

MINUTES FOR THE
SISTER CITIES ADVISORY BOARD
May 6, 2026
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

Roll Call

Present:

- Ross Chambless
- John Wilson
- Stacey Adams
- Sheri Sorenson
- Rose Kjesbo

Absent:

- Matilyn Mortensen
- Annie Quan
- Ahimara Suarez
- Jane Kim

Staff Present:

- Olivia Johnson
- Jake Maxwell

Approval of the March 4, 2026, Sister Cities Board Minutes

Co-Chair Adams motioned, Board Member Wilson seconded, minutes approved unanimously.

Public Comment

No public comments were provided.

Business

Brian Parrott, University of Utah English Language Center

Mr. Parrott discussed the work of the English Language Center, now housed in the Office of Global Engagement, including their English classes, English teacher training, and recruitment efforts of international students. He discussed working with schools in Guadalajara and interest in potential business and education partnerships between Salt Lake City and Guadalajara. He also discussed the federal interest in creating opportunities in the mining and engineering fields for international students in the U.S. and possible opportunities for Utah. He described an example of higher education partnerships between a city in Arkansas and in Bolivia and the potential economic impact of creating tangible industry connections between Sister Cities.

Torino Subcommittee Representation

With the departure of Nicole Gallo from the Board, representation for Torino is needed. Board Member Wilson noted that he was interested in taking a more active role in working with Torino.

Formation of Subcommittees

Board Chair Chambless noted the opportunity for the Board to be more active in the months in between Board meetings. Possible activities for these meetings could include historical research to create more tabling materials, creating a more formal curriculum for the Pen Pal or other educational exchanges, and reviewing historical materials. Olivia Johnson clarified direction from the Recorder's Office that these meetings are self-directed not staff-supported in alignment with city policies and practices. The Board decided to establish these committees after the official meeting as no quorum is needed.

Staff Report

Living Traditions

Olivia Johnson noted that Sister Cities was going to table at Living Traditions and support the Kulturang Pilipino Ensemble of Utah performance on the Saturday of the festival.

Virtual Exchange with Matsumoto

Olivia Johnson noted that Matsumoto was hoping to schedule a onetime virtual exchange with a classroom in Salt Lake City, a similar program to one held in 2024. She noted that YouthCity was potentially interested but that further details were being confirmed. She also noted that separately YouthCity was interested in a longer-term exchange program that would require support from the Board.

Nihon Matsuri Recap

Board Chair Chambless noted that the Sister Cities table at Nihon Matsuri was busy all day and there were some great interactions with the public. He noted the potential projects for the subcommittee to work on to create historical materials for future tabling.

Archiving Assistant

Olivia Johnson noted that there were over 70 applications for the position and review was ongoing.

Goal Setting

Olivia Johnson noted that she was still trying to get in touch with the Mayor to review goals for Sister Cities and her priorities for the program and Board. The Board discussed the status of several of the active Sister Cities and the lack of activity with some, as well as the

importance of connecting in person. Mr. Parrott mentioned that he was traveling to Japan and Taiwan later in the year and would be happy to connect with officials during his visits.

Miscellaneous

Olivia Johnson noted that Salt Lake City's application for the U.S.-Japan Impact Grant was not selected, that tabling for Asian Festival was set and that Sister Cities could also hopefully celebrate Quezon City at the event, and that OPMA certifications might be due soon.

City Report:

- Chernivtsi - Sheri Sorenson provided an update on upcoming events focused on Ukraine, including a festival in August, and that the community was looking for a permanent space for a Ukrainian refugee center.
- Keelung - No updates for Keelung were provided.
- Matsumoto - Board Chair Chambless noted that there would potentially be a visit in July with youth from Matsumoto, Tsuki Sake was interested in participating in a fall festival in Matsumoto, and that he was working with Craft Lake City on a potential partnership based on Salt Lake City's last trip to Matsumoto.
- Trujillo - Board Member Kjesbo said she had not heard from her contacts in Trujillo recently. She said that if there was a Pen Pal subcommittee she would like to participate.
- Torino - No update for Torino was provided.

Adjournment

With the loss of a quorum, the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ross Chambless", written over a horizontal line.

Ross Chambless, Co-Chair

This document and the recording constitute the official minutes of the Economic Development Sister Cities Advisory Board meeting held on May 6, 2026.
