

**CITY OF ISSAQUAH**  
**Sister Cities Commission**

6:30 PM  
April 8, 2026

**MINUTES**

Steelhead Room, 235 1st Ave.  
SE, Issaquah

**COMMISSION AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL PRESENT**

*Commissioners:*

Stephanie Angula, Co-Chair  
Ryan Opitz, Co-Chair  
Brandon Grossi – *excused absence*  
Maryann Heil  
Christian Nilsen – *excused absence*  
Wendy Pickering

Pam Robinson – *Alternate (serving as regular member)*  
Ellen Wunderley – *Alternate (serving as regular member)*

*Administrative Staff:*

Gillian Straub, Staff Liaison  
Dale Markey-Crimp, Assistant to the City Administrator

*Youth Advisory Board Representative:*

Sanvi Madan

Join the meeting in-person at the address above, or virtually using the following options:

**Join by Computer**

- Microsoft Teams [meeting link](#)
- Meeting ID: 288 203 045 873 979
- Meeting Password: Lz77Vo9M

**Join by Phone**

- Call 1-206-485-0299, enter Phone Conference ID: 799 340 563#

If planning to make verbal comments, please email [Gillian Straub](mailto:Gillian.Straub). Submit written comments to [SisterCities@issaquahwa.gov](mailto:SisterCities@issaquahwa.gov).

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 PM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a) Minutes of the March 11, 2026 meeting.  
The minutes were APPROVED as presented by unanimous consent.

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

None.

**REGULAR BUSINESS**

- a) **Discussion Moderation Update (I)**

*Presented by: Stephanie Angula and Ryan Opitz*

Co-Chairs Angula and Opitz introduced the process for signaling interest in speaking by tipping their name tents from “hotdog” (horizontal) to “burrito” (vertical). Angula also reminded commissioners to keep equal participation in mind when participating; she will keep note of participation trends and track of the order of name tents being tipped to indicate interest in speaking. Angula also suggested that at the check-in about the new hybrid model in a few months, data on participation is reviewed and additional norms considered.

**b) Recruitment Update (I)**

*Presented by Stephanie Angula, Co-Chair*

Co-Chair Angula provided an update on Sister Cities Commission recruitment, specifically that the Commission will have full membership starting this coming month, including a new youth member. Youth Commissioner Sanvi Madan shared a bit about the new youth member’s experience with the Issaquah Youth Advisory Board.

**c) New Member Onboarding (D)**

*Presented by: Stephanie Angula and Ryan Opitz, Co-Chairs*

Co-Chair Angula led a brief discussion on how to support the onboarding of new commissioners, specifically to Sister Cities to support a welcoming environment. The Commission considered the following options:

- A “Meet & Greet” ahead of the first meeting with get-to-know you questions
- An opening question ahead of each meeting. This is something that Youth Commissioner Madan shared that the Issaquah Youth Advisory Board does.
- A way to learn about how the City governs and works, including background information about the work that the Commission has done in the past.
- Reassuring new members that it is normal to feel that they do not fully understand what is being talked about.
- A new member meeting with the co-chairs or having commission buddies.

*Brief recess at 7:00PM*

*Resumed meeting at 7:06 PM*

The Commission further discussed:

- “Meet & Greet” social before the next meeting beginning at 6:00
- Board buddies – to check in after each meeting and a commitment to circle back with the new members after 3-4 meetings. Madan shared how IYAB matches its board buddies based on mutual interests. Ellen suggested that the pairing up happen at the May meeting. Wendy suggested a meeting with co-chairs as well.

The commission agreed to a 6-6:30 social before the May meeting and offer a board buddy that is matched up at the May meeting. The board buddies would stay engaged through the first 3-4 meetings, with the co-chairs following up in. The goal of the social is to get new members comfortable and to learn about them.

Wendy volunteered to work with co-chairs on the first meeting’s social programming.

**d) 2025 Commission Report to City Council (A)**

*Presented by Gillian Straub, Staff Liaison*

Straub presented the draft report and its purpose – to provide City Council with a high-level recap of commission activities in the past year. The 2025 report covers 3 accomplishments and notes items to look forward to in 2026.

Commissioners requested that the report specify that the 2026 visiting artist will likely be from Norway, and Straub noted that Sanvi Madan needs to be added to the list of commissioners.

Wendy moved to approve the draft report with the noted changes to the visiting artist and membership sections, Ellen seconded. The motion to approve the draft report passed unanimously.

e) **Visiting Artist Update (I)**

*Presented by Ryan Opitz and Stephanie Angula, Co-Chairs*

Opitz shared that they have reached out to the Mayor of Sunndal and other contacts about bringing artist over, with no response yet. The co-chairs also reached out to Erik, from the Sunndal chamber of commerce equivalent, with the same request. The co-chairs defined artist and artisan broadly to increase the odds the Commission gets an artist or artisan from Sunndal, including opening it up to food artisans.

The co-chairs are aiming to have an artist selected by June, leaving time for interviews. The group discussed the option to reach out beyond Sunndal and potentially to the Daughters of Norway and the National Nordic Museum if bringing a visiting artist from Sunndal is not possible.

f) **IVE Tabling (D)**

*Presented by: Stephanie Angula, Co-chair*

The IVE Multicultural Fair has been cancelled. Gibson Ek does not have a similar program. Co-chair Angula suggested that the commission could look at putting on a similar event as a commission or looking for the same opportunity at another school. Youth representative Madan noted Sunny Hills has an active cultural fair. The Commission noted that putting on this event is beyond the capacity of the Commission this year, but something to consider for future years, but that the Commission could reach out to the Issaquah Youth Advisory Board to see if they have interest in such an event with Commission support.

## REPORTS

a) **Youth Representative Update**

*Presented by Sanvi Madan, Youth Representative*

Madan provided the following updates:

- Arts in the Park event is cancelled.
- Harry Potter night was a success.
- Leadership bootcamp has been cancelled or paused.
- Triathlon work continues, including messaging the new route and registration opening soon.
- Basketball tournament is cancelled.

Cancellations are due to a variety of factors, including limited volunteering/coordination for events.

b) **Sunndal, Chefchaouen and Sister Cities International Monitoring**

*Presented by Brandon Grossi, Member*

There was no update as Grossi was not present.

c) **Joint Arts, Sustainability Initiative with Chefchaouen Update**

*Presented by Stephanie Angula, Sanvi Madan, and Wendy Pickering*

Madan shared that the intercommission group with Arts Commission and Environmental Board had their first meeting this week and shared that the group discussed what the partnership would do. The group also discussed the need for establishing an Issaquah presence in Chefchaouen, similar to the blue door.

## OTHER BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Parking Lot  
*Next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2026.*
- b) Co-chair Angula shared an update on the learning management system project, and that the request for volunteers to test out the course is on pause while her work is reviewed by professors. Plan to hear from Stephanie before May.
- c) Wendy Pickering shared about the meeting for sharing about her entire trip to Chefchaouen. The Commission preferred to do this presentation without a quorum to complicate the meeting.
- d) Recognition of Maryann Heil at her last meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

#### **INQUIRIES**

Please contact Gillian Straub at [Gillian.Straub@issaquahwa.gov](mailto:Gillian.Straub@issaquahwa.gov).

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

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