

Greater Savannah International Alliance

Minutes, January 17, 2018

Attendance:

Members: Chair Leigh Ryan, Jim Anderson, Ed Eckstrand, Pete Hodges, Emmanuel Naniuzeyi, Nalanda Roy, Joe Steffen, Patrick Thomas
Advisory Group: Denis Blackburne, Francis X. Hayes, Mindy Shea
Ex-Officio: Bill Durrence III, Manny Dominguez
Excused Absence: Adriana Oliveira, Mark Linsky

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Leigh Ryan began the meeting announcing that GSIA's long time city liaison, MarRonde Lotson, has been transferred to another position with the City of Savannah and will no longer serve GSIA in that role. However, the Executive Committee has appointed her to the advisory group. Leigh also welcomed our liaison, Manny Dominguez, who is the director of the newly named Office of Business Opportunity for the City of Savannah.

Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the November 2017 were approved.

General Topics

Leigh noted that the position of secretary of GSIA has not been filled although Jim Anderson has been responsible for the minutes for the last meeting and for this one. Since no one present volunteered for the position, the members voted for Jim Anderson to continue as acting secretary.

Leigh also announced that the executive committee voted to move the time of our monthly meetings to 11:00 am and that we will not be providing lunch at future meetings. Meetings will still be held in the Entrepreneurial Center at 801 E. Gwinnett.

GSIA Handbooks Review

Leigh provided a new GSIA notebook filled with various information about GSIA activities, membership lists, history, etc. This is for all GSIA and Advisory Group members. This notebook will be continually updated and made available to new members as part of their orientation to GSIA. Electronic copies can be emailed to anyone preferring an electronic version.

Leigh reviewed the contents with one recommendation made to add more details of each international group that is listed in the notebook and on the website. Leigh and Adriana will work on that suggestion.

City of Savannah Updates

Manny Dominguez reminded the group again of MarRonde Lotson's change of positions by moving to community services. He noted that in the past few months, the City of Savannah has completed restructuring of several various departments and services.

Updating/Restructuring the GSIA Strategic Plan

Leigh reviewed the results of the poll by the GSIA members and advisory group regarding their top 3 priorities of the 7 objectives that were given to them by mail. The top three, each having over 50% of the votes, were as follows:

1. To improve GSIA communication and outreach, and promote GSIA as a local resource of International information and connections (58.33%).
2. To reinforce partnerships with international organizations and organizations focused on international business and affairs (50%).
3. To develop a strategic database with local and international resources (50%).

The members reviewed the GSIA mission statement, vision and goals before discussing the choices listed above.

#1 Communication - Some of the discussion and suggestions included:

- a) Our members need to speak to various groups in Savannah about our international efforts and activities. Some of these could include the downtown business groups, Rotary Clubs, neighborhood association such as the Thomas Square, Chamber of Commerce small groups, the Hispanic Chamber, County Commissioner Meetings, and other speaker opportunities. Members were encouraged to send Leigh the names additional groups for us to work on.
- b) We should be prepared to speak about the original purpose of GSIA, what we have accomplished, and what we are trying to do now. We can use a lot of the information that is included in the new handbooks that received in the meeting. The executive committee can also work on a power point presentation that everyone could use as needed.
- c) Bill Durrence recommended that it would be good for GSIA to make a short presentation about our organization to the Mayor and City Council as well as schedule a short meeting with the City Manager. Manny Dominguez will be the liaison to arrange those meetings.
- d) Another suggestion reminded the group that while GSIA is a coordination committee working for city government there are also many other types of groups that should be reaching out to.

#2 - reinforce partnerships

- a. It was suggested that we should bring various international organizations to our meetings to make short presentations to us and that we provide them with more information about GSIA. This would include for the first time, to invite the leaders of the various international cultural groups that we have identified. Another possibility is to reach out to various

military groups in the area.

- b. GSIA members should also make presentations to the various international/cultural groups. One suggestion was that each person attend 2 meetings per year to present GSIA information. One way to do this is to keep our committees on the various parts of the world with each team focusing on making presentations to organizations within their geographical area.
- c. Another new idea was to build a data base of Savannah groups doing exchange or mission trips overseas (churches, medical groups, cultural exchanges, etc.). Suggestions on how to reach those groups was to speak to someone at the Mercer Medical School, the Red Cross, Hospitals, ESL programs. It was also suggested that we invite these group helping overseas to come speak to GSIA.
- d. Members were encouraged to send other names, etc., to Leigh as we big building a list of such groups.

#3 develop strategic data base

- a. The group suggested that GSIA continue to develop and update the data base since the information frequently changes.
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Only about half of the members and advisory group completed the poll. Leigh encouraged everyone to finish the survey.

Teutonic Council and Sister City News: Jim Anderson announced that the members of the Teutonic Council are attending a luncheon with the General Consul of Germany on Thursday, January 25. Two of exchange teachers from the Sister City of Halle will be in Savannah from Feb 9-23 as part of the 3 years of teacher exchanges between Halle and Savannah and Effingham County. Progress is being made on additional sister city exchanges between our cities. The T.C. has an exchange students from Martin Luther University coming in August as a Rotary Scholar to spend the academic year on the Armstrong Campus of the new Georgia Southern University. Another exchange student from Martin Luther University in Halle is also studying on the Armstrong campus this semester.

It was also announced that the German Friendly will be celebrating their 181 year of their founding this week.

Emmanuel Naniuzeyi announced that SSU has a new Fulbright grant and will be taking 14 people from SSU and Chatham County to Ghana in June/July 2018 to work on a social studies curriculum. Emmanuel will be leading this program.

Visit Savannah – Continuing to attend international trade shows promoting Savannah as a premium tourist destination.

World Trade Center Savannah – Is following up with the many contacts made during the two business development missions to Bremen, Halle & Munich Germany in 2017. An invitation has been extended to

Germany business owners/leaders who are interested in expansion into the US primarily through our region, for the Savannah Gateway Regional Showcase hosted each spring by WTCSav and Georgia Power in conjunction with the Savannah Music Festival. WTCSav is expecting 5-8 Germany companies will attend.

Meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm.