

**NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE NORTH AMERICA ASSOCIATION HELD ON TUESDAY 12 MAY 2015 AT 16.30 IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

Present:

Chris Allen – Turves Green Girls School  
Jo Andrews – BCU (Chair)  
Erica Arthur – UoB  
Stefanie Bowes – Birmingham Airport  
Symon Easton – BCC  
Heather Law – BCC  
Mike Murray – BCC  
Carl Smith – Turves Green Girls School

Apologies for absence: Ravinder Masih and John Ottery.

Notes of last meeting – agreed.

**Report overview on visit to Chicago – March 2015**

JA and MM gave an overview of the Chicago visit as detailed in the circulated report. The issues of establishing one Committee to service both cities and the need for virtual communication within and between Birmingham and Chicago were highlighted.

**BABC Schools Creative Writing Project**

CS and CA informed colleagues that funding from the British American Business Association (Chicago Chapter) had recently agreed 5 years funding for the creative writing project. Initially the project would comprise Turves Green Girls and Hanson Park Schools, however it was hoped to include other Birmingham and Chicago schools at a later date. That may include Perry Beaches11.

The project`s activities were likely to include poetry collaboration, Skype discussions and project work around potential themes of “My city” and “Journeys”.

In addition to the schools, Dan Healey of Lake Region Medical, a company with Birmingham and Chicago interests, had also expressed a desire to assist with the project providing a role mode input.

CS and CA undertook to report further as the project develops.

MM undertook to connect CS and CA with Dan Healey.

### **Birmingham / Chicago Internships**

In the absence of JK colleagues were informed of the proposal to instigate a wide ranging programme of internships between the cities. Such internships will include student, business, professional and other staff exchanges of varying durations and focus.

It was hoped the first to be undertaken would be with National Express with other potential organisations including De Paul University and Chicago Sister Cities programme.

### **Social Services Good Practice Exchange**

MM reported that 2016 will be the twentieth anniversary of the annual Birmingham / Chicago social services exchange of staff between the cities. Originally initiated by Chicago the exchange of professional staff had for some years also included Hamburg, Germany.

The exchange model had proved so successful it was being rolled out to 7 other Chicago Sister Cities on a bilateral basis.

Discussions with Peter Hay, Strategic Director of Children`s Services had indicated BCC was keen to celebrate the 2016 anniversary and will be participating in next years` exchange.

EA suggested the good work being undertaken through this exchange should be profiled to highlight the benefits of Sister City collaboration.

### **Aston Villa Football Club – potential engagement with KICS**

Colleagues were informed of an opportunity for Aston Villa Football Club to participate in the Chicago KICS youth football initiative. Although only in its third year the KICS will, in the summer of 2015, comprise approximately 4,000 young footballers in a knock out competition.

Run by volunteers the project has become immensely popular. It was hoped Aston Villa may become involved as it related to the USA where they have an interest both in football and corporate social responsibility.

### **News Story for Geographical Associations**

JA made reference to a meeting with Sir Albert Bore at which the chairs of all 4 geographical associations were present. At that meeting Sir Albert Bore had welcomed Jo's suggestion of a news story to update and inform the public, citizens, Council and others on what was being achieved by the geographical associations.

### **Virtual communication between Birmingham and Chicago**

SB reported on the options available regarding a LinkedIn virtual communication network of members of the Sister City Committee. She undertook to establish the required group link and advise colleagues how best to maximise the opportunities associated with LinkedIn.

### **Other business**

- a) JA informed colleagues that she would be leaving Birmingham City University in April but was happy to continue in the role of NAA chair pending review at some future date.
- b) SB reported on the recent inaugural Birmingham / New York (JFK) flight and the wider promotion of new routes, with Marketing Birmingham.
- c) SE suggested a report back to the wider group called together by Sir Albert Bore in September 2013 to consider the drafting and implementation of a corporate international strategy for Birmingham.

**Date of next meeting – Tuesday 14 July at 4.30pm.**