

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

September 24, 2025

Members Present: Chair Austin Knott; Commissioners Shawn Niebeling, Sheena Whitlock, Tao Peng, Kim Clancy, Tammy Jaynes, Danielle DeWitt, and Ashlyn Werner; Student Liaison Nisha Catarino Santiago

Members Absent: Commissioners Ingrid Hokanson and Renee Kreye (excused absences); Council Liaison Vicki Jo Lambert (excused absence)

Others Present: Lisa Acker, Staff Liaison

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

Chair Knott reported that Commissioners Hokanson and Kreye and Council Liaison Lambert were unable to attend the meeting.

4. Approval of Agenda

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

5. Approval of Minutes

A. Approve Minutes from July 23, 2025, Meeting.

B. Approve Minutes from August 27, 2025, Workshop.

A motion was made by Chair Knott, seconded by Commissioner Peng 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. Finance Report.

Staff Liaison Acker reviewed the September 2025 Finance Report. She summarized recent expenses pertaining to the Ikata delegation visit to Red Wing. She noted a Sister Cities Commission budget balance of \$2,924.05 in the 101 fund. She noted that funds can only be carried over into the next year's budget if there is a specific budget allocation toward a project.

Staff Liaison Acker discussed student fundraising revenue and donations that are captured in the 248 account. She noted that these funds remain in the account, are used to support the Ikata student exchange, and cannot be used for any other purposes. She reviewed recent transfers from this account to cover Ikata trip expenses. She stated that there is a current balance of approximately \$15,000 in the 248 account. She suggested allocating funds from the Sister Cities budget (101 fund) toward the chaperone subsidy, as opposed to transferring funds from the 248 account, as there are no major expenses planned for the remainder of 2025. She noted that if this allocation is approved, there would still be a balance of approximately \$753.33 remaining in the 2025 Sister Cities budget. She clarified that this decision does not need to be made until the end of the year.

Following discussion of Item 7B, a motion was made by Commissioner Peng, seconded by Chair Knott, to adopt the Finance Report as presented. A vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Ikata Exchange Student Refunds.

Staff Liaison Acker reviewed the tour expense divided among the four exchange students and the chaperone, noting that this expense was \$551.60 each. She reported that the final cost for each student to travel to Ikata was \$2,414.91, with the cost for the chaperone slightly higher because of the insurance expense.

Staff Liaison Acker suggested refunding each student's family a portion of the \$250 down payment collected prior to traveling to Ikata, as all of the students were able to raise more than the cost of the trip. She indicated that the overage total was \$916.36, which calculates to \$229.09 per student. A motion was made by Commissioner Peng to refund \$229.09 of the \$250 deposit to the parents of each of the four students. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Niebeling. Following discussion a vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. Committee Reports.

A. Ikata Student Exchange Committee Update.

Commissioner Jaynes reported that the committee assignments been divided into Subcommittee #1 and Subcommittee #2. She stated that documents have been updated relating to the 2026 Ikata student exchange. She discussed the chaperone interview process and stated that the goal will be to vote on the chaperone selection during the next Sister Cities Commission meeting. The subcommittee members were clarified.

Staff Liaison Acker reported that she reached out to City Council President Janie Farrar about a potential student presentation to the City Council, who expressed interest in a student presentation. She indicated that she will follow up with her about potential dates.

Commissioner Werner reported that the 2025 exchange students discussed their experiences during a recent American Legion meeting and presented origami gifts that they had made. She noted that two more presentations are planned to community organizations that supported the students.

Student Liaison Catarino Santiago discussed thank-you gifts that the students are working on.

Commissioner DeWitt discussed plans for presentations and student recruitment, including a video presentation to the entire student body, with subsequent meetings to be scheduled with interested students and their parents. Staff Liaison Acker indicated that she will help coordinate assistance with the video presentation and suggest interviewing past exchange students. It was suggested to complete the video presentation by mid-October.

Staff Liaison Acker suggested posting the 2026 Ikata student exchange application on the Sister Cities Commission website, if it has been finalized. Commissioners expressed support for this suggestion. The anticipated timeline for selecting the students was discussed. It was noted that grocery bagging dates are being planned.

Staff Liaison Acker discussed social media promotion of the 2026 Ikata student exchange and plans for a flyer to be printed and distributed at the schools.

Chair Knott referenced past discussion of Sister Cities tree grove markers. Staff Liaison Acker summarized discussions with Public Works staff, noting that markers in trees would be preferable to markers placed in the ground.

Chaperone recruitment strategies were discussed. Commissioners offered suggestions in this regard. Staff Liaison Acker indicated that she will print flyers.

B. YAAS Committee Update.

It was reported that the 2026 theme has not yet been posted on the YAAS website. Commissioner DeWitt reported that she has been reaching out to some of the teachers at Red Wing High School about the competition.

C. Quzhou Adult Delegation / Friendship Exchange Committee.

Staff Liaison Acker stated that she has not received a response to her email. Commissioner Peng indicated that he will follow up on this. Staff Liaison Acker reviewed the next steps in the process. She noted that Mayor Gary Iocco and Council Administrator Chris Heineman have expressed interest in a 2026 Quzhou adult delegation. She stated that the delegation would need to have a defined purpose.

D. Update Committee Listing.

Chair Knott referenced the committee listing. Staff Liaison Acker encouraged Sister Cities Commission members to contact her with any changes. She noted that assistance will be needed on the Quzhou committee, if plans for a 2026 delegation move forward. Commissioner Peng provided additional background information and offered to serve on this committee, even after his term on the Sister Cities Commission expires at the end of the year.

9. Communication Items

A. Sister Cities Commission Meeting and Workshop Schedule.

Staff Liaison Acker suggested discussion of changing the October 22 workshop to a special meeting, in order to vote on the 2026 Ikata student exchange chaperone. A motion was made by Chair Knott, seconded by Commissioner Peng and unanimously carried, to schedule a special meeting on October 22.

Staff Liaison Acker suggested consideration of scheduling a workshop in November and a special meeting in December. A motion was made by Chair Knott to change the November 19 meeting to a workshop and the December workshop to a special meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Peng, a vote was conducted, and the motion carried unanimously.

It was clarified that the dates will remain the same, but the locations will change. Staff Liaison Acker indicated that she will send out an email in this regard.

B. Maura Curry Update.

Chair Knott reported that Maura Curry has found it necessary to step down from the Sister Cities Commission due to work obligations and thanked her for her service.

10. Adjournment

Chair Knott adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.