



Sister Cities Committee Meeting

Conference Room A at City Hall, 1 Junkins Avenue
Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 5 pm

For the Zoom recording of this meeting, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsJ48dAiLyk>

Draft Minutes

Attending: Councilor Rich Blalock, chair; Christine Friese, Stephanie Seacord, Robert Sullivan, Ben VanCamp, Robert Conard. Excused: Mary Carey Foley. Absent: Stephen Chinosi

1. Review and approve past minutes – None.

2. Old Business

- A. Update on Nelson, NZ – Councilor Blalock reported that Mayor McEachern has approved the application we drafted to go to New Zealand. His contact in Nelson is no longer the Ambassador for the Friendship City discussion but has designated other Americans in Nelson to continue.
- B. Correspondence with Hungary – There is a Sister Cities International (DC) Hungary partners roundtable scheduled for March 3 at 11 am. Councilor Blalock also to connect with Dr. Gary Kish at Peter Somssich's suggestion. Also an SCI roundtable for UK Sister Cities on Apr 22 at 11 am. SCI is actively scheduling more of these country-specific roundtables.
- C. Update on Halifax, Nova Scotia – Seacord to determine if Mayor McEachern had any conversation about this with Halifax Mayor Andy
- D. Update on Sister City Fund – Christine Friese met with the Legal and Finance Departments to discuss setting up this special revenue fund in the City's accounts that can accept tax deductible donations.
 - Special revenue fund can have subcategories: eg Santarcangelo, Nichinan, general
 - Robert Sullivan to work on the draft donation letter template that includes the tax-ID number for deductions.

- City Manager will approve any allocations from the fund that meet the established purposes.
- City will track the donations to thank donors and explain expenditures and provide a report to the Committee

3. New Business

A. Visit from Santarcangelo, March 27-April 2. Guests: Amy Boylan, UNH Italian Department and Donna Pesaresi Garganta.

- Mayor Sachetti and artist Tiziano Corbelli and others arriving late on March 27. Film festival at UNH – a “traveling version” of the film festival in Bologna (also in Romagna) and Portsmouth High School exchange with four students and three faculty. Silent film, Eisenstein’s “Strike” on Saturday, March 28 at The Press Room with live band, Griff Ritso’s Dog Lips.
- Public Art Review Committee has some questions about the art-light installation and perhaps can discuss it with Tiziano Corbelli (through interpreter) when he’s here.
- Final films on Sunday, March 27 at The Music Hall Lounge, 10 am – 1:30 pm. Including clips from new “Lost North End” prequel documentary being created by UNH students.
- Santarcangelo hoping to expand its collaboration with Portsmouth and model initiatives. First Santarcangelo visit in 2015, Friendship City Dec 2019, connection with UNH 2021 when Superintendent Steve Zdravec approved teaching Italian at PHS and hired teacher Joseph Marquette to honor the families and businesses displaced from the North End by Urban Renewal.
- Tonino Guerra is Santarcangelo’s famous poet and film maker who worked with Fellini. His son who is also a composer and maintains a museum in Santarcangelo to his father’s work may join the delegation.
- UNH team now working with Santarcangelo to create a nonprofit Association to accept two potential grants
 - From the Italian Government to fund cultural events
 - From Emilio Romagna to honor those from the region with scholarships, film festival support and other cultural events
- Discussed hosting a reception starting at 2 pm.
 - Location TBD. Ben VanCamp exploring one option, but Friese has reserved Portsmouth Public Library Levenson Room.
 - UNH has some funds for the reception. 20-40 people? Invite: Santarcangelo delegation, UNH film festival team, Sister Cities Committee, Mayor and

Council. Consul General from Italian Consulate is invited. Santarcangelo descendants? PHS students who visited Santarcangelo in February?

- Film festival participants will not have had lunch, so refreshments should include sandwiches – ask DeStefano’s (purchase) and desserts from Massimo (purchase).
- B. Letter from Severodvinsk, Russia – Friese to distribute to Committee for discussion at next meeting.
- C. Carrickfergus discussion with Friends Forever. Jim Noucas brought women’s PHS basketball team to Carrickfergus and then Clr. Blalock hosted their team.
- D. Friese exploring the SCI Roundtable on Sports – potential exchanges eg. Nichinan baseball, or a rugby tournament.
- E. Committee format – discussed the Sister Cities Committee “elevator pitch” to explain the Committee’s purpose to potential donors and other interested community members e.g. the mission statement in the permanent committee ordinance draft. Determining the audience: high school, adults? Committee to suggest sales pitch and consideration whether committee should be nonprofit. Sullivan noted that a strength of the permanent committee is that it is a City committee. Sister City relationships are mayor-to-mayor. Friese continues to look for strong Sister City Committees in cities the same size as Portsmouth to learn best practices.
- F. Ghana – The African Union, through the president of Ghana is presenting in March 2026 a United Nations resolution recognising transatlantic slavery as the "gravest crime in the history of humankind" and calling for reparations, declared in our Sister City Accra. “This marked a historic turning point in the life of [the African Union], not as a symbolic or commemorative act, but as a strategic and international commitment,” Ghana President Mahama said, referring to the African Union’s designation of 2025 as the Year of Justice for Africans through Reparations. [Mahama to present historic resolution on slave trade to UN in March. - The Presidency, Republic of Ghana](#)

4. Adjourned 6:23 pm.

NEXT MEETING: Special meeting to discuss Santarcangelo visit, March 5.

Next regular meeting, Thursday, March 19, 2026 at 5 pm.