

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

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

Members Present: Hani Nassar, Ken Humphreys, Cynthia Ferrell, Marion Love, Marc Swinnen, Gretchen Oetting, Karl Wolfe, Ira Roberts, Toshiaki Satake, Joe Getlein, Claire McCrea, Jack Crawford and Bella Fields

Members Absent: Becky Mich and Maria Jose Daily

Guests Present: Efrain “Fez” Palafox, Eric Brandon (LRU), Gabriele Weinberger (LRU & W. Piedmont Sister Cities), Farisha & Mohammad Rahman (ZIA Web Solutions), Kelly Bruley, Laura Dobson (LRU), Stephanie Huitron (LRU), Dorothy Nurminen, Andrew Atkin, Luis Millan-Lara, Michael Lee (St. Stephens Elementary School) and Matheus “Matt” Semiao (International Boy Scout, Brazil)

Staff Present: Purchasing Manager Bo Weichel and Minutes Clerk Anne Starnes

A quorum was present.

Call to Order: Hani Nassar, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm and welcomed everyone present.

Approval of June 16, 2016 Minutes: Minutes of the previous meeting were distributed to members in advance. Ken Humphreys moved, seconded by Marion Love, to approve the June 16, 2016 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of May 19, 2016 Minutes: Mr. Nassar said that approval of the May 19, 2016 minutes at the previous meeting was not valid, due to the lack of a quorum at the meeting, and the minutes would be re-approved today. Ken Humphreys moved, seconded by Gretchen Oetting, to approve the May 19, 2016 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction of Guests & Board Membership Changes: The guests present were introduced.

Gabriele Weinberger, a faculty member at LRU and new Chair of the Western Piedmont Sister Cities program, discussed the Sister Cities’ efforts, including a trip being planned to Hickory’s Sister City, Altenburg, Germany during next year. She said the current Sister Cities relationship has existed for 23 years, and invited those present to become active in the program.

Laura Dobson, from LRU’s Office of International Education, said she would like to see a more vibrant student organization developed, with more attention on global issues.

Old Business:

HIC Financial Statement – Purchasing Manager Bo Weichel reported the new budget year began July 1, 2016. Hickory City Council has approved a budget of \$13,000 for the HIC this year, the same amount as last year. A surplus of \$291 remaining in the HIC budget at year-end was returned to the City budget. However, the just over \$7,500 in donations (in the Spring Fest account) does roll over to this year, along with a donation recently received, for a balance of \$8,000.

Folkmoot USA – Mr. Nassar said Folkmoot would be on Sunday, July 24, in the Drendel Auditorium. There will be two performances by four groups, one for the public at 3pm and a private sponsored performance at 6pm. Over 80 performers will participate in the four groups from China, Peru, Japan, and the US/Mexico. Half of the 400+ tickets have already been sold. Marion Love asked for all members planning to work the 3:00 pm show to remain after today’s meeting to discuss assignments. Mr. Nassar said Folkmoot’s Candlelight Closing Ceremony, with all ten groups of performers, would be on Sunday, July 31 in Waynesville, NC.

HIC/Footcandle Short Films – Mr. Nassar said that immediately following this meeting, nine international short films would be screened in Drendel Auditorium, adjoining this room. He invited everyone to attend the free event, which is part of the HIC’s collaboration with the Footcandle Film Society. He noted the HIC selects the four full-feature foreign films for Footcandle members annually.

Sister Cities Update – Ms. Weinberger reported earlier in the meeting. She added that since their organization includes all four counties in the Unifour, they are considering additional Sister-City relationships in the future, including a region of Brazil (that is heavily populated by Germans), the Swiss area of Italy where the Waldensians are from, and others. She said there is plenty of room for development.

Hickory Playground Project – Mr. Nassar reviewed the Hickory Playground’s “One Act Play Festival” event at 7pm this coming Saturday in Drendel Auditorium, with 10 one-act plays of 10 minutes presented. The funds generated will support the arts in Hickory Public Schools.

Great Decisions – Mr. Nassar said 30 people could be accepted for Great Decisions this fall, and 25 are signed-up now. Participants will discuss eight topics, September 6 through October 25, in the Keiser Community Room, next door in the West Wing. Guest speakers are needed for the discussions. Dr. Love said the topics for next year’s Model UN would come from the 2016 Great Decisions program.

HIC Grants – Mr. Nassar said the purpose of increasing the budget by \$500 was in order to offer larger grant amounts this year. The City did not approve it, so he said the funding would remain at \$1,000 unless funds are used from another line item. He said that Michael Lee, St. Stephens Elementary School, and Matt Semiao, International Boy Scout from Brazil, were both the recipients of past HIC grants. Mr. Nassar asked how early publicity should begin for the HIC Grants this year. Dr. Humphreys said the deadline is in December, so he would send grant information out and begin publicity in September, after the new school year begins. He said this gives people 3-months to complete and return their application.

BSA International Scout – Jack Crawford introduced the international Boy Scout from Brazil, Matheus “Matt” Semiao, who has been working at the Boy Scout Camp all summer. Mr. Semiao said that during his time here he has assisted with the Pioneering and First Aid merit badges. He said this has been an amazing experience for him. He appreciates the structure and having a place for scouts to go for 1-week, something they do not have in Brazil. Their scouting program is co-ed, with boys and girls up to age 21-yrs. all meeting together on Saturdays, in schools and churches. He said scouting is a strong program there, not as strong as in America, but using the same ideas – the oath, camping, and many of the same basics. One thing he likes at their meetings, that he misses here, is their “group cheer” or “spirit scream,” as well as the “clap” their members do in unison. He said scouts in Brazil could create their own merit badges, including the requirements and design of the badges. After getting approval for a badge, scouts across the country can then earn that merit badge. Mr. Nassar thanked Mr. Semiao for coming.

New Business:

HIC Website Upgrade – Mr. Nassar said the City has a website and the HIC is included, but the HIC also has their own website with their specific events discussed. He said Farisha & Mohammad Rahman of ZIA

Web Solutions attended the last HIC meeting. Since the June meeting, they reviewed the HIC website and have submitted a proposal to upgrade it, which includes: Responsiveness – they will make the website compatible with all mobile devices, add features that allow users to zoom into content, add automatic image size adjustment, etc.; Website Design – a custom website re-design for a more modern, professional look, with the HIC choosing the design from samples provided; and, User Friendly – they will organize the content, as needed.

The Rahmans propose their work can be accomplished in 2-3 weeks, at a cost of \$1,000 and discounted 10%, for a total cost of \$900, with \$500 payable in the current fiscal year and the remaining \$400 payable next year (after July 1, 2017).

Mr. Rahman said they typically work with a variety of businesses, from very small to large, and their proposal would modernize and re-develop the website. He said they would work with a web administrator, if the HIC wants to assign one, and Mr. Nassar said Karl Wolfe would continue as admin person and oversee the website changes. Members asked questions, which were all addressed and discussed.

Mr. Weichel asked if the website upgrade expense was included in the current fiscal budget, and Mr. Nassar said the funds could come from the Spring Fest budget, if necessary.

Farisha & Mohammad Rahman left the room while members further discussed and made a decision on their contract proposal.

Karl Wolfe moved, seconded by Ken Humphreys, that the Hickory International Council approves the contract with Farisha & Mohammad Rahman of ZIA Web Solutions, and will pay them \$900 to upgrade the HIC website over two years, with \$500 due in current fiscal year 2016-17, and the remaining \$400 due in fiscal year 2017-18. Mr. Nassar requested discussion on the motion.

Marc Swinnen asked how many people currently visit the HIC website, and Mr. Wolfe was not sure. Mr. Nassar explained that the website is referenced in all of the marketing for HIC events and activities, so visitors are constantly being directed to it. Also, he said it has become very expensive, and difficult, to make website changes in the current format, and this would make a big difference in the visitor's experience. Mr. Wolfe explained, in layman's terms, what the Rahmans intend to do for the HIC. Mr. Palafox asked how it would "look more modern." He also asked if a QR code could be added to the website, and then added to the HIC's marketing materials. Mr. Wolfe said he could create a QR code.

There was no further discussion. The motion was brought to a vote and carried unanimously.

The Rahmans returned, and Mr. Nassar advised them that their proposal was approved by members. Mr. Wolfe requested they provide the samples mentioned earlier, and asked about the format. Ms. Rahman said she would send PDFs to Mr. Nassar, which could then be e-mailed to the members involved in the process. Mr. Wolfe asked for examples of other website they have developed, so members could visit them and see some of their past work. Ms. Rahman said this information was on their website, and easily accessed.

A question was asked about the colors to use, and Mr. Weichel said the City's approved colors and theme should be maintained. In regards to "colorblind colors" it was noted that colorblind persons are unable to see some colors.

Facebook – Karl Wolfe put an events ad on Facebook on June 14, and said to-date there have been 155 responses. He also noted \$561.26 has been spent in ad credits he receives, with no real money spent, and that 22,828 people were reached through the ad.

Leadership 2000 –Mr. Nassar said Claire McCrea, a rising junior at Hickory High, is a member of the Hickory Youth Council and one of their two representatives to the HIC. She served her Leadership 2000 & Beyond internship with him at Klingspor and then decided to go to Minnesota for a month, to be fully immersed in the Korean language. Ms. McCrea reported on her experience, saying she participated in the Concordia Language Villages, a part of Concordia College, and attended the Korean Language Village. They have multiple language villages of either a 2- or 4-week programs, and she attended the 4-week program for high school credit. The teachers, counselors, and participants only speak Korean, including the three daily classes that are taught in Korean, and speaking English is discouraged. Ms. McCrea said all food and music was Korean, any books in English, and their phones were taken away, and that it was a 100% Korean immersion. She said it was a great experience, and she highly recommends it to others.

Other Business: Please remain and meet with Dr. Love immediately following the meeting to discuss volunteer assignments for Folkmoot this coming Sunday.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on Thursday, August 18, 2016, 5:30 pm, in the Moretz Board Room, 2nd floor of the Arts & Science Center.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Hani Nassar, Chair
Hickory International Council

Anne Starnes, Minutes Clerk
City of Hickory