



Hickory International Council
Thursday, January 21, 2016, 5:30 pm

A regular meeting of the Hickory International Council (HIC) was held on Thursday, January 21, 2016, 5:30 pm, in the Moretz Board Room at the Arts & Science Center of Catawba Valley.

Members Present: Hani Nassar, Karl Wolfe, Marion Love, Becky Mich, Jack Crawford, Claire McCrae, Joe Getlein, Cynthia Ferrell, Toshiaki Satake and Alex Mezei

Members Absent: Marc Swinnen, Bella Fields, Ken Humphreys and Maria Jose Daily

Guests Present: Gretchen Oetting, Efrain Palafox, Eric Brandon, Michael Lee and Joachim Körner

Staff Present: Minutes Clerk Anne Starnes

A quorum was present.

Call to Order: Hani Nassar, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and welcomed everyone present.

Approval of Minutes: There was no regular meeting held in December. Minutes of the previous meeting on November 19, 2015 were distributed to members in advance. No additions or corrections were stated. Joe Getlein moved, seconded by Alex Mezei, to approve the November minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of Guests & Board Membership Changes: Mr. Nassar introduced Gretchen Oetting and Efrain Palafox, who regularly attend the meetings. Eric Brandon (Lenoir-Rhyne University), Michael Lee (St. Stephens Elementary School), and Joachim Körner (WPCOG) introduced themselves, and Mr. Nassar invited each to attend HIC monthly meetings in the future. There were no membership changes to report.

Old Business:

HIC Financial Statement Update – Mr. Nassar had not received a financial statement for December 2015, but he said the Council’s finances are in good shape through June 2016, the end of the current fiscal year.

BSA-IYC (International Youth Council) Update – Jack Crawford said their first meeting of the year is tonight at 6:30 pm, immediately following the HIC meeting, and a good group of students signed up to participate this year. One student is from Caldwell County, and all remaining students are from Catawba County.

Steve McCurry Photography Exhibit Update – The Steve McCurry exhibit opened at Hickory Museum of Art in September and will close in May 2016. Mr. Nassar said the Steve McCurry Reception, held in the SALT Block Auditorium on January 9, was well attended and near capacity. Marion Love recently spoke with HMA Executive Director, Lisse Swenson, and learned the exhibit has been relatively well attended, but not by educators, school groups, or college students. Ms. Swenson said that not many community groups have attended, including local international groups. Dr. Love encouraged HIC members to support the exhibit, and to reach out to members in their various international communities.

Christmas Dinner Summary – As has become the custom, in place of the HIC’s regular December meeting, a Christmas Dinner was held at Thai Lotus in Hickory, and well attended by members and guests.

Romanian Baptist Church Christmas Concert Summary – The concert was on Saturday, December 5 in the SALT Block Auditorium. Their church’s choir was joined by the 40-member choir from Wesleyan College in Tennessee. The event was recorded and edited, and can now be viewed on-line. Mr. Nassar will send members the concert link. Their next concert will be on Saturday, December 10, 2016.

MUN 2016 Update – The PANGEA Model United Nations Conference will be held March 8-9, 2016 on the LRU campus. The Opening Ceremony will be on Tuesday, March 8, 6:00-7:00 pm in the Belk Centrum, and HIC members are encouraged to attend. Dr. Love said their planning committee met yesterday, including herself, Eric Brandon, Ken Humphreys, Joe Getlein and Efrain Palafox. She suggested that members visit the PANGEA MUN website to learn more, and consider reading the 10 background reports posted. Dr. Love said Eric Brandon has taken over as LRU’s liaison this year, and has nine of the 10 student co-chairs needed, two for each of five committees. Training dates are scheduled, which Dr. Love will share with HIC members later.

HIC Community Grants – Mr. Nassar said the HIC awards two \$500 community grants each year. Dr. Love said two grant proposals were received by the mid-December deadline, which were reviewed by HIC sub-committee members. The proposals are from St. Stephens Elementary School in Conover and Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG). Dr. Love said the sub-committee recommends approval of both grant proposals, and gave an overview of each.

Michael Lee, Assistant Principal at St. Stephens Elementary School, was present to discuss his proposal and answer questions. His proposal requests funds for a free, two-week, Day Camp for Hmong Scholars, at St. Stephens Elementary School, July 18-29, 2016. Mr. Lee said sessions are planned on culinary preparation, arts and crafts, and language; community speakers and field trips would also be included. Any child in 3rd grade, or older, may apply; 30 children from area schools will be selected. Objectives include acquainting students and local businesses with Hmong culture, improving cultural understanding within Hickory, and strengthening Hickory’s profile as a city that values having an international presence.

Jack Crawford said additional resources might be available through some of the HIC members, in addition to the \$500 grant funds. He said the Boy Scouts organization could help advertise it to Boy and Girl Scouts in that age group. Mr. Lee left the meeting while members considered his proposal. Mr. Nassar said the motion to approve Mr. Lee’s grant proposal comes from sub-committee members Ken Humphreys and Kathryn Grandgenett.

The Community Grants Sub-Committee moves, seconded by Jack Crawford, to approve the “Day Camp for Hmong Scholars” grant proposal and award \$500 for the project. The motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Love discussed the WPCOG proposal, Hispanic Family Caregiver Project. The proposal was submitted by the WPCOG Area Agency on Aging, and requests funds to provide the growing Hispanic community with Spanish language resources, aimed at guiding Hispanic caregivers. Specifically, they seek seed money to begin their caregiver program and print brochures to distribute at three Hickory locations. Dr. Love said sub-committee members had noted several weaknesses in the proposal, including the project budget, lack of a defined ending date, and that a much broader audience would be served than just Hickory’s international community. However, these weaknesses did not disqualify the grant proposal. She said the sub-committee recommends approval of a \$496.44 award, or 50% of their total grant budget.

Joe Getlein said he believed the Red Cross currently has much of this information available, printed in English and Spanish, but the materials may be more general in nature. He was not sure if the Red Cross materials focus specifically on eldercare, but it was noted the WPCOG brochure would be very specific. Members discussed this, and noted that making the brochures available at two area churches serving the Hispanic community and Centro Latino would put information directly in the hands of the persons needing it. Mr. Getlein offered to collect copies of all Red Cross materials, printed in Spanish, and contact the grant applicant directly to see if it would be sufficient. He will also advise HIC members of what is currently

available. It was suggested the proposal be tabled. Mr. Nassar said members could vote by e-mail later, if needed, since the project is set to start on February 1, 2016.

Karl Wolfe moved, seconded by Alex Mezei, to table the “Hispanic Family Caregiver Project” grant proposal, until additional information is available and reviewed. The motion carried unanimously.

IFFC 2016 Update – The International Film Festival for Children (IFFC) will be held Monday through Thursday, during the week of April 25, 2016. Mr. Nassar said the event is on track, and a poster contest for students in 3rd through 6th grades is underway in local schools, with a late February deadline. This year, he said film submissions are being sought worldwide; the count was at 89 films a few days ago, and has likely surpassed 100 now. The films will be screened during February. Any member interested in helping screen the films should let him know, and he will provide them with the link. Approximately 10 films will be selected for the festival, or 2 hours total viewing time.

Appointment of Bond Commission Representative – Hickory voters approved the City’s \$40 million bond proposal in the November 2014 election. Mr. Nassar said the City established a Bond Commission to oversee selection of projects and use of the bond monies. There are 42 members serving staggered terms of one to three terms, including one ex-officio member from each City Board, Commission and Council. Each Bond Commission member also serves on one of three sub-committees: Riverwalk, Citywalk, and Streetscapes & Gateways. He said the full Bond Commission recently voted to decide which of the many possible projects to recommend to City Council, and their recommendation was approved by Council this past Tuesday evening. A public hearing is the next step, offering local citizens an opportunity to offer opinions, before Council makes their final decision.

Mr. Nassar is serving the current 1-year term as the HIC’s ex-officio member of the Bond Commission, and is on the Riverwalk Sub-committee. Terms begin each February, and it is now time to either re-appoint him to another 1-year term, or select a new HIC representative. He discussed a schematic design for the \$8.5 million Riverwalk project planned at Rotary-Geitner Park, which includes the Lackey Family project on Lake Hickory.

Gretchen Oetting asked Mr. Nassar if he was interested in continuing as the HIC’s representative to the Bond Commission, and he said yes. Prior to the meeting, he asked HIC members to advise if they were interested in serving as the HIC representative, and no one stated an interest, nor did anyone present indicate an interest in serving.

Joe Getlein moved, seconded by Marion Love, to recommend Hickory City Council re-appoint Hani Nassar to a second 1-year term on the Bond Commission, representing the Hickory International Council. The motion carried unanimously.

Members requested having regular updates on the Bond Commission and sub-committee efforts, so Mr. Nassar will add this item to future meeting agendas.

HIC Sub-committees Update – Dr. Love reported that sharing the HIC workload through creation of various sub-committees is working well. She will prepare a list of sub-committees and the assigned members, and e-mail it to all members. Anyone wishing to change sub-committee assignments should let her know.

New Business:

WPCOG – Sister Cities Organization – Mr. Nassar noted that Altenburg, Germany is Hickory’s Sister City. He thanked Joachim Körner of Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) for attending. Mr. Körner said he represents the Western Piedmont Sister Cities, and their members include the City of Hickory, City of Morganton, and Alexander County. He said the Sister Cities program has struggled for

community participation recently, and they have discussed merging the Hickory International Council and Sister Cities in the future. Mr. Nassar said that whether or not the two organizations merge, they could collaborate.

Mr. Körner said they are preparing for a weekend visit by a delegation from Altenburg, May 26-30, over the Memorial Day weekend. He discussed the group of delegates, including three accomplished student musicians. Two concerts will be held during their visit, with one in Hickory, possibly on Saturday, May 28. Since one musician is an organist, he said First Baptist Church had been suggested as the concert site. The other concert is scheduled at Calvary Lutheran Church in Morganton. Mr. Körner said the visiting delegation would need host families for the three youth musicians, hopefully in Hickory. He said one delegate's husband is the hospital director in Altenburg, and he has requested a medical facility tour be arranged for him. He would also like to meet with a hospital administrator to discuss operations and nurses training. Mr. Nassar will contact executives at Frye Regional Medical Center, and Eric Brandon will see if Lenoir-Rhyne could help with this request.

FY 2016-2017 Work Plan – Mr. Nassar said the proposed FY 2016-2017 Work Plan was distributed to members by-e-mail for review, prior to the meeting. The Work Plan needs to be approved today and submitted to the City Clerk tomorrow. He reviewed the seven various projects and events. He will present it to City Council on March 1, and request a small budget increase, from \$13,500 to \$14,000. He said the additional \$500 would allow an increase in the two community grant awards, from \$500 to \$750 each.

Jack Crawford moved, seconded by Marion Love, to approve the FY 2016-2017 Work Plan draft for the Hickory International Council as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

HIC Business Cards – Members who have joined since July 1st should let Mr. Nassar know the information to print on their new HIC business cards.

International Council Letter/Hickory Day School – A letter from a Hickory Day School teacher Nisreen Kothari was shared with members. She invites HIC members to visit her class and talk with students about celebrations that are held in their native countries.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 18, 2016, 5:30 pm in the Moretz Board Room at the Arts & Science Center.

Adjournment: Joe Getlein moved, seconded by Becky Mich, to adjourn. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Hani Nassar, Chair
Hickory International Council

Anne Starnes, Minutes Clerk
City of Hickory