

## **Greater Savannah International Alliance**

Minutes of the Wednesday, February 21 Meeting (2018)

Present: Leigh Ryan, Adriana Oliveira, Pete Hodges, Nalanda Roy, Emmanuel Manyiseni, Jim Anderson, Bill Durrence II, Manny Dominguez, Francis X. Hayes, Mark Linsky

Excused: Pat Thomas, Ed Eckstrand, Mindy Shea

**Welcome and Introductions** - Leigh Ryan, chair, welcomed everyone and had each person introduce themselves and state their professional affiliation. She also presented a copy of the GSIA organizational chart (attached to these minutes).

### **Review and Approval of Minutes**

Pete Hodges moved that the minutes be accepted. Nalanda Roy seconded the motion. All voted to approve the minutes.

### **General – Handbook**

Leigh provided a copy of the new Handbook to those who did not attend in January. She also passed around a new copy of membership information and asked everyone to verify their information was correct. She noted how important it is that we have accurate information on each regular and advisory member.

Leigh also reminded us that we changed the bylaws to reduce our official membership to 13. Leigh noted that we have a new member who will join us next meeting. Bill Durrence reminded us that advisory board members are not voted on by the city council. They are approved by a majority vote of the GSIA officers.

### **City Update**

Manny Dominguez reported on a meeting that Leigh, Jim and he had a couple weeks ago with a woman from St. Maarten who is interested in building a sister city relationship with Savannah. Her group is called Sky Angel from the Dutch side of St. Maarten. This is already a connection in Savannah interested in working with them. She noted that tourism, culture and the port are good connections for the two cities. Bill Durrence noted there is a difference between GSIA's Sister City Structure and that of the Official Group in Washington, D.C. Jim noted that in our conversation with her, we pointed out that there would not be any available funding from the city, and that GSIA has a number of various levels for connecting with partner cities.

Manny also distributed a copy of the new monthly newsletter published by his office (Savannah Office of Business Opportunity).

Bill Durrence suggested that some of the GSIA officers bring the city manager up to date on the GSIA partner city process so that we are all in agreement. He suggested we might want to use a different term than "Sister City" so there is no misunderstanding. Councilman Durrence also noted that Haiti is

another possibility for partnership but nothing seems to happen. Francis X. Hayes noted there was a good connection between the Haiti organization in Miami and former Mayor Floyd Adams. This activity included having a delegation at one time from the government of Haiti. Francis stated there is still interest from the Miami group and he thinks they are waiting for a response from the City of Savannah. He also noted that the Georgia Historical Society had some connection with the Haiti group at one point.

Jim Anderson said he will contact the leader of the group in Miami. Francis will send Jim a contact name.

Councilman Durrence also mentioned that the city is looking at developing an attendance policy for members of boards and will probably put one in place in the near future. The city boards need to have membership of people who are serious about the board they are serving one. It was also mentioned that the city is revamping all the websites.

### **Strategic Plan**

**Overview** - Leigh reviewed the vision and mission of GSIA with everyone but the reminder that GSIA focuses on the areas of education, culture, tourism and economics/business. We also revisited the 3 main objectives that the group agreed on at the last meeting.

The first objective deals with improving communication. Adriana is the chair of that committee and led us in a discussion of various ways that we can work to build better communication. This includes making presentations and visiting with our community international organization, improving our press coverage and maintain/updating our website and social media. Other suggestions are to add dates of the organization's meetings to our website, check with Bret Bell about additional communication possibilities, work with the City's new calendar of events for better publicity of our meetings, etc. Adriana also suggested the possibility of some type of awards for young people to promote GSIA.

The second objective focuses on GSIA's International Partnerships. Jim chairs that committee. Some of the discussion for this objective included inviting our international organizations to attend GSIA meetings, have them make short presentations about their group to GSIA, setup meetings with the leaders based on the region of the world they are in and work on learning ways GSIA can be of help to them.

The third objective is about maintaining/updating our international database. Pete is in charge of that objective and will ask members to help him as needed.

At the end of the discussion, Leigh encouraged everyone to determine which of the first two areas they would like to work on based on the objective and connect with the chair.

### **Comments for the Good of the Order:**

1. The Halle-Savannah Teacher Exchange sponsored the Teutonic Council just hosted two teachers who worked in Effingham High School the past 2 weeks. The T.C. sponsored a dinner for them at Vic's and had some 30 people from the German-American Societies and the public schools in attendance. Two more will be here later this spring.
2. Leigh announced for Nalanda Roy that the Armstrong campus is sponsoring a symposium on the Philippines in March. The activities include speakers, music, dances, and a small food festival. For further details, please email Nalanda.

3. Emmanuel noted that SSU is sponsored a Fulbright trip to Ghana and Liberia in late spring for SSU and SCCPS Teachers.
4. **City Update**

Manny - interest from St. Maarten about a sister city relationship with Savannah. Sky Angel group, from the Dutch side of St. Maarten. This is already a connection in Savannah interested in working with them. Tourism and the port are good connections for the two cities. Bill Durrence noted difference between GISA's Sister City and that of the Official Group in Washington, D.C. Our conversation focused on no available funding from the city and a number of various levels of connecting together. GSIA should speak to the City Manager about the GSIA process. Bill says Haiti is another possibility but nothing seems to happen. Francis noted there was a connection between the Haiti organization in Miami and former Mayor Floyd Adams. Include a delegation at one time with an official delegation from the government of Haiti. He says there is still interest from the Miami group and he thinks they are waiting for a response from the City of Savannah. There is a strong history. Georgia Historical Society had some connection with that at one point.
5. WTCSav will host the Canadian and Israeli Consul Generals, as well as a minister and Consul General from Ireland in March. They will be in Savannah to learn more about the region and economic possibilities. In April, WTCSav is hosting a regional showcase bringing in businesses from Germany (Bremen, Munich and Halle) for a week to explore trade and investment opportunities with the region.
6. Mark presented the multitude of international programs in the public schools this spring. This includes the exchange of students between Bremen, Germany and Johnson High School. His office is also sponsoring a World Language Summer Immersion Campus with 2 sessions in June. The language choices are sign language, Chinese, French and Spanish.
7. The Confucius Institute at Savannah State has been busy helping the community celebrate the Chinese New Year with lots of various cultural activities.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 21, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. at the Savannah Entrepreneurial Center at 801 E. Gwinnett Street.