

Japanese Sister City Committee Meeting

Teams Meeting Wednesday, August 21st, 2024, 6:00-7:00PM
<https://teams.live.com/join/9340514050895?p=vw2IOI4Er0PfvjEu>

1. Roll Call/Call to Order

1. Called to order at 6:03
 1. Present: Katie Gall (Secretary), Chad Whisenunt (Member), Danijela Nenadic (Member), Dustin Henrich (Vice Chair), Jeannae Segura Brown (Historian), Cassy Pallo (Chair), Kristy DeMeyer (Treasurer), Kim Osborne (Executive Assistant to the Mayor)

2. Approve prior minutes

1. Danijela moved to approve the July meeting minutes
2. Chad seconded the motion
3. Unanimous approval with show of hands

3. Exchange review

1. Activities
 1. Royals, WOF, Englewood Glass Blowing, and Royals all great
 2. Science City might not have been enough bang for the buck and consider swapping it with Union Station or WWI Museum next year
 3. Dustin said his guest was lukewarm on the Toy and Miniature Museum. He wished there would have been more there.
 - a) Cassy's observation was that they were bored that day at the Nelson and the TMM. She said the Nelson might have been more entertaining for longer. She would suggest skipping the TMM next year. The Kaufman Garden was also a little bit boring. It was pretty but there wasn't enough to do there.
 - b) Kristy said they should spend more time at the Nelson next year and that the kids this year might have just not been into art.

1. Danilo observed that this group was one that moved through everything fast. He wasn't sure why, but they approach each activity the same and were finished quicker than anticipated. Danijela said that we shouldn't alter future plans because of this group but see what it is like in the future.
2. Dustin said his student did love the Nelson and heard that from others as well. They were amazed that entrance is free. His student said the garden was beautiful but wished it were bigger. Dustin thinks they enjoyed the day. As for Science City, Dustin thinks that axe throwing might be a good replacement to Science City because it isn't something they can do in Japan. It is undeniable that the student had tons of fun.
3. Dustin asked if he should make an anonymous survey in Japanese to distribute to the Japanese students. Cassy said their reports are due on the 30th and the survey might be helpful. It would be nice to hear if there is anything they hoped to do that they weren't able to.
4. Danijela said to keep in mind that at the end of the exchange, the kids submit a report. Those reports are available for students that come in later years. The goal of the activity committee was to hit the most important things in the city, the highlights. There, of course, are other options in the metro area, but they had to weigh costs and travel time into the decision.
5. Cassy said that maybe we can introduce more history to be interpreted into the day. That may have provided more context. We could have given them more explanation. The language barrier was more than we anticipated this year. We should plan for more interpretation.
6. Danijela said to keep in mind that we can't necessarily plan for successful interpretation each day.
7. Danijela said it seemed that they enjoyed each day, but we can't ensure each thing will be a huge success for each student. We can consider the timing of events and when things open. Plan for more filler activities when places don't open until 9 or later.
8. Cassy said there was a Freshman Orientation at ISD one day they were here. We should make a note to contact the ISD in the future to see what's going on and capitalize on events that might align. The students might have enjoyed a high school visit. Chad said that the Independence delegation loved the school visit in Japan. Keep in mind that the timing of the exchange affects whether teachers can host. If it happened during back-to-school for teachers, they are less likely to host. Danijela suggested recruiting for next year earlier than we did this year.

2. Drop off and pick up

1. Cassy liked the Sermon Center as drop-off and pickup. Uno was helpful. One more rest day would be helpful in the future because the kids were exhausted.

Next year, make sure they have a rest day then activity, but work in one more rest day. The kids were falling asleep a lot.

3. Feedback from families

1. Dustin sent out an anonymous survey in Line for families to fill out.
2. Cassy said there was no drama, and everything went well.
3. In the future, always make sure to report any issues, but there didn't

4. Finances

1. Approved budget of \$5000 and we bumped right up to that. We did receive \$600 in donations.
2. \$4962 total was spent this exchange
3. Currently have \$1700 in checking, \$1400 in Savings, \$14,000 in Truman Heartland account (much of that is for the Garden project). We need to fundraise for next exchange.
 - a) Next year, we can talk about what we provide such as the Royals tickets for families. Maybe consider providing for one family member, student +1.
 - b) Dustin said for next year at the festival, we can apply for the grant one more time. Japan Festival is in the Fall, and we can sell our souvenirs at our tables at the event. We will discuss next meeting.
 - c) Danijela said there is flex in programming. Glass blowing typically costs \$1000 but the kids loved it. The day at the beach was a hit for interacting with one another in a joint activity that was free. Cassy agreed that the engagement with host families was a success.
 - d) Dustin said that the account with the Truman Heartland Foundation might be able to help us with purchasing activities at a discounted nonprofit rate. Would Truman Heartland Foundation be willing to work on our behalf to handle those transactions? JETAA uses that model through another organization. Dustin would be willing to start that conversation in the future.
 - e) We covered a lot of activities for families, but in the future, we should consider a stipend for families if that is an obstacle to hosting. Reinforce that you don't have to spend a ton of money; quality time is more important.
 - f) Kristy wondered if there is any way we can receive money from the City of Independence to help with the costs of the exchange. Kim Osborne said that she can inquire about that. JSCC is different than a lot of the commissions. Kristy said even \$2000 would help tremendously. Cassy said that the Mayor's breakfast was wonderful and Danijela expressed appreciation for ice skating and the rental of the room at the Memorial Building. The Sermon Center was also a great gift. Please pass

on to the Mayor that the students loved the Hunter S Thompson quote; one student even repeated it in her farewell speech. Kim will also do some brainstorming before the next meeting. Cassy mentioned that the facility rental fee being waived for the annual festival is much appreciated.

g) Jeannae posted that Jackson County previously granted JSCC \$5000 each year for the Sister Cities International organization membership. The committee is skeptical about the potential for that in the future, but we should keep it in mind.

1. Other?

1. Next month's agenda will include a line item for a Trunk or Treat event at the YMCA that we can participate in.

4. Items from the floor

1. Dustin and Chad are brainstorming on some recruitment efforts for the American exchange and for host families. Consider engaging Fort Osage schools which is in Independence city limits. JET starts recruiting almost a year in advance; we should start early to reduce stress on the Committee. We should use our connections to get the word out early. Chad and Dustin should report on progress at the September meeting.
2. Chad would like to see the kids who participate in the exchange to host as well. The relationships deepen that way, and it alleviates the stress of finding more families. We should recruit from high schools and reach out to the Metropolitan Community College.
3. Chaperone recruiting is a big deal as well. We will need one and potentially two.
4. Danijela said the student surge happens when we start selecting because they recruit their friends. This group was older on average. It might be a good idea to have a few younger students because they come back and advertise the program to their friends. This year, we sent 10 total, and they sent 11. We should try to make that equal. Cassy mentioned that should even out in the future. We did have good student involvement even if they couldn't host.
5. For the next exchange, Cassy suggests reviewing the applicants as if they are job candidates and they receive points for things such as ability to host. What are the things we ideally want from students? Assign points to each trait. We can also use that point structure to provide feedback.

5. Garden update, time permitting

1. Dustin said that the meeting went fantastic. The City Manager loved the idea. City Hall will be changing and most likely will be moving. Because of the improvements that need to be done, a sink hole developed. Because of the location of the garden, it doesn't do the program justice. Because of all the factors, it makes sense to consider another spot on the square for the new garden. One idea includes the Chamber of Commerce grounds which Dustin is recommending. An added benefit to this would be investment from the Chamber including sustainability in maintaining the garden. We don't want to

lose size for the new garden, so hopefully we can maintain. Another idea is developing green space on the Square; our garden could potentially be one of those anchor spots. This hasn't been determined yet, and we should introduce the idea as a potential solution to the desire of the Square. Additionally, maybe it can become a "rentable" space with the proceeds going to JSCC.

2. For current plans at the existing location, the cost is \$100,000 which includes the tea house. The design can potentially be retrofitted for a new location, but it will need to be adapted. The City Manager said there is potential that the city can contribute to the efforts, but not set in stone. Dustin has yet to communicate this to Koji. We need to investigate other locations to introduce to Koji.
 3. Katie suggested getting into contact with the Independence Square Association.
 1. <https://indepssquare.com/>
 2. <https://indepssquare.com/team/>
 4. Cassy suggested considering preserving some elements of the current location and adapting it to the new location, if that's the direction we pursue.
 5. We need to consider what maintenance of the current garden looks like especially if we are moving. Annual needs include tree trimming. We can discuss at the next meeting. Dustin will ask for Koji's thoughts on maintenance planning. The 50th Anniversary of the exchange is in the Fall of 2027, and it would be ideal to have the garden completed by then. Dustin will get back in touch with the City Manager to keep the ball rolling. Cassy suggested talking with the Square Association too; let's hear their ideas.
 6. Let's coordinate a fall volunteer cleanup for late September. Dustin will spearhead the efforts.
- 6. Topics for next meeting**
1. Start recruiting in October. Try to have recruitment efforts in place by then.
 2. Japan Fest sale
 3. Garden Update
 4. YMCA Trunk or Treat event
- 7. Adjourn**
1. Meeting was adjourned at 7:18
 2. Dustin motioned and Kristy seconded

Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 11, 2024