

2016-17 ANNUAL REPORT

RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION

Submitted by

Patricia W. Cummins, Chair

May 8, 2017

Executive Summary

RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION (RSCC)
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2016-17
May 8, 2017

Bringing the World to Richmond and Richmond to the World

Richmond Sister Cities Commission shares Sister Cities International's mission to create relationships based on cultural, educational, information and trade exchanges, creating lifelong friendships that provide prosperity and peace through person-to-person "citizen diplomacy."

Highlights of 2016-17 report focus on three major areas:

- 1) Activities took place with all our sister cities -- Richmond-upon-Thames (England,) Saitama (Japan,) Ségou (Mali,) Windhoek (Namibia,) and Zhengzhou (China.) Special efforts were made to promote the awareness of activities of the Commission, as country reports will indicate. In early April 2017 Mayor Levar Stoney signed the long-awaited new agreement with Windhoek, new humanitarian aid arranged by Virginia Friends of Mali arrived in Ségou with a message from the Commission, Commissioner Catherine Nexsen went to Japan and reached out to Saitama on behalf of the Commission, and the Richmond-upon-Thames committee initiated new projects while continuing to extend existing projects with our English sister city. All city committees advanced the Commission's visibility, and several commissions joined the Ségou delegation at the Lumpkin Jail ceremony of the Slave Trail Commission where Commission Chair Patricia Cummins introduced our visiting Ségou delegation who then presented gifts to Governor McAuliffe, Mayor Jones, Delegate McQuinn, and City Councilwoman Newbille, who acted as Council's representative to the Commission.
- 2) Enhancing our visibility and our role in the City constituted a second area. Under the leadership of Vice Chair Squires, we participated in EnRichmond Foundation activities and made plans to expand our fundraising abilities in 2017 and in 2018. The Young Global Ambassadors Program included Commissioner Sabrina Boggs recruiting a young Richmond leader attending college out of state and who helped us develop our website. We also began to take a regional approach that will bring together the economies of West Africa and to encourage entrepreneurship opportunities in both Windhoek and Ségou through our planned role in a 2017 Africa Business conference to be held at VCU in October 2017.
- 3) Re-evaluating our strategic plan based on the participation of seven commissioners in the 2016 Sister Cities International meeting allowed us to recruit actively new members whose interests aligned with our priorities. Signage, economic development, and promotion of the young global ambassadors program resulted as three important priorities and as a focus of our planning activities. Several commission members left Richmond and / or the Commission in 2016-17, and new members were appointed. One of the new appointees took a job as the head of a company and will need to be replaced. The current Chair of the Commission Patricia Cummins will see her second term end in September 2017, and she is planning a smooth transition for her successor after the May 2017 elections. She will assume the title of Past Chair of the Commission during that period

and will provide special assistance requiring French language and African cultural expertise during the coming transition period.

Our planned directions and priorities for 2016-17 include:

- 1) Strengthening our relationships locally with key partners and stakeholders and internationally with our five sister cities and Sister Cities International,
- 2) Building on our 501 c (3) status through EnRichmond Foundation and similar collaboration with our local committees and other stakeholders,
- 3) Promoting economic development on a regional basis in Africa including the development of sister cities initiatives during the eighth annual meeting of the Africa Business and Entrepreneurship Research Society from Oct. 4-7, 2017. (Call for papers attached.)

1. MEMBERS OF THE RICHMOND SISTER CITIES COMMISSION

Cynthia Newbille	City Council Representative (through January 2017)
Andreas Addison	City Council Representative (beginning February 2017)
Patricia W. Cummins	Chair
Marcus Squires	Vice Chair
Will Egen	Treasurer
Ana Edwards	Secretary
Su Boer	
Sabrina Boggs	
Christopher Brooks	
Ana Edwards	
Mark Johnson (Replaces Shannon Wilson)*	
Catherine Nexsen	
Rachel Snead (Replaces Selena Carr)	
My Lan Tran	
Emily Yeatts (Replaces John Sarvay)	
<i>*Has not been sworn in and will need to be replaced</i>	

2. COPIES OF BY-LAWS AND OTHER GOVERNING DOCUMENTS TO BE KEPT ON FILE

By-laws are already on file in the Clerk's Office, where Alexander Rawles maintained files on documentation forwarded by Commission Chair Patricia Cummins and / or by those serving as Commission secretary.

3. COPIES OF MEETING MINUTES

Minutes are already on file in the Clerk's Office where Alexander Rawles, Boards and Commissions Administrator, filed minutes from meetings when they were sent by Commission secretary Ana Edwards or Commission Chair Patricia Cummins.

4. STAFF SUPPORT AND OTHER RESOURCES

There are no paid staff members dedicated to the Richmond Sister Cities Commission. Alexander Rawles serves as Boards and Commissions Administrator and helped with numerous commission tasks and Debora Shaw provided assistance with the Commission budget.

Other city employees who have worked with the Commission included City Council representative Cynthia Newbille and more recently City Council representative Andreas Addison. They served as our contacts first with Mayor Jones and now with Mayor Stoney. Members of their respective staffs assisted with international visitors. Special recognition goes to Grant Neely and Cheryl Ivey Green for visits involving Mayor Jones, and to Rushawna Senior for her assistance in the signing of an agreement with Windhoek. Sam Patterson (assisting Councilwoman Newbille) and Chelsi Bennett (assisting Councilman Addison) and Steve Skinner provided significant staff support for a variety of activities and were critical staff members when we needed to arrange for delegation visits involving interactions with City Council. Steve Skinner and Alexander Rawles assisted with websites, brochures, and other communications. Betty Anne Teter and her colleagues were helpful in economic development initiatives and will be included in the planning of the October 2017 conference.

Once again, I reserve my greatest recognition for Alexander Rawles, who both monitors the rules and assists us in interpreting them and putting us in touch with other offices in a way that allows us to be effective.

The fact that no one city employee is dedicated primarily to facilitating the work of this Commission has required us to explore creative solutions, including new opportunities for partnerships with VCU and with community groups that work with the commission on cultural and educational projects. Initiatives where we shared employees allowed the commission to increase both effectiveness and efficiency.

Budget:

Sister Cities had a 2016-17 City budget of \$11,500. Expenditures to date **\$2,503.20**, budgeted expenses of **\$5,470**, anticipated reimbursements of commissioners for **\$2026.80**, = \$11,500.

Expenditures:

Patricia Cummins – 10-Member Malian delegation and Commission hosts -Lunch	\$ 387.66
Catherine Nexsen - Accommodations at Sister Cities Conference and refreshments and gift bags for Saitama teachers and for baseball exchange	1,149.61
Patricia Cummins - Additional July 2016 Sister Cities Conference Expenses	189.07
Sabrina Boggs - Sister Cities Conference Expenses	315.06
Catherine Nexsen - Saitama baseball exchange expenses (pending itemized receipt)	122.68
Patricia Cummins - Segou reception during our October Sister Cities meeting	324.12
Marcus Squires - Statewide meeting in Norfolk, VA	35.00
Subtotal	<u>\$2,503.20</u>

Budgeted expenditures:

Sister Cities International dues for 2017-18	\$	970.00
Registration, hotel (2 per room), meals, transportation \$900 x 5 commissioners		<u>4,500.00</u>
Subtotal		\$5,470.00

Anticipated reimbursements of commissioners:

Signage for the commission (estimate)	\$	1,726.80
Conference pre-registration for 6 commissioners at Oct. 4-7 conference (<i>Participating: Addison, Boer, Brooks, Cummins, Edwards, Tran</i>)		1,800.00
<i>Gifts for ambassadors and officials from Windhoek, Ségou, Zhengzhou at conference</i>		TBA
(Cost is \$1,200.00 – can come out of new budget, but may be purchased now if fewer commissioners attend the conferences or signage costs less.)		
Subtotal	\$	3,526.80

SUMMARY

Expenditures to date	\$ 2,503.20
Expenditures budgeted	5,470.00
Expenditures anticipated	3,526.80

TOTAL \$ 11,500.00

*Other items were requested by commissioners for reimbursement but they did not submit receipts to justify reimbursement.

The Commission also continues to maintain a “Friends of Richmond Sister Cities” Enrichmond Account. To date the total amount for 2016 – 2017 came to \$571.32.

5. Goals and Objectives – Mission and Strategic Plan

Building on our strategic planning initiatives, Commissioners expanded our interest in economic development. A Richmond Sister Cities ad-hoc committee has begun to plan a more specific strategic plan for economic partnerships beginning with Africa and the Oct. 4-7, 2017 Africa Business Conference. The commission will be involved in the discussions on economic development with speakers from the U.S. Department of Commerce and others from various state and local economic development groups. The city’s economic development office is invited to take part in roundtable discussions, and Mayor Stoney will be invited to speak Oct. 6.

Signage in strategic locations was another critical mission. The purchase of approved signage was planned during the current year, and the actual placement of signs giving the distance to each of our sister cities is expected to take place in 2017-18.

Humanitarian initiatives in Segou involving medical supplies and access to low-cost drugs were a major interest for commissioners, and those interests will be combined with entrepreneurship and economic development in Richmond House once the building is fully constructed.

Sports and education continue to be the prime areas of focus for Saitama, and expanded efforts in both areas were discussed when Commissioners Nexsen and Boggs visited our sister city in Japan.

Building on the previous year's efforts we developed our relationship with *EnRichmond Foundation* and expect both this year and next year to take advantage of the opportunity to accept tax-deductible donations for the projects we have identified in the country-specific reports below.

Brochures are in need of updating, and we expect to finalize and print new brochures either during this fiscal year or early next fiscal year.

6. Summary of key initiatives

ACTIVITIES WITH FIVE SISTER CITIES

(1) SEGOU (MALI)

Commissioners and former commissioners involved with Ségou activities in 2016-17: Boer, Brooks, Cummins, Edwards, and Yeatts. Virginia Friends of Mali works with the Commission, and Commissioner Edwards serves as President of the organization.

Richmond Sister Cities Commission Chair Patricia Cummins and Commissioner Christopher Brooks continued to work on VCU grants that relate to the Richmond-Ségou partnership, namely a Bill & Melinda Gates clinical trial involving HIV-positive women in Ségou, and the follow-up to a U.S. Department of Education French West Africa Project for which Commission Chair Patricia Cummins serves as PI. The latter grant has included student and faculty initiatives in Ségou, and they include community initiatives involving both the Ségou-based Haidara Foundation and Virginia Friends of Mali. University partners in Bamako and Yamoussoukro worked with the commission on regional approaches to the teaching of English in West Africa and French and international studies at VCU. Plans for economic development included a Medicines for All initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in which low-cost drugs are developed in West Africa based on new processes developed at VCU. While the model being developed will take place in Côte d'Ivoire where the government has committed to \$50M in infrastructure investment, the benefits are planned for the entire region. Discussion on how Ségou will benefit and participate will take place during the Eighth Africa Business Conference next October 4-7, 2017 in Richmond, and it will continue during the Ninth Africa Business Conference in Côte d'Ivoire in 2018 .

Supplies Over Seas CEO Melissa Mershon continued to work with the Haidara Foundation and Commission Chair Patricia Cummins to bring more containers of medical supplies to Ségou.

And Project C.U.R.E. working with Virginia Friends of Mali and the Richmond Sister Cities Commission brought yet another container to Ségou in March 2017. Plans are underway to arrange for two more containers from Project C.U.R.E. for Ségou in 2018. This Richmond activity was part of a scrolling video during the Sister Cities International meeting in July 2016.

Virginia Friends of Mali President and Sister Cities Commissioner Ana Edwards provided the following report to the Commission on its 2016-17 activities:

Richmond House in Segou - A dedicated sister city project initiated by Segou and VFOM in 2009, this is community center and hostel for girls is being established on 5 acres of land (\$95,000 value) donated to VFOM for the project by Segou-based partner Foundation of Cheick Mansour Haidara for the construction and operation of the community center. A well was dug and during the spring and summer of 2017 manufacture of mud bricks for building construction and creation of initial playing fields will take place. VFOM contributed \$6,000. Programming priorities will be outlined this summer from which a funds development strategy will be established. (Brochures provided to City Council.)

Hosting Visitors

The 2016 delegation was in Richmond from October 3-11, and included officials from Mali's national, regional (Segou and Kayes) and local governments (Segou). Areas of interest for the delegation were health, education, energy, economic development: Project C.U.R.E. medical equipment and supplies, Richmond House project for girls empowerment program, Medicines for All project with VCU Dept of Chemical and Life Sciences Engineering and the Institut National Polytechnique – Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB), U.S. based solar energy projects in West Africa, and the upcoming “Doing Business in Africa” Conference (Oct 4-8, 2017). Their itinerary included visits to VCU departments in Engineering, World Studies, and Health Systems, the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the annual conference of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, and on their last day participated in the October 10 press conference of the city of Richmond at the Shockoe Bottom “Devil’s Half Acre-Lumpkin’s Jail” archaeology site. Attendants included Richmond’s mayor and city councillors, Sister City and Slave Trail commission members, the governor of Virginia, and state delegates. Gifts were presented by the Mayor Simaga of Segou to Mayor Jones, Governor McAuliffe, Delegate McQuinn and others. Certificates of honor signed by the mayor and RSCC president Patricia Cummins were presented to each member of the delegation on behalf of the city of Richmond.

Project C.U.R.E. (Denver CO)

This organization partners with nonprofits to raise \$25,000 to collect and send a shipping container of medical supplies and equipment, valued at \$50,000+, to hospitals and medical centers around the world. VFOM’s first shipment left the U.S. on October 5, 2016 and arrived in Segou on March 16, 2017. Beneficiaries are Segou’s main hospital and one community health center. Rotary Club of Denver CO on a grant from the Rotary International to fund two more containers: 50:50 match. VFOM goal is \$25,000

VFOM / Member Book projects

Sunjata: Children of the Empire of Mali ~ Then & Now - collection of stories of Malian society as experienced by children since the 13th century. [Published on Amazon Kindle](#), April 2017.

The Most Vulnerable: Women, HIV & Islam in Mali - anthropology of AIDS research by Professor Christopher A. Brooks of VCU with translations by Salim Coumaré, 2016. [Available on Amazon Books](#).

The Limits of Democracy and the Postcolonial Nation State: Mali's Democratic Experiment Falters, While Jihad and Terrorism Grow in the Sahara by R.E. Poulton and R. Tonegutti-Greco, published by Edwin Mellen Press, 2016.

To be published by December 2017, an edited anthology of essays about the creation of the Richmond-Segou relationship written by R.E. Poulton and many of the partners involved over the years 2003-2009.

(2) RICHMOND-UPON-THAMES

Commissioners and former commissioners associated with Richmond-upon-Thames included: Marcus Squires (Chair,) Rachel Snead, and Tom Lisk.

Visit to Richmond

The Richmond-upon-Thames Committee this year greeted Lord Allen Watson of Richmond-Upon-The-Thames, England. Marcus Squires greeted Lord Watson at the Commonwealth Club and the Lord expressed interest in strengthening the two Richmond's relations. The Lord stated that he would like to seek out potential nominations for The Richmond's Metal. The Richmond Metal was last awarded to Sir David Attenborough with full regalia in Richmond U.K. The committee has been in a transition phase with our Richmond contacts seeking out a more established liaison/out of the Richmond-upon-Thames government and move away from the previous contact points whom were associated with the committee years ago and seem to have faded away according to my contact point Carol Clapperton whom is the Partnership and Policy Manager for the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. The official Twinning Committee in Richmond Upon the Thames did not take part with the Richmond, Virginia insinuation so rebuilding this relation has taken sometime. Our New contact point appointed by Mrs. Clapperton is Elizabeth Kingdom who is also apart of the Partnership and Policy Management office. Elizabeth and I have for the past year been communicating and brain storming about how we can link to two cities together through the following initiatives.

Project Farmers Market –

The Richmond-upon-Thames committee has been in the developing stages of a Richmond-to-Richmond farmers market program. This program's aim is to import organic or trendy products

from Richmond-upon-Thames and export trendy or organic products from Richmond, Virginia and feature them in farmers markets, perhaps moving towards retail in the future. (TBA)

Project Soccer Exchange / Rugby

This project could not garner enough attention from the Richmond, Virginia players. The ideal was originally to start a soccer exchange program but then Carol made a suggestion to start a Rugby exchange program because of The Rugby World Cup was just hosted in the city and would have more participants in the U.K. I am not sure if I will continue with this program.

Young Artists and Authors Showcase

The flyers were sent out this year but there was no response. We hope to fix our logistics issues with the school next year.

Richmond-to-Richmond Writers Program

The Richmond-to-Richmond Writers Program is a pen pal program designed for school aged children. The program was welcomed in both cities and will start next year because in Richmond title one reading teachers this year could not fit the program into their schools schedule due to standardized testing constraints. Many Schools also did not respond to numerous phone calls and emails. Next year we plan on implementing the program across RPS in 2017-2018.

Economic Exchange Program

The Richmond-upon-Thames Council will try to be an enable to support our community, including our businesses to make closer links. We are currently focusing on how we can move forward with these links. I have provided Elizabeth with a plethora of information regarding Richmond, Virginia and the economic power house our city holds. The Richmond Upon Thames team U.K. is in the early phases of crafting an economic exchange program. I have met with our cities office of Economic and Community Development to bring them up to date with what is occurring within Sister Cities and this initiative. Elizabeth and I are also bringing our cities two mayors into this project by attempting to build a relationship between Richmond Upon Thames; current mayor Councillor David Linnette and Richmond Virginia's mayor Levar Stoney.

(3) SAITAMA (JAPAN)

Commissioners Nexsen, Boggs, and Tran participated in this year's events along with many community members.

Education: The 17th Scholastic Exchange took place in March 2017 and involved students and teachers from Clover Hill High School. The 5th Teacher Exchange between Saitama Teachers and Richmond Teachers took place in 2016-17. Kazuyuki Okayasu, Delegation Head, Saitama, Japan visited to Maymont and went shopping in Carytown, visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and toured Tredagar Ironworks. In January 2017 the 5th Teacher Exchange brought Richmond Teachers to Saitama, Japan and was followed by skiing and viewing of the renowned

Ice Festival in Sapporo. In March 2017 the Scholastic Exchange between Clover Hill High School and Urawa Municipal High School included a visit to Maymont, VMFA, Carytown, and Williamsburg.

Commissioners travel to Japan: Commissioners Nexsen and Boggs traveled to Japan in April 2017. Miss Nexsen visited Richmond Dori (Street), a community designed and built by Japanese architectural firm Polis Green Chou and showcasing elements from their Sister City, Richmond, Virginia's neighborhoods, including Rockett's Landing, the Fan, Monument Avenue, Church Hill and Old Gun Road. Thanks go to Keiko Tonegawa-san, Coaches Akihiro Machida-san and Hidemi Iida-san and former player, Yuichi Minami-san for their thoughtfulness in making arrangements with Saitama City's officials, including Mayor Hayato Shimizu-san, Director of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Chieda Naoto-san (Note: Saitama Sister Cities is under Saitama Tourism and international Relations Bureau International Exchange Center), General Director Saitama city Bureau of Economy Hiroyuki Yoshizawa-san, Saitama School Superintendent Yasuhis Inaba-san and members of International student relations. Superintendent Inaba-san expressed thanks for the Teacher Exchange and looks forward to sending teachers to Richmond Public Schools in Fall 2017. There will be a Sister Cities Day in May 2017 highlighting Saitama's Sister Cities. RVA stickers provided by Mrs. Andrea Bourne and Mr. Lee Downey were presented to the City of Saitama for both the residents of Richmond Dori and those who organized the display for the Sister Cities Day in May 2017. Saitama residents that have been on varied exchanges to Richmond, Virginia will present programs and information during this festival. Thanks go to Mayor Levar Stoney for the prompt letter acknowledging upcoming Goodwill Games in Saitama in August 2017 and the welcome of Teachers coming to Richmond in Fall 2017.

Invitations from Saitama, Japan (contact Shinsuke Eto -- Saitama-city Board of Education) had been issued for two to three Richmond Public School Teachers, allowing them to teach two to three weeks in Saitama, Japan, and this was carried out during the period of September 2016 to March 2017. Richmond teachers were responsible for their round trip airfare to Tokyo, Japan from Richmond, Virginia. Homestays were provided by Saitama City. Richmond Public Schools are inviting Saitama Teachers to participate in the 6th Annual Teacher Exchange in 2017-18.

Sports: During August 2016 the Richmond Little League hosted the Saitama team for the 23rd exchange between the two cities. During the Welcome Ceremony at City Hall, the delegation met Mayor Dwight Jones, Council President Michelle Mosby, Honorable Cynthia Newbille Nobuhiro Ebata-san was Head of the Delegation representing Saitama City, and he was recognized along with Coach Haruo Shimizu-san, for whom this was an 11th visit to Richmond, Virginia. City Hall and Capitol tour followed by lunch on the Observation Deck and first game at Byrd Field. At the time the Baseball Goodwill Games were beginning, two teachers from Saitama joined us for a week of touring Richmond, Virginia. Shoko Sasaki-san had participated in the 4th Teacher Exchange in November 2015 at Chimborazo Elementary School, and he was hosted by Dr. John Holland and family. Richmond Sister City Commission was contacted early in Summer 2016 to see if Shoko-san and a fellow teacher could join the Baseball delegation

while learning more about their Sister City Richmond for their respective classrooms. They expressed thanks to the citizens of Richmond, Virginia for including additional guests and opening their homes and hearts to our visitors. In May 2017 preparations were under way for Summer 2017 Junior Baseball Goodwill games to be held in Saitama, Japan.

(4) ZHENGZHOU (CHINA)

Commissioner My Lan Tran and Zhengzhou Committee Co-Chair Diana Greer.

1. The Zhengzhou Commission continues to work with our Partner in Zhengzhou to outreach successfully with several schools and helped resolves some technical aspects of its participation in 2017 with Sister City Arts project with our partner to successfully sending several pieces of arts work to Richmond portion of the nationwide Arts Competition program (22 pieces + instagram) . We will also assist the local Richmond Art project in being one of the judges for this project.
2. The Zhengzhou- Richmond Sister Cities Commission Economic Sub Committee is currently working with Zhengzhou in identifying best prospects for trade for Richmond in collaboration and with the guidance and technical assistance of the City 's Economic Development Department, which is responsible for all economic and business activities in direct relation to the City's authority and responsibility in interacting with all local, domestic, and global economic and other entities. Our combined progress will be announced at next reporting activity.
3. The Education Sub-Committee member Ms. Diana Greer is currently working with a major Richmond Public Schools representative regarding education projects – progress to be announced at next reporting activity.

Late March 2017 Zhengzhou expressed an idea to possibly invite Zhengzhou- Richmond Sister Cities Commission and the City of Richmond key personnel to attend a fair in April but it also realized it was too late to invite the City thus it will do so at next opportunity.

(5) WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA)

Commissioners, former commissioners, and community members currently involved with the Windhoek Committee include the following: Christopher Brooks (Co-Chair,) Su Boer (Co-Chair,) Nin-Aseeya Rael.

Over the last year (2016 – 17), the Richmond Sister's City relationship with Windhoek, Namibia has been mixed. At the urging of the Honorable Minister Martin Andjaba, Namibian Ambassador to the United States, two embassy officials met with Richmond Sister City Commissioners, Christopher Brooks and Patricia Cummins at Sister City's International meeting

in Washington D.C. summer 2016. That meeting was fruitful in that parties discussed a range of issues including how to heighten the relationship between the city's after a very successful visit from a Namibian delegation from the previous year. It was determined that a necessary step insuring the continuation of the relationship was for the Mayor of Richmond to re-sign the relationship agreement. After several unsuccessful attempts to reach out to the outgoing Mayor, the Honorable Dwight C. Jones, to sign the Windhoek Sister City agreement, and appeal was made to the current mayor, the Honorable Levar Stoney, who signed recently renewed the agreement with Windhoek. We have now reached out to the Honorable Martin Andjaba to inform him of this development

Other activities included several current and past Commissioners (i.e. Cummins, Brooks, and Nin Aseeya Ra-El Williams) hosting three Namibian members of the African Young Professional Program (i.e. Mandela Kapere, Tulongeni Pohamba, and Ndahafa Hapulile) as they attended the Young African Leaders Institute hosted by Virginia Commonwealth University.

OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Signage Ad Hoc Committee

Signage Committee includes Patricia Cummins, Andreas Addison, Marcus Squires (Chair), Rachel Snead, Emily Yeatts, Catherine Nexsen, and Ana Edwards -

In 2017 the Sister Cities Commission made plans to install signage in a city park, such as Kanawha Plaza, Libby Hill, Monroe Park, and Brown's Island. We also considered placement on a city sidewalk adjacent to Main Street Station, or at Richmond City Hall. Our current pick for our premier sign is set to be Kanawha Plaza. This signage would be similar to other sister city waypoint signage around the United States. It will list Richmond, Virginia's five sister cities and their distance from that particular waypoint. These Sister cities are Richmond-upon-Thames, United Kingdom; Saitama, Japan; Zhengzhou, China; Windhoek, Namibia; and Segou, Mali. This sign is meant to represent not only Richmond's diplomatic efforts but also to show the Richmond pedestrian that the world is a big and connected place. With globalization bringing more global citizens to Richmond, Virginia, the Commission provides a wonderful opportunity for our city to have a park we show off to delegations from all over the globe.

1. Young Global Ambassador Program Committee

YGAP- Chair Sabrina Boggs worked closely with an intern from Oberlin College who earned credit for a winter intensive course (2016-1027) for her work. We reestablished the goals of the Young Global Ambassadors Program by creating a blueprint of what it is, the structure, and goals of the program. The goal is to engage high school and college students, as well as young professionals in the Richmond Sister Cities Commission. They will work together through mentorship learning about the commission, and promoting its values of diplomacy by bringing Richmond to the world and the world to Richmond.

An application, accessible online, was created along with flyers promoting the upcoming program. Local organizations have been and are being contacted to help promote the recruitment process. Commissioner Boggs will work with another intern in May to continue progress with the program.

7. Review of Accomplishments and Challenges

Accomplishments:

1) Humanitarian initiatives in Ségou

Building on the humanitarian award we received from Sister Cities International in 2014, we have continued to work on projects that bring millions of dollars in medical supplies to Ségou. (See details in the Ségou report above.)

Because there is on-going violence in North Mali (Timbuktu is 763 km from Ségou,) Ségou hosts internally displaced persons and suffers high unemployment as investors stay away from Mali. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is now expanding the violence into the south and making Ségou less safe than it had been last year.

While the Gates-funded initiative involving HIV-positive women in Ségou has ended, Commissioner our activities have continued and are listed under the country reports for Ségou, Mali.

2) Young Artists and Authors Showcase

Commissioners Boggs and Nexsen received many entries from our Saitama and Richmond. Artwork was matted and displayed at the Richmond Public Library, with an extensive display from Saitama. "We're Going Places" was this year's theme, and the exhibit showcases the importance of travel and exchange in achieving peace. Certificates for First, Second, and Third place for each winner are being made by digital artist and photographer Matthias Miller. Small committees also formed, with artist Mo Regulinsky helping in with the artwork and Author/Poet Joshua Poteat aiding with the writing entries. Ideas for the following year have been discussed, including more online interaction with voting. We will push for further visibility, with help from the YGAP committee, for more local and international entries in the coming year. Entries were accepted until May 1, 2017.

3) Sister Cities International follow-up

The follow-up to attendance at the Sister Cities International meeting included work on protocol for upcoming visits for all of our sister cities. In addition, planning for fund raising, promotion of community involvement by schools and businesses, and action plans for signage and the Young Global Ambassadors Program all benefited directly from attendance at sessions of the conference. We also made contact with several ambassadors and embassies during the conference – Mali, Namibia, Japan, and China embassy visits took place during the conference.

Commission Membership and Upcoming Election:

Four of the 13 commission members left the city or completed their terms in 2016-17. A full contingent of commissioners was not in place for much of the year, and we are still lacking one commissioner in April 2017 because one person who was appointed took on a new job that did not allow him the time to participate in commission activities. We have actively recruited other candidates.

To address that challenge, five of the 13 commissioners will be registered to attend the annual meeting of Sister Cities International in July 2017. The expectation is that those who attend the SCI meeting will come back invigorated and highly committed to implementing the strategic plan and commission goals that were put in place over the past few months.

The Chair of the Sister Cities Commission Patricia Cummins will complete her second term during September 2017. An orderly succession is planned, and elections were scheduled to take place in May 2017. Vice Chair Marcus Squires has been nominated to serve as Chair, and both Treasurer Will Egen and Secretary Ana Edwards have agreed to continue in their current roles if re-elected. We expect another commissioner to stand for Vice Chair. Dr. Cummins will continue to serve the commission as Past Chair and to attend commission meetings until she is replaced.

Strategic Plan and Commission Goals:

General goals

- 1) Strengthening our relationships locally with key partners and stakeholders and internationally with our five sister cities and Sister Cities International
- 2) Building on our 501 c (3) status through EnRichmond Foundation and developing a friends group in collaboration with our local committees and other stakeholders
- 3) Branding our Commission and promoting its presence during events hosted by our sister city committees and other government and institutional partners in the community.

Specific goals

We wish to implement our strategic plan and follow through on the various goals established by our committees focused on both individual cities or on special initiatives. These include plans

- (1) to expand humanitarian efforts and promote economic development,
- (2) to promote student and teacher exchanges,
- (3) to encourage youth activities involving both sports and the arts,
- (4) to establish partnerships with government and educational institutions that include regional networks in Africa, Asia, or Europe as appropriate.

Submitted on behalf of the Commission by:

Patricia W. Cummins, Chair
Richmond sister Cities Commission