



CITY OF DE PERE

Sister Cities Committee
De Pere, WI 54115

Date: September 7, 2006

Committee Meeting

Kathy passed out packets of information with the agenda, minutes of the last meeting, and made introductions for guests and members introduced themselves.

Meeting called to order at 16:12 by Committee Chair Kathy VanVonderen in the Riverview room at city hall.

Attending: Jim Stupka, Lynn Lee, Larry Delo, Paul Kegel, Jerilyn Schad, Ben Villarruel, Christine Fossen-Rades, Mayor Walsh (late). Absent: Fr Seamus Nielson, Bill Patzke, Tracy Hopkins, Candy Heidersheid, Ron Baeten. Guests present: Riccardo Paterni and Peter Feira.

Review of minutes from the last meeting, looked OK.

Presentation by Riccardo Paterni who brought us up to speed on why he was here making a presentation to our group. He grew up in Italy, came to UWGB for college, ended up married and then returned to Italy with his wife. His wife missed the US so they returned to the Green Bay area. He cares about education and educational exchanges, so much that he started a business to promote and develop these exchanges. He would like to assist the city in its sister city endeavor because it would be beneficial to his interests in educational exchanges.

The municipalities he is recommending are of similar size to De Pere. Pontassieve has a business agent fluent in a number of languages that works to promote the community to foreign interests; she was originally from the US. The mayor in this community has a strong interest in developing business opportunities outside the country and providing opportunities for cultural ties. Riccardo has strong interests because of the schools located in Pontassieve. He has made preliminary contacts on our behalf and they have strong interests in us. The primary products are wine, olive oil, and fashion (leather) products, they are attempting to re-brand themselves and are looking for stronger ties with the United States. Their industries include mechanical, electro-mechanical, etc. most are small companies. The city is doing a lot of redevelopment they are forward thinking and open to new ideas. The Mayor is focused and open, language won't be an issue. Florence is in close proximity, about ten miles south.

Bango a Ripoli is a neighbor of Pontassieve, they have a boat yard and the associated industries. One of the products they are known for is glass. This community has a very innovative high school that has made exchanges all over Europe.

When asked why these two cities because both have deep cultural roots. They both care for arts, painting, and literature and they are roughly the same size as De Pere. When you are in Pontassieve it feels like you are in a museum, they wish to promote their identity and are proud of their history,

as well. The US council is located in Florence having some influence in promoting a link. Christine asked about any background on sustainability, it is extremely important to the area in preserving nature especially because of the special agricultural products being grown. Olive Oil from the region is an important product for the country and as an export.

Peter suggested that he felt economics and the environment could be the focus for some of the educational exchanges. The Tuscan/American Association has a group that meeting in Green Bay that would like to assist in coordinating these exchanges. The current governor was a former president of the association in the Florence region.

Paul asked what they might want out of the exchange. They would be looking for visibility and cultural exchanges primarily but the other potential interests could be incorporated. They perceive the US as a very important market for their products. Peter stated that 20% of Brown County exports currently go over to Italy, so they are very interested in opening markets here. Larry asked what were being exported, primarily paper products, paper machinery, and the like.

The counselor general will be coming to the Green Bay area next week as part of a represented group from the area. Several businesses in the paper industry have significant ties to Italian business mostly residing in Ashwaubenon. The culture there is very different (i.e. You don't see a lot of alcoholics in the area they are taught to sip their drinks and enjoy the flavor). Peter had taken several trips with regard to educational, he found testing was different and the idea was for the younger students to focus on specific areas of expertise (i.e. hotel hospitality the student studies for three years as a waiter because the student will serve people not hamburgers). No college in the community but a business college just outside.

For Pontassieve they want to interact with a community that has a strong historical background. They feel the project will be as strong as the interest of the people involved. Larry suggested that because the businesses are in Ashwaubenon has Riccardo a contact that could make a connection on the business level. Riccardo stated that they are looking at commonalities based on the discussions from both parties involved. He talked about setting up Green Bay for an exchange with one of the businesses providing the funding and that nothing came of the exchange.

Meeting review: All agreed that the last two meetings provided a plethora of information. It was suggested that we discuss our views at the next meeting.

Next meetings are scheduled for Thursday, September 21 and October 5, 19 at 4:00. Adjourned 5:00 pm, sharp. Planning to discuss the information presented at the last two meetings.

No assignments for the next meeting, bring veiwpoints.

Respectfully submitted,

James O. Stupka III

Assistant Fire Chief