**International Relations Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 23, 2024**

**Opening:**

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 am, at the City Hall Administration Conference Room.

**Present:**

Angela Ge, Cecilia Dingledy, Herta Matteson, Junko Ihara, Katie Sundstrom, Mayor Kim Norton, Loring Stead, Paul Larsen

**Minutes from Last Meeting:**

Herta was able to provide more background information about World Fest. It was originally meant to be a one-time bicentennial event, but proved popular enough to be brought back. While it had started separate, it temporarily fell under the International Affairs Committee before branching out again. There was a great deal of overlap between the leadership of the two groups. The last World Fest was held in 2019; 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. There is no word from anybody about starting it back up again. Mayor Norton will look into contacting the former President of the World Fest board to see about possibilities of working together in future.

**Agenda Items Covered:**

* **Officers –** Angela Ge agreed to be Vice-Chair. We are still recruiting a secretary and a treasurer.
* **Short Term Goal** – Re-establish the Friendship Committees.
* **Friendship Committees**
  + Please help brainstorm possible meeting locations for the friendship committees; they should be free and accessible.
  + Please help brainstorm possible activities/projects that the friendship committees could focus on.
* **Open House**
  + Date/Time – We’re thinking late February or early March. On a Saturday morning from 10:00 am - Noon.
  + Location – We are considering the Civic Center, the Library Auditorium, or possibly the Chateau. Katie will check on the Chateau and Library Auditorium; the Civic Center is for sure available to us.
  + Activities
    - Live Performances:
      * Chinese Dancers – Angela will contact about availability
      * Taekwondo Demonstration – Angela will contact about availability
      * Testimonials from past participants – These people will be difficult to track down. If anybody knows of someone, please reach out.
      * Multilingual Storytimes – Angela will contact possible readers about availability
    - Passive Events:
      * Origami Station – Angela and Junko will contact possible leaders
      * E-Bikes and Energy Partnership display for Muenster, showing a joint project
      * 1 table for each Sister City, showcasing cultural items, providing basic information, and with a sign-up sheet to get involved
      * Can anyone think of more? If we get a lot of people, we’ll want more activities. Also, we currently have nothing to share of Nepal.
  + Security – We may want to think about security aspects, in case any local groups decide to demonstrate in opposition to this program. There had been an LGBTQIA+ breakfast at the Civic Center a couple of years ago, to which demonstrators showed up with rifles to intimidate possible attendees. While we hope this never happens, we may want to prepare a plan of action in advance.
* **Germany Travel** – The brochures are finalized and going out. Please spread the word and recruit.
* **US**-**China Pen Pal Program** – We want to make sure they’ll let us partner students in our city with students in our Sister City specifically, instead of randomly across China. Angela will contact them about if this is possible.
* **2024 Sister Cities International All Americas Summit** – May 28-21, in San Antonio Texas. We don’t have a budget to send somebody, but if anybody wishes to go on their own, we would love if they would present about what they learned after they return.
* **Other Business**
  + Muenster, our energy partner, contacted Mayor Norton about possible topics to focus on for the year. We brainstormed:
    - eBikes, and better biking infrastructure in general, especially including safe storage and charging
    - Geothermal Energy, as Rochester is already converting some of their buildings
    - Using tree canopy coverage to fight the urban heat effect, something Rochester is already working on as well
  + Muenster will be sending representatives in June. Watch for further updates.
  + Junko connected with the Mayor and another representative of Akita while on a recent trip to Japan. They are eager to re-establish our relationship, and will be contacting Mayor Norton next.