

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	August 21, 2023
Action Required:	Resolution consideration
Presenter:	Edward Herring - CSCC Chair
Staff Contacts:	Maxicelia Robinson, Deputy Clerk of Council
Title:	Resolution supporting the Sister Cities Commission's request to host a delegation from the Charlottesville Friendship City, Huehuetenango, Guatemala for an exploratory visit (1 reading)

Background

In 2019, at the request of Charlottesville City Schools educators and members of our area's growing Latinx community, the Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission (CSCC) embarked on a reasoned and systematic approach to identifying a potential new Sister City partnership between our home city and a Spanish-speaking city in the Americas. The CSCC recommended the city of Huehuetenango as an ideal Spanish-speaking Sister City and on December 7, 2020, City Council approved a Resolution initiating the Sister City partnership with Huehuetenango.

The Charlottesville Sister Cities Commission created an inclusive and open process for identifying and selecting a Spanish-speaking Sister City. CSCC first invited members of our community to submit written proposals and make in-person presentations to the Sister Cities Commission. The Commission reviewed all proposals and selected the cities of Huehuetenango, Guatemala and Villa Carlos Paz, Argentina as the two cities that best demonstrated sufficient volunteers, local organizational support, and institutions willing to establish a relationship between the two cities. In order to seek broad input from the Charlottesville community on the selection of a Spanish-speaking Sister City, CSCC worked closely with City Communications Director Brian Wheeler to establish a public involvement platform that included media releases, interviews, a public survey, and an open invitation to attend a public information session. This public information session took place January 22, 2020, at Buford Middle School, with presentations about both finalist cities and an opportunity for public comment. Commission members were available for questions and comments from the community and from the local media. Hundreds of members of the public subsequently participated in in-person and on-line surveys on the selection of a Spanish-speaking Sister City. In the surveys, the city of Huehuetenango received more votes than the city of Villa Carlos Paz.

Key criteria for the recommendation of Huehuetenango included:

- Spanish is the second most common language spoken in Charlottesville.
- A substantial portion of our Spanish-speaking population are native to Guatemala
- Citizens and community leaders in both cities demonstrated an interest in this partnership.

- A well-established local advocate group (Ixtatán Foundation) is willing and able to help nurture and support the relationship between the two cities on an ongoing basis.
- Citizens of both cities are readily able to communicate with each other and travel to each city safely.
- There is potential for activities between our two cities to be developed in numerous areas such as cultural, educational, medical, governmental, economic, and humanitarian.
- Good reason to believe the relationship would be sustainable over time.

On July 1, 2021, Charlottesville, USA, and Huehuetenango, Guatemala, entered into a Friendship City relationship. The CSCC's Guidelines for Affiliation with a New Sister City require at least one exploratory visit between cities during a three-year Friendship City relationship.

Discussion

City Council was notified at the July 17 City Council meeting that a request was forthcoming.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

By facilitating a diverse array of cross-cultural exchanges and by broadening the horizons of local residents through international collaboration and understanding. The Charlottesville Sister Cities program contributes significantly to the enhancement of C'ville Arts and Culture and to the city's desire to be a Community of Mutual Respect.

Community Engagement

Regarding the request to host a delegation, there was no community engagement involved.

Budgetary Impact

There is no budgetary impact on City Council. Funding will be allocated from the Sister Cities Commission's budget.

Recommendation

Alternatives

City Council could decline to support the Sister Cities Commission's request to host a delegation from Huehuetenango or delay the matter for further review.

Attachments

1. Sister Cities Commission - Huehuetenango
2. RES - Sister Cities Huehuetenango Delegation Visit