

Greater Savannah International Alliance

Minutes of the Wednesday, March 21, 2018 Meeting

Savannah Entrepreneurial Center, 801 E. Gwinnett Street

Present: Leigh Ryan, Pete Hodges, Adriana Oliveira, Ed Eckstrand, Mehmet Ergul, Manny Dominguez, Alfonso Ribot, Colleen Cunningham, Francis X. Hayes, Molly Swagler, Mark Linsky

Not Present: Jim Anderson, Emmanuel Naniuzeyi, Pat Thomas, Nalanda Roy, Larissa Davidson, Joe Steffen, Mindy Shea

Welcome: The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM by Leigh Ryan, Chair. She welcomed attendees and introduced two new members. Mehmet Ergul is a new board member and Molly Swagler (SCAD) is now on the advisory board, replacing Erina Tandy of SCAD. Both individuals provided a brief oral biography of their backgrounds. Of particular note, Mehmet is originally from Turkey but has resided in Savannah for 24 years.

Review of February 21, 2018 Minutes: Francis X. Hayes moved that the minutes be approved subject to correcting the comments regarding the Miami Haitian group. In lieu of the entry citing the Georgia Historical Society, it should have reflected the Coastal Heritage Society. Pete Hodges seconded the motion, and all approved the minutes with this change.

City Update: Manny Dominguez commented that the St. Patrick's Day festivities were generally successful, and that the Mayor had a good meeting with Vice President Pence who was in attendance.

General:

Mark Linsky highlighted several activities involving the SCCPSS: (1) Halle Germany Exchange Program had the German Teachers here and the farewell dinner was very successful. (2) Bremen Germany high school students were here for ten days and apparently didn't want to leave (suggesting they should perhaps lose their passports so as to enjoy our southern hospitality a little longer!!). (3) Some Johnson High School Students will travel to Germany this summer. (4) In September, Valencia Spain students will be visiting Savannah's school system. (5) A Ghana Educational Exchange program is underway. (6) A dual language program has been set up at Windsor Forest involving English and Spanish – it is the first program in Georgia outside of the Atlanta area.

Francis X. Hayes commented on a United Nations model program that involved Dr. Naniuzeyi at SSU and Harvard reps that assisted in the sending of a 13 person delegation to Panama (kudo's also to the GA Ports Authority).

Leigh Ryan commented on the recent successful visit of Ireland dignitaries representing County Wexford to establish a TradeBridge project. This is a pilot program for both countries and will involve both exports and imports. Ed Eckstrand added that there may be a sister city possibility down the road, but Leigh pointed out that this will require "buy in" from entities on both sides of the Atlantic.

Guest Speaker: Saint Andrew's Society of the City of Savannah

Bill Lattimore, Vice President of the Society made an oral presentation to the board. Of note is the fact that Scots arrived as early as 1734 in Savannah and that the Society was chartered in the early 1800's. In addition to the Scottish impact on Savannah, Bill pointed out the successful military victory over the Spanish by the Darien Scots (the Battle of the Bloody Marsh). Francis X. Hayes highlighted the fact that the Protestants organized the first St. Patrick's Day in Boston and Savannah, not the Catholics. In closing, Bill invited all of us and our families to attend the May 5th Scottish Games that will be held at Bethesda.

Guest Speaker: Brazilian Community in Savannah

Our own Adriana Oliveira provided a slide presentation on Brazil and their local contingent. Of note is the fact that Brazil is the 5th largest country in the world, has almost 209 million people, and that 37 area companies are doing business with Brazil (export/import). In Savannah, Gulfstream hires a good number of aerospace engineers from Brazil. They have established their own blog/facebook for over 100 Brazilian families that now reside in the southeastern part of Georgia. Adriana closed by pointing out three recommendations the Brazilian community feels would aid newcomers: (1) a welcome/support center for our international population; (2) a capability for "short term" English classes (e.g., 30 days) in lieu of a mandatory quarter or semester; and (3) local events that support our growing international cultures.

Comments for the Good of the Order:

Leigh reminded all that our next meeting on Wednesday, April 18th will also involve presentations by The Salzburger Society and the German Friendly Society. GSIA will meet at the Savannah Entrepreneurial Center.

Alfonso Ribot added that he concurs with Adriana's suggestion of a Welcome/Support Center. He opined that this type capability would aid in integrating many of the Spanish speaking personnel in our community. Alfonso also requested that he provide a presentation on the Hispanic community at one of our upcoming GSIA meetings, and Leigh advised that we should be able to schedule it sometime this year.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 PM.