

Sister Cities of Durham Special Board Meeting
August 22, 2024 at 7:00 pm via Zoom

Meeting called to order at 7:04pm

Present: Randy Griffith, Bob Ashley, Mark Goodwillie, Leslie Fischer, Patricia Shepherd, Nancy Cox, Eve Marion, Lusia Li, Tom Harris, Min Shu

Guests: Longen Chen, Wenning Qi, Scott Hill, Brady Surles

President Harris explained that the New Cities Committee met with Kunshan and by majority vote they are recommending that the Board approve Kunshan as a Sister City.

President Harris had provided a list of activities accomplished by Kunshan and Kunshan's application prior to the Board meeting.

Members of the New Cities committee shared their views:

- Bob Ashley shared that he voted yes. He was impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the committee to be a part of Sister Cities. He appreciated that veteran board members, Lusia Li and Mark Goodwillie are a part of the committee. He also noted the opportunities of the relationship through Duke University given that they have a campus in Kunshan. Finally, he praised the possibility of the positive impact that citizen diplomacy can have on China/US relations.
- Patricia Shepherd. They have a robust and age diverse committee. She noted that the Mayor is in favor of the relationship and will be supportive.
- Scott Hill wholeheartedly supported their approval.
- Brady Surles noted that they have a strong capability of becoming a strong city committee. He noted that they have members from other cities. His main concern is that the committee may be lacking members who don't already have close ties to Kunshan or China. His concern is based on his years of experience and seeing that city committees that are most effective are those with members from the community who are curious and interested in learning more about the city including traveling to the city and inviting their citizens here.
- Tom did not vote but if he had had to vote to be a tie breaker he would have voted in favor.

There is a motion on the floor, per the committee to approve Kunshan as a new Sister City.

President Harris fielded questions from members.

- Nancy Cox asked if Kunshan already has a bank account.
- Leslie Fischer asked if there are any concerns with having two Sister Cities in the same country. Tom responded by sharing that Ronda Pierce, who is active with Sister Cities

International shared that there are other American cities that have more than one relationship in a country.

- Mark Goodwillie shared that their committee members believed there will be synergy between the two committees especially with the overlap of committee members. Patricia Shepherd shared that during the presentation by Kunshan to the New Cities committee, they shared that they were already looking at partnerships.
- Bob Ashley noted that there had not previously been a situation where there was a request for a new city within a country where we already have a relationship.

Tom Harris called the motion:

The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps;

The MOU needs to be drafted

Secure proposed agreement document from the applicant city

Share documents with the Board

Share with the Mayor's Office

The proposal will go to a work session of the City Council

Meeting Adjourned at 7:30pm

Submitted by Nancy Cox, Secretary