

ANNUAL REPORT

RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION

Submitted by

Patricia W. Cummins, Chair

April 25, 2013

Executive Summary
RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION (RSCC)
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2012-13
April 25, 2013

Bringing the world to Richmond and Richmond to the World

Richmond Sister Cities Commission (RSCC) shares the Sister Cities International mission to create relationships based on cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges, creating lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through person-to-person “citizen diplomacy.”

Highlights of 2012-13 report focus on three major areas:

- 1) Activities took place in line with our mission with Richmond-upon-Thames (England,) Saitama (Japan,) Ségou (Mali,) Windhoek (Namibia,) and Zhengzhou (China.) Given a long history of no activities involving Olsztyn (Poland) and Uijeongbu (South Korea,) their status was deactivated.
- 2) As suggested by City Council last year, a guide outlining criteria for selection of new sister cities was put in place to help identify candidates whose priorities align with those identified by the City of Richmond. That guide also addresses opportunities to share sister cities, whether it is for Richmond sharing of an existing sister city or whether it will allow Richmond to add a shared sister city relationship in another country.
- 3) Strategic planning was focused on budget efficiency, effective staff support, and realistic space needs. In line with our mission, strategic goals encompass internationally oriented activities to advance educational ties, cultural connections, and economic prosperity for the City of Richmond.

Our directions for next year:

- 1) Protocol document to be developed for use in working with international visitors, something to help the City and the Commission prepare for UCI 2015 and many other events.
- 2) Building on university partnerships in Africa, expansion of activities in Europe and Asia, and new relationships to explore in China, France, and Kenya.
- 3) Plans for a VCU-community-City of Richmond partnership to promote efficient and effective use of staff support and budget for Commission-related activities that bring the world to Richmond and Richmond to the world. Longer term goal for Richmond to hire a Sister Cities employee within the Economic Development and Tourism sector.

1. MEMBERS OF THE RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION

Cynthia Newbille	City Council Representative	
Patricia W. Cummins	Chair	<i>(Replaced Susan Nolan April 1, 2013)</i>
Susan Nolan	Past Chair	
Vacant	Vice Chair	
Beverly Abdus-Sabur	Secretary	
Fai Howard		
Umar Abdul-Mateen Kenyatta		
Allan Levenberg		
Nin Aseeya RaEl		
Karin E. Taylor		
My Lan Tran		

The Commission has one vacancy.

2. COPIES OF BY-LAWS AND OTHER GOVERNING DOCUMENTS TO BE KEPT ON FILE

By-laws are already on file in the Clerk’s Office, where Debra Bowles has carefully filed documentation forwarded by Commission secretary Beverly Abdus-Sabur.

3. COPIES OF MEETING MINUTES

Minutes are already on file in the Clerk’s Office where Debra Bowles has carefully filed minutes from each meeting when they were forwarded by Commission secretary Beverly Abdus-Sabur.

4. STAFF SUPPORT AND OTHER RESOURCES

There are no paid staff members dedicated to the Richmond Sister Cities Commission.

City employees who have worked with the Commission included City Council representatives as well as Mayor Jones and members of their respective staffs who assisted with international visitors. Special recognition goes to Suzette Denslow and Cheryl Ivey Green for visits involving Mayor Jones, and to Steve Skinner for visits involving City Council.

In addition, I reserve my greatest recognition for Betty Anne Teter of the Office of Economic Development, who participated in Commission meetings and assisted us with establishing criteria for identifying future sister cities. I also recognize Anedra Bourne of the Office of Tourism. Both of their names appear below among the activities of the commission. I note, however, that the time they spent was above and beyond their regular duties, as there is no dedicated time allocated from their workload that would facilitate commission work.

The fact that no city employees are dedicated to facilitating the Commission’s work has required us to explore creative solutions, including new opportunities for partnerships with VCU and with community groups that work with the commission on cultural and educational projects. Initiatives where we share employees are allowing the commission to increase both effectiveness and efficiency.

Budget:

Sister Cities has a City budget of \$3,967. To date \$993.06 has been spent on conference participation by former Chair Susan Nolan (\$880) and a gift for visiting Mayor Ousmane Simiga (\$113.06).

Customer Name	Date Of Record	Amount
SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL	8/8/2012	880.00
PATRICIA CUMMINS	8/15/2012	113.06
	Sum:	993.06

Encumbered amounts are as follows:

- \$ 500 International Peace Day Conference – focus on Africa (co-sponsored by RSCC, Virginia Friends of Mali, Richmond Peace Education Center, VCU)
- \$ 250 Reception to recognize past commission chair, new City Council liaison, and International visitors on May 1
- \$ 200 Co-sponsorship of a table at Asian Festival event on May 4
- \$ 375 Early Bird Registration for July annual meeting of Sister Cities International
- \$1698 Administrative assistance for all commission activities (joint employee costs for two employees paid jointly by VCU, grant funding, and Virginia Friends of Mali) –VFOM account used to pay two shared employees and pay for office supplies.

5. Goals and Objectives – Strategic Plan

Two strategic planning sessions were held in Spring 2013. Those sessions resulted in a reaffirmation of our commitment to our cultural and educational missions, and a desire to expand our economic development mission. We agreed on the logo “Bringing the world to Richmond and Richmond to the world.”

- A. Address long-term need for an employee dedicated to RSCC.

To make a greater impact in the area of economic development, it was determined that we needed to look more like other cities of our size (Columbus, OH was an example,) and we needed to have a presence with at least one employee within City government.

- B. Need for a long-term and short-term budget to help promote the City as part of our mission

Mission: Like Sister Cities International, RSCC's mission is to promote cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges, creating lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through person-to-person "citizen diplomacy."

The aspect of our mission that benefits most from an investment in RSCC is the City's ability to promote international trade and international tourism. We want very much to do more to work with the City in this area and would complement the limited resources discussed with Office of Economic Development and Office of Tourism personnel Betty Anne Teter and Anedra Bourne.

- C. What we can do to promote the City under current limitations

We have begun to pool resources with our community partners as we pay jointly for shared staffing that will benefit all of us. (The commission chair is volunteering some of her time to oversee shared staff in Summer 2013.)

We have developed temporary letterhead stationery and are writing to members of City Council this spring.

We can improve our website in consultation with Steve Skinner and in cooperation with community partners.

We can design a new brochure in consultation with Steve Skinner and in cooperation with community partners.

6. Summary of key initiatives

ACTIVITIES WITH FIVE SISTER CITIES

(1) SEGOU (Africa)

Mayor Simaga came to Richmond in July 2012, when he met with Mayor Jones, City Councilman Tyler, VCU president Rao, and others. He began economic development activities (purchase of garbage trucks, export of rice, cotton, and crafts) that are on-going. Mayor Simaga returned with an economic development team in October 2012. Arrangements were made through Virginia Friends of Mali and VCU. Vice Chair and VCU faculty member Patricia

Cummins had service learning students in her composition class interact with Mayor Simaga and with the other five members of the Ségou delegation.

In September 2012 VFOM, RSCC, and VCU jointly sponsored a Mali Independence Day event on the VCU campus. The public was able to attend free of charge a symposium and a concert with ngoni player and singer Cheikh Hamala and a Malian rapper

Work was finished on the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's AUPAP project in Mali, and the final inspection took place in January 2013 by Virginia Friends of Mali (VFOM) president Ana Edwards.

In January VFOM president Edwards and RSCC Vice Chair Cummins signed an agreement promoting university partnerships between the University of Ségou and institutions in the Richmond area.

VCU obtained a new Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant to do clinical trials involving HIV-positive women in Ségou.

Eight VCU faculty traveled to Ségou in January 2013. Joint research and teaching activities were planned.

2013-14

VCU obtained a U.S. Department of Education grant that will bring VCU students to Ségou 2013-15.

VFOM in partnership with RSCC, Richmond Peace Education Center (RPEC), and VCU will co-sponsor a conference focused on Africa with satellite hook-ups to Ségou in the coming months.

(2) RICHMOND-UPON-THAMES

In Fall 2012 Lord Watson visited Richmond for a special ceremony in Church Hill. In Summer and Fall 2013, there will be several interactions between Richmond Virginia (aka Richmond-on-the-James) and Richmond-upon-Thames, England involving Maymont, Richmond Garden Clubs, Scenic Virginia, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and the Richmond Ballet that focus on Preservation, Conservation and Cultural Heritage.

Special emphasis is being given to environmental and economic development challenges, particularly with regards to tourism, historic view sheds and green initiatives. We are very fortunate to have strong partnerships with the Thames Landscape Strategy, Kew Gardens, and the Borough Council in Richmond, Surrey all of whom are eager to collaborate on joint projects that would benefit both our cities and surrounding communities.

(3) SAITAMA

The 19th Sports Exchange between Richmond, Virginia and Saitama, Japan Junior Baseball Byrd Park August 2012

The 13th Scholastic Exchange March 2012 students and teachers – Clover Hill High School, tour VMAF, Maymont, Virginia Historic Society, and Tredegar.

Japanese Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki came to Richmond in March 2012 and visited Randolph Macon College, University of Richmond and Maymont Honoring the Life, Work and Good Spirit of Taylor Anderson.

The 1st Teacher Exchange Richmond Public Schools and Saitama, Japan took place from June – July 2012. Three teachers taught in 13 schools during two weeks in Saitama, Japan.

Takashi Fukushima, former VP of Waco Chemical in Richmond, Virginia presented program in Saitama, Japan on doing business in Richmond,. Virginia materials were sent from the City of Richmond and Virginia Tourism.

World Premier The Taylor Anderson Story Richmond Center Stage November 2012 Scholastic Exchange Community Event at St. Catherine's School 6001 Grove Avenue Impressions of Great Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011

2013 events and upcoming programs

14th Scholastic Exchange March 2013 students and teachers – Clover Hill High School, tour VMAF, Maymont, Virginia Historic Society, and Carytown.

Invitation to participate in Girls Basketball Exchange with Saitama, Japan

20th Sports Exchange Baseball between Richmond, Virginia and Saitama, Japan August 2013 Saitama, Japan

Fall 2013 Teachers will be coming from Saitama to teach in Richmond Public Schools.

Exploring option to share Saitama as a sister city with Columbus, OH

Columbus, OH contacted RSCC Chair Susan Nolan, and they have been authorized to contact Saitama on activities where RSCC does not have an interest. (Part of an initiative on sharing cities begun last year by RSCC, with three other cities in China, France, and Kenya potentially to be added by RSCC in the future.)

(4) ZHENGZHOU and other CHINA CONTACTS

In Summer RSCC was approached by a representative of the Chinese government who arranged for a Fall 2012 visit of a delegation from Chongqing. The plan was for Richmond to explore a second sister city relationship with what was identified as the New Chicago of China and a gateway to the western part of the country. The alignment of economic interests was worked out with statewide and city government officials.

In Spring 2013 several members of the RSCC, the Richmond economic development team, and the US China People's Friendship Association (USCPFA) met with Chinese Embassy officials, Counselor Zha Liyou and First Secretary Li Sanghua, here in Richmond, who shared with all of those in attendance the importance of maintaining our Sister City relationship with Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province and its largest city. It was unclear how the Chongqing connection should be pursued. My Lan Tran, Sister City Commissioner for China, has worked diligently to renew the Zhengzhou relationship, and Diana Greer joined her to continue to grow that important tie between our two cities. USCPFA made that first connection many years ago and now we work together to rejuvenate and bring about an even closer relationship between Richmond and Zhengzhou.

The 24th US-China Peoples Friendship Association (USCPFA) National Convention will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn-Richmond Downtown on October 18, 19, and 20, 2013. The theme is China and the United States: Weaving Friendship through History and the Arts. China experts from area universities, including Dr. John Herman: Director of VCU--China Relations and author Dean King, author of Unbound, and other historians from all over the United States and Canada will be presenting on China-related topics. The new Ambassador His Excellency Cui Tiankai from the Chinese Embassy and Madame Li Xiaolin, President of The Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) will be invited. The Mayor of Richmond City and the Governor of Virginia will also be invited. We are looking forward to an exciting, informative and successful convention of national and international members and guests.

(5) WINDHOEK

During the early part of the year, we sent correspondence to the Minister of Education of Namibia to identify secondary schools to establish a National Society of Black Engineers-Pre College Initiative and develop an exchange with the local Richmond NSBE-PCI. Since then we have been in contact with Freddie Gaoseb at the Embassy of Namibia in Washington, DC to assist in facilitating the relationships. (It has been a long and slow process) We were also given the contact info for the Dean of Engineering at the Polytechnic Institute of Namibia. There is interest in establishing an exchange program with Virginia Commonwealth University School of Engineering. Fai Howard initiated contact with VCU School of Engineering to begin the dialog. That is where we left off in 2012.

BY-LAWS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

As suggested by City Council last year, we have approved by-laws as well as a guide outlining criteria for selection of new sister cities was put in place to help identify candidates whose priorities align with those identified by the City of Richmond. That guide also addresses opportunities to share sister cities, whether it is for Richmond sharing of an existing sister city or

whether it will allow Richmond to add a shared sister city relationship in another country. April minutes will reflect the most recent approvals.

A copy of the by-laws is attached.

7. Review of Accomplishments and Challenges

Accomplishments:

Strategic planning was our greatest accomplishment. We reviewed our mission, which Richmond Sister Cities Commission (RSCC) shares with Sister Cities International. Our mission is to create relationships based on cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges, creating lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through person-to-person “citizen diplomacy.” Our logo reflects this: “Bringing the world to Richmond and Richmond to the world.”

Activities took place in line with our mission with Richmond upon Thames (England,) Saitama (Japan,) Ségou (Mali,) Windhoek (Namibia,) and Zhengzhou (China.) Given a long history of no activities involving Olsztyn (Poland) and Uijeongbu (South Korea,) their status was deactivated.

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Challenges:

We need a greater presence in city government in order to carry out our mission to advance the international presence of Richmond, whether culturally, educationally or through economic development and humanitarian efforts. Strategic planning was focused on the budget efficiency, effective staff support, and realistic space needs. In line with our mission, strategic goals promote educational ties, cultural connections, and economic prosperity for the City of Richmond.

Our goals for next year:

Protocol document to be developed for use in working with international visitors, something to help the City and the Commission prepare for UCI 2015 and many other events. A protocol expert is working with the Commission.

Building on university partnerships in Africa, expansion of activities in Europe and Asia, and new relationships to explore in China, France, and Kenya. Both VCU and the U. of Richmond participated in last year’s discussions and will continue to help.

Sharing resources will stretch dollars and expand what we can do. Plans for a VCU-community-City of Richmond partnership to promote efficient and effective use of staff support and budget for Commission-related activities that bring the world to Richmond and Richmond to the world.

The longer term goal for Richmond to hire a Sister Cities employee within the Economic Development and Tourism sector.

We look forward in the future to working with City officials on any performance indicators or other actions and policies that may be appropriate. We do not have any report for items 8, 9, and 10 at this time.