Fred Francis states there was never a need to formalize that relationship as there is an interconnectedness between Canadians and Americans, i.e. crossing the Bridge and the Tunnel on a daily basis. Councillor Renaldo Agostino adds that the City of Detroit is like our next door neighbours.

Ronnie Haidar remarks that the City of Windsor is somewhat linked with Detroit as we watch their television programs, follow their sports teams, and go shopping. What is good about having a border community is that there are many educational transnational opportunities.

The Chair thanks the delegation from Arlington, Texas for their presentation.

Councillor Fred Francis expresses concern that there is no “people to people connection”. He suggests starting with a “friendship city”, build a relationship and then consider a Sister City connection. He adds exchanges with Arlington could include culture, sports, tourism, business, music and education.

Sandra Gebauer remarks that Arlington does have an alliance with the City of Toronto for music. She suggests reaching out to Toronto to determine if there is an agreement with Arlington.

Councillor Renaldo Agostino asks if discussions on homelessness or other topics take place between the Sister Cities and if ideas are shared. The Chair responds that oftentimes, we can learn by seeing the methods of other Sister Cities.

Councillor Fred Francis responds that the relationship with the City of Detroit is about the people; the relationship between government to government is not as close as one would think. He adds there is no relationship with Detroit City Council.

Milan Vujanovic remarks that the Economic Development Office has been in touch with the Consulate General in Detroit and is working on a bi-national project between Windsor and Detroit basically trying to communicate what is the value proposition of this region collectively.

Councillor Fred Francis requests that the City of Arlington, Texas provide a formal proposal.

Sandra Gebauer advises that as per the City of Windsor's Twin City Policy, the City of Arlington, Texas must submit a formal proposal and adds that it is the IRC Committee who will make a recommendation to the Mayor's Office. The Mayor in turn will bring the recommendation to Council for a decision.

5. Business Items

5.1 Letter of Invitation from Changchun, China for a delegation from the City of Windsor to visit

Moved by Councillor Fred Francis, seconded by Councillor Renaldo Agostino,
That the invitation from Changchun, China for a delegation from the City of Windsor to visit Changchun, China **BE RECEIVED** and further, that correspondence will be sent acknowledging when and if a delegation from the City of Windsor will visit in 2023.
Carried.

5.2 Children's Art Exhibition

Sandra Gebauer reports that since 2017, the IRC determines every year if there is interest in participating in the Children's Art Exhibition and if so, when and where.

Councillor Fred Francis suggests status quo, i.e. holding the Children's Art Exhibition in City Hall.

Councillor Renaldo Agostino proposes holding the Children's Art Exhibition at the Aquatic Centre or taking the Children's Art Exhibition on tour to different venues.

Councillor Fred Francis suggests reaching out to Devonshire Mall as a venue as there is more foot traffic.

It is generally agreed that the Children's Art Exhibition will be held in November 2023. Sandra Gebauer will research to determine if the venues at the Aquatic Centre and Devonshire Mall are available. She will report back at the next meeting.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

International Conference of Twin Cities & Ceremonial Opening of the Garden of the Twin Cities in Mannheim, Germany

The Chair provides the highlights of the International Conference of Twin Cities and ceremonial opening of the Garden of the Twin Cities in Mannheim, Germany as follows:

- The delegation to Mannheim, Germany consisted of the Chair, William Ma and Wanda Letourneau, Horticulturalist
- Upon arrival, there was a casual meet and greet
- Provided gifts to the dignitaries that were present
- The event included a three kilometer gondola ride
- Environmental concerns and options were discussed at the conference.
- Attended a dinner with Dr. Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim
- Toured the Garden of the Twin Cities
- The display by Wanda Letourneau was outstanding.

William Ma adds upon arrival in Mannheim, there was an information exchange and a discussion regarding best practices relating to the twin cities and suggests incorporating best practices into the IRC Mandate.

Sandra Gebauer reports that approval was given at the IRC meeting held March 8, 2023 to an expenditure in the amount of \$10,000 for the Mannheim, Germany delegation to attend the Ceremonial Opening of the Garden of Twin Cities and the International Conference of Twin Cities. The actual amount spent was approximately \$4,707.

Ronnie Haidar asks when delegations from the IRC visit various Sister Cities, do they wear anything that is representative of the City of Windsor. The Chair responded that the delegations to Mannheim wore the City of Windsor Pin at every event.

7. Communications

7.1 Nicolaus Copernicus Pictorial Report

Jerry Barycki provides an update of the Pictorial Report – The National Inauguration of the Copernicus Jubilee held on February 17, 2023 in Windsor. He adds that The Copernicus Jubilee was also held in Poland from February – March 2023.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Jerry Barycki suggests a brainstorming discussion be held regarding “where does the IRC want to be in two to five years”.

Jerry Barycki inquires about the status of the City Post. Sandra Gebauer responds that the location near the parking lot in the City Esplanade is no longer feasible. She

suggests inviting the Manager, Parks Development to the next meeting to discuss an alternate location.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at the call of the Chair.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 5:10 o'clock p.m.