

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH
Sister Cities Commission**

6:30 PM
July 9, 2025

MINUTES

Steelhead Room, 235 1st Ave.
SE, Issaquah

COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT

Commissioners:

Stephanie Angula
Victor Bello (unexcused absence)
Diana Fleming
Shari Gehrke
Brandon Grossi (excused absence)
Maryann Heil
Christian Nilsen
Ryan Opitz
Wendy Pickering

Pam Robinson - Alternate
Ellen Wunderley – Alternate

Administrative Staff:

Gillian Straub, Staff Liaison

Youth Advisory Board Representative:

Sanvi Madan (excused absence)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) Minutes of June 11, 2025, meeting.

The minutes were APPROVED as modified by unanimous consent.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

None.

REGULAR BUSINESS

- a) Report out on visit to Sunndal, Norway (I)

Presented by:

Ryan Opitz, Co-Chair

Stephanie Angula, Co-Chair

Wendy Pickering, Member

Photo presentation & news article to be shared after via email

Commissioners who went to Sunndal provided a summary of the trip and their activities:

- Friday, June 20th: The mayor of Sunndal led the group on a tour of an aluminum hydroelectric plant which is the largest employer in the town, and they then had an presentation about the local government. A portion of the group visited an

economical conservatism institute and learned about the role of salmon.

- Saturday, June 21st: The group visited a regional folk museum and went on a waterfall hike, with an opportunity for the Commission to purchase or sponsor a stair on a portion of the hike still under construction. Members had dinner at the local culture house, before seeing the play. Other activities included attending a play about Lady Arbuthnot.
- Sunday, June 22nd: The group went to Øystein's house and family farm for a tour where they learned about land preservation and the importance of tourism.
- Monday, June 23rd: The group exchanged gifts with locals who guided them throughout the visit and had a final meeting with the mayor and deputy mayor of Sunndal, where they indicated a high degree of interest in continuing the connection between the two cities.

Goals of connecting with the local government, schools and a chamber/business organization representative were met for this trip.

Next steps include staying connected, stay informed about Sunndal and for Sunndal to stay connected to Issaquah.

b) Norway Visit Promotion (D)

Presented by:

Stephanie Angula, Co-Chair

Ryan Opitz, Co-Chair

Straub walked through the communications plan for the Mayor's messaging on the trip, and the opportunity to appear on the Uniquely Issaquah podcast with the Mayor. The Commission also discussed the opportunities to share this experience at upcoming events.

c) Welcoming Week Preparation (D)

September 5, 2025, 5:30-7:30 PM

Presented by:

Stephanie Angula, Co-Chair

Ryan Opitz, Co-Chair

The Commission discussed the purpose of Culture Fest and Welcoming Week and the artifacts they could bring to share the purpose and work of the Commission. Further discussion and planning will occur at the August meeting.

REPORTS

a) Sister Cities International Monitoring

Presented by:

Brandon Grossi, Member

Brandon to provide an update on Sunndal, Chefchaouen and Sister Cities International monitoring at the August meeting.

b) Nordic Museum Contact/Outing

Presented by:

Pam Robinson, Member

Pam to suggest a few dates for a summer social outing.

- c) City Council Meeting July 21: Friendship Day Proclamation & YAAS Top Recipients
Presented by:
Gillian Straub, Management Analyst
 Ryan will receive the Friendship Day Proclamation.
 Diana will introduce the YAAS top recipient's work.

OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Tina Eggers Recognition
 At City Council on July 21
 Celebration at Formula Brewing, 5-7 pm

- b) Next Meeting
August 13, 2025, 6:30 PM
 Straub noted that she will not be attending the August meeting, and another member of the Executive Department would be the liaison.

- a) Parking Lot
 The Commission discussed the need for a website refresh, how to involve the community in ongoing work, and Salmon Days.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.

INQUIRIES

Please contact Gillian Straub at Gillian.Straub@issaquahwa.gov.

Note: Times listed for meeting topics are approximate and items are subject to change.

(A) Action, (D) Discussion, (I) Information