

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Meeting held Wednesday, December 11, 2024

A hybrid meeting of the International Relations Committee is held this day commencing at 3:30 o'clock p.m. in Room 522a, 350 City Hall Square West, there being present the following members:

Councillor Angelo Marignani, Chair
Councillor Renaldo Agostini
Councillor Ed Sleiman
Lubna Barakat
Jerry Barycki
Saiful Bhuiyan
Ronnie Haidar
William Ma

Regrets received from:

Councillor Fred Francis
L.T. Zhao

Also present are the following resource personnel

Sandra Gebauer, Council Assistant
Karen Kadour, Committee Coordinator

1. Call to Order

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 3:32 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. Business Items

3.1 Update regarding Arlington, Texas and the request for a Twin City Agreement

The Chair advises that a virtual meeting was held on November 22, 2024, with Sheri Capehart, Program Director, Arlington Sister Cities, City of Arlington, himself, and Sandra Gebauer to discuss a potential partnership with Arlington, Texas.

The remarks as provided by Councillor Angelo Marignani, Chair are as follows:

- Windsor frequently receives partnership requests
- The IRC is interested in pursuing a relationship with Arlington.
- The **Friendship City Policy** was developed to allow for municipal driven partnerships and to manage precedents.
- The 5-year review period falls in line with the Draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) provided by Arlington.

Sheri Capehart, Arlington, Texas brought forward the following comments including options for a Windsor-Arlington relationship:

- Arlington is eager for a Sister city partnership in Canada and the City of Windsor as a border city was their first choice.
- A partnership should be a full twin/sister city partnership as per Sister Cities International (SSI).
- Sister City benefits include direct affiliation with SSI's global directory but no fee requirement for Windsor.
- **Sister City Partnership:**
 - Formal and long-term (typically 5+ years).
 - Requires alignment with SSI membership and program.
- **Alternative- Letter of Interest:**
 - Start with a mutual Letter of Interest to establish initial steps.
 - Delegation visits to Arlington/Windsor could:
 - Demonstrate commitment and build rapport.
 - Identify potential community or economic connections.
 - A shorter-term agreement (e.g., 1-2 years) could be proposed as a pilot
- **Exploration without formal Label:**
 - Initiate actions informally:
 - Exchange city staff for short periods to foster operational understanding.
 - Collaborate on mutual interests (tourism, economic development, cultural ties).

The Chair reports that the process will begin with a Letter of Interest from both parties which will demonstrate the City of Windsor's commitment to Arlington. He adds that the Letter of Interest will seek to identify potential community or economic connections that are outside of the municipal spectrum. Once the Letter of Interest has been received by both, delegation visits to Windsor and Arlington will be arranged. Sandra Gebauer advises that the possible next steps would be draft a Letter of Interest, outline the shared goals, and to position the letter as a flexible, exploratory agreement on a trial basis. Ultimately, Arlington, Texas is interested in being a Sister City.

Councillor Ed Sleiman questions if there is any financial commitment to this process. Sandra Gebauer responds that any financial costs would be derived from the visit by the Arlington delegation which would include accommodations, and meals. She adds that the cost of flights would be paid for outgoing delegations.

Councillor Ed Sleiman expresses concern that there may be an influx of cities that wish to be sister cities with the City of Windsor. Sandra Gebauer responds that many requests are received, and notes that the requests are vetted through the IRC.

Ronnie Haidar asks if Arlington is expecting a decision within the next few months. The Chair responds that Arlington expects this relationship to happen within the next year. Ronnie Haidar advises that this is a learning process for the IRC in terms of how we engage with new sister cities by beginning with the friendship city relationship.

Saiful Bhuiyan supports moving forward with this initiative with Arlington, Texas.

Jerry Barycki refers to the opening of the Gordie Howe Bridge and the Chair advises that the City of Windsor has the number one gross domestic product exchange border link in North America.

Sandra Gebauer adds that Sherri Capehart suggested a city staff exchange, i.e. if we are interested in sending city staff (economic development) to Arlington for a short period of time to foster operational understanding.

Moved by Councillor Renaldo Agostino, seconded by Councillor Ed Sleiman,
That City of Windsor Administration **BE REQUESTED** to prepare a Letter of Interest to be sent to Arlington, Texas to begin the process of exploring a Friendship City/Sister City relationship.
Carried.

4. Communications

E-mail to L.T. Zhao from Changchun, China – Inquiry about opportunities with the Windsor Chamber of Commerce

Sandra Gebauer advises in 2022, the IRC was approached by the former Chair of the Chamber of Commerce who asked if an introduction could be arranged between our Chamber of Commerce and our Twin Cities. A letter was drafted and sent to the Twin Cities to determine if there was interest in collaborating and becoming “pseudo” members. She adds that Mannheim, Germany responded to the Chamber of Commerce. She suggests reaching out to the Acting Chair of the Windsor Chamber of Commerce to establish if there is an interest in this initiative.

Moved by Councillor Renaldo Agostino, seconded by Saiful Bhuiyan,

That the initiative in 2022 of the Chamber of Commerce to reach out to the Twin Cities of the City of Windsor to determine if there is interest in collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce **BE RESENT** to the Acting Chair of the WindsorEssex Chamber of Commerce for a response.

Carried.

5. New Business

Jerry Barycki announces that Polish Heritage Month will be held in May 2025.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held in January 2025 on a date to be determined.

7. Adjourned

There being no further business, the meeting is adjourned at 4:10 o'clock p.m.