

**Red Wing Sister Cities Commission
Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers**

May 28, 2025

Members Present: Chair Austin Knott; Commissioners Shawn Niebeling, Ingrid Hokanson, Renee Kreye, Sheena Whitlock, and Tammy Jaynes

Members Absent: Commissioners Maura Curry, Tao Peng, and Kim Clancy

Others Present: Lisa Acker, Staff Liaison; Vicki Jo Lambert, Council Liaison; Gary Iocco, Mayor

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Knott at 5:15 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Knott led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

Staff Liaison Acker reported that Commissioners Curry, Peng, and Clancy were unable to attend the meeting.

4. Approval of Agenda

A motion was made by Chair Knott, seconded by Commissioner Kreye and unanimously carried, to approve the agenda as presented.

5. Approval of Minutes

A. Approve Meeting Minutes from March 26, 2025.

B. Approve Workshop Minutes from April 23, 2025.

A motion was made by Chair Knott, seconded by Commissioner Jaynes and unanimously carried, to approve the meeting and workshop minutes as drafted.

6. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

7. Motions & General Business

A. Ikata Student Exchange Committee Report and Introduction of the 2025 Ikata Student Delegation.

Commissioner Jaynes asked the students and the chaperone to introduce themselves and describe their expectations of the student exchange experience.

Nisha Santiago introduced herself and described her family and interests. She thanked the Sister Cities Commission for the opportunity to participate in the Ikata student exchange and stated that she is honored to have been selected.

Ms. Santiago stated that she looks forward to gaining a greater understanding of the culture, the language, and the living situation in Ikata. She stated that she traveled to Germany in 2024 as part of an exchange student program.

Marek Sparby introduced himself and described his family and interests. He discussed his interest in the Ikata student exchange, stating that he has always wanted to travel to Japan. He stated that he looks forward to experiencing the culture and daily life along with nature and the summer season in Ikata. He stated that he hopes to create global friendships. He thanked the Sister Cities Commission for the opportunity.

Audrey Larson introduced herself and described her family and interests. She stated that she wanted to participate in the Ikata student exchange because she loves to travel. She stated that she had an opportunity to go on a band trip to Italy in 2024. She commented that she likes experiencing different cultures and looks forward to staying with a host family.

Isabella Paradis introduced herself and described her family and interests. She stated that she wanted to participate in the Ikata student exchange because she has always loved learning about new cultures, stating that the only way to overcome ignorance is through knowledge. She stated that she is excited for the trip and hopes to learn many things from the other students, the guide, and the host family.

Chaperone Ashlyn Werner introduced herself. She stated that she is honored to serve as the chaperone and travel to Japan with a group of exceptional students. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to immerse herself in a new culture and gain first-hand experience with a different way of life. She stated that she loves to learn and loves to teach. She stated that she hopes to bring back valuable insights to share with the Red Wing community. She thanked the Sister Cities Commission for putting their trust in her to guide and support the exchange students as they represent Red Wing.

Commissioner Kreye reported that host family arrangements have been made for the Ikata students. She reviewed the travel schedule, noting that the Ikata students and the Red Wing students will travel back to the U.S. together. She noted that the cost of the airfare came in significantly below the anticipated amount. She stated that grocery bagging activities have been going well and that the students are in the process of raising the necessary funds to cover their trip expenses. Commissioner Hokanson commented regarding a recent meeting with the students and Gretchen Anderson. Commissioner Kreye reported that Gretchen Anderson will be organizing a student and parent meeting to take place at the end of June.

Commissioner Kreye discussed the welcome dinner on August 4 and a farewell picnic on August 10. She invited Sister Cities Commission members to attend and stated that assistance is requested with set-up and clean-up activities.

Commissioner Jaynes reviewed the tentative activity schedule. Staff Liaison Acker indicated that she will take care of the River Cities parade application. Assistance with a potential St. Paul Saints game activity was requested. The potluck sign-up process was discussed.

Staff Liaison Acker provided additional information regarding a potential Saints game outing, including ticket purchases and transportation. She suggested discussing this with the host families. Chaperone Ashlyn Werner offered to assist with transportation and help organize a Saints game outing.

B. Young Artists and Authors Showcase Update.

Staff Liaison Acker commented that new committee members will be needed for the 2026 competition and reviewed the responsibilities of this committee. Commissioner Niebeling provided additional information.

Staff Liaison Acker stated that she sent an email to Kristin Bray, thanking her for her help and informing her that no individual placement awards were given this year.

C. Sister Cities Commission Gift Collection Update.

Staff Liaison Acker summarized discussion with representatives of the Goodhue County Historical Society on May 15. She stated that Gretchen Anderson helped her pack up the items. She reported that the Historical Society will be hosting a display for approximately 6 to 8 weeks and will then temporarily store the items until a long-range storage option can be determined. It was noted that a tour of the Historical Society will be conducted during the Ikata student visit.

D. Quzhou Adult Delegation 2026 Update.

Staff Liaison Acker stated that communication needs to be drafted to Quzhou representatives, explaining that a 2025 delegation is not possible but expressing interest in a 2026 delegation. She stated that Mayor Iocco has expressed interest in participating in a delegation. Chair Knott offered to provide assistance with drafting the communication, with Commissioner Peng to assist with the translation. Staff Liaison Acker indicated that more committee members are needed to assist with planning activities.

E. Finance Report.

Staff Liaison Acker reviewed the Finance Report and highlighted budget adjustments. She discussed a JASM membership renewal and commented regarding the resources and benefits offered to members.

Staff Liaison Acker detailed budget placeholders for anticipated expenses, including gifts, the welcome dinner, the farewell picnic, the tree, and miscellaneous tickets and events. She provided a student fundraising update. She discussed the cost of airfare and other travel expenses.

A motion was made by Chair Knott, seconded by Commissioner Kreye and unanimously carried, to adopt the Finance Report as presented.

8. Communication Items

A. Commission Members Needed.

Chair Knott referenced the need for more members. It was noted that the terms of Commissioners Niebeling, Peng, and Kreye will expire at the end of the year. Potential membership recruitment opportunities and ideas were suggested.

9. Adjournment

Chair Knott adjourned the meeting at 5:57 p.m.