

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH  
Sister Cities Commission**

6:30 PM  
September 10, 2025

Steelhead Room, 235 1st Ave.  
SE, Issaquah

**MINUTES**

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

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

Pam Robinson - Alternate  
Ellen Wunderley - Alternate

*Administrative Staff:*

Gillian Straub, Staff Liaison

*Youth Advisory Board Representative:*

Sanvi Madan

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of July 9, 2025 meeting  
The Commission moved to approve minutes after the Regular Business portion of the agenda.  
The minutes were APPROVED as presented by unanimous consent.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

Tina Eggers commented on the youth trip to D.C. and encouraged the Commission to advertise this on various City media platforms. She also encouraged youth to join the commission early. Eggers spoke to her trip to Texas to collect the Innovation in Humanitarian Assistance Award from the Sister Cities International organization and shared a photo from the award ceremony.

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

a) **Report out on Trip to Norway (I)***Presented by:**Mary Lou Pauly, Mayor**Tina Eggers, Former Chief of Staff*

Mayor Pauly and Tina Eggers presented an overview of their trip to Sunndal that occurred in June. The delegation included Mayor Pauly, Tina Eggers, Robin Kelley (former Commissioner), Stephanie Angula, Ryan Opitz, and Wendy Pickering.

Topics included the local geography, potential for artist exchanges, industries on food/aquaculture research and aluminum hydroelectric plan, and the waterfall and family farm visits. Mary Lou Pauly shared that she purchased a step on the path to the waterfall for the Sister Cities Commission.

Ideas from Commissioners on how to capitalize on this visit included the ability to have a slideshow of photos of the Sister Cities on a laptop at tabling events, the possibility of translating or filming the Lady Arburthnott play to run at the Village Theater, providing Sunndal with a translated blurb from the Snoqualmie Tribe artist denoting the significance of the blanket that the Commission gifted Sunndal.

b) **Report out on Culture Fest (Welcome Week) (I)***Presented by:**Commission Members who Tabled*

Pam Robinson shared that tabling went well, but there were some takeaways to improve tabling:

- 1-2 branded tablecloths with city logo and Sister Cities name and potentially the Norwegian and Moroccan flags
- Stands for display materials, ranging from small door displays to utility box art
- Pop up tent – Victor Bello has one the Commission can borrow.
- Organize storage – create an inventory sheet.
- Display case for the shoes
- Update the trifold and the content on the trifold

Gillian Straub shared that the City would welcome a Moroccan/Norwegian performer or art installation next year and could use the Commissions help in finding such an artist. Commissioners discussed connections made at Culture Fest to Moroccan artists. Wendy Pickering volunteered to make contact with a local artist and report back in November,

c) **Report out on Youth Summit (I)***Presented by:**Sanvi Madan, Youth Advisory Board*

Sanvi Madan provided a high-level overview from the Youth Leadership Summit in June 2025 in D.C that she attended, with a full report out scheduled for the October meeting. She connected with other high school-aged young adults from across the United States and four continents throughout the program. Focus areas include professional development, leadership skills, cross cultural cooperation. Three key takeaways included:

- How to maintain relationships with our sister cities through youth exchange and programs
- Resources available through SCI, including grant opportunities and contacts at SCI for support on strengthening relationships
- Connecting with youth in the community as priority; youth are also looking for volunteer opportunities

d) **Young Authors & Artists Showcase Debrief (D)**

*Presented by:*  
 YAAS Subcommittee  
 Moved to the October meeting.

e) **2025 Salmon Days Planning (D)**

*Presented by:*  
 Stephanie Angula & Ryan Opitz, Co-Chairs  
 Saturday, October 4 - Sunday, October 5  
 11 am - 1 pm, 1 pm - 3 pm  
 Sister Cities has sufficient volunteers to fill all 4 shifts at the City's booth.  
 Saturday, 11 am – 1 pm: Gillian, Ryan, Victor  
 Saturday, 1 – 3 pm: Gillian & Ryan

Sunday, 11 am – 1 pm: Christan, Victor, Stephanie  
 Sunday, 1 – 3 pm: Christian, Ellen, Maryann

Ryan Opitz and Pam Robinson to put together a tabling kit.

f) **2026 Salmon Days - Visiting Artist Funding (D)**

*Presented by:*  
 Stephanie Angula & Ryan Opitz  
 The Commission voted to pursue a visiting artist from one of Issaquah's sister cities to the 2026 Salmon Days, with a preference for a Norwegian artist.

The Commission will pursue a grant through the arts granting program; Ryan Opitz and Maryann Heil to lead the grant writing. Gillian Straub to touch base with Arts liaison to discuss previous agreement for ongoing, stable funding for the artist in residence program.

## REPORTS

a) **Sunddal, Chefchaouen & Sister Cities International Monitoring**

*Presented by:*  
 Brandon Grossi, Member  
 No report out.

b) **Nordic Museum Contact/Outing**

*Presented by:*  
 Pam Robinson, Member  
 Yule Fest November 21-23 (Friday-Sunday)

c) **Joint Sustainability Project**

*Presented by:*  
 Gillian Straub, Management Analyst  
 Joint effort with Environmental board, Arts, and Sister City. Youth and Climate. Moroccan joint art project. YAAS theme: Voices of the day vision of tomorrow with a climate theme. Art, Youth climate despair. Others suggest partnering with tribes. Sustainability ambassadors

d) **Sharepoint Migration**

*Presented by:*  
 Gillian Straub, Management Analyst  
 Straub requested that all Commissioners confirm they had access to the Commission

Sharepoint. She also gave guidance on not deleting items and to use the same guidelines as committee work – 4 or less can work on a shared item, as long as it is returning to the Commission.

e) **Membership Update**

*Presented by:*

*Gillian Straub, Management Analyst*

Straub shared that Diana Fleming tendered her resignation to the Commission over the summer, as she had a teaching opportunity that conflicts with Commission meetings.

**OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS**

a) Parking Lot

The next meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2025.  
Update commissioner contact info  
Contact sheet for interested folks  
Updating Norway contacts

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 PM.