

Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 13, 2023

Alexandria City Hall – Room 2000

I. Welcome and Call to Order.

ACSCC Chair Angelique Moss called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. There was a quorum present.

II. Approve Minutes from February

Angelique had distributed a draft of the February 13, 2023, meeting minutes to committee members to review prior to the March 13, 2023, meeting. At the meeting, the committee voted to approve the minutes as distributed.

III. Ongoing Business

A. Dr. Paxton Lecture – France and the Gauls: From Caesar to Astérix 3/30/23

Angelique reported that Deb Fuller and a friend, both of whom are reenactors, volunteered to attend the lecture--one as a Celtic Warrior and the other as a Roman Centurion. Angelique spoke to Dr. Paxton, who thought it was a great idea. Also, Angelique said that at the lecture, committee members would be needed to serve wine, which we have left over from previous events, and to donate snacks.

B. Advertising Update

Following the February committee meeting, the Advertising/Budget Subcommittee followed up with a sales representative from Mailchimp, which is the software package they are recommending for maintaining the committee's contacts and sending emails promoting our events. ACSCC members Elodie Guillon and Jennie Reading said that although there is a free Mailchimp package if we maintain no more than 500 contacts, they were recommending that the committee purchase a package that allowed us up to 1500 contacts, at the cost of \$26 per month/\$312 a year. They were confident we would be able to get a 15% discount on this price because we are part of city government. ACSCC member and treasurer Stephen Hartka said that we could be billed monthly as a recurring charge on the city's credit card, and we can freeze the account for two months in a row when we anticipate not sending out mailings.

There was an extensive conversation about whether or not we should start out with the free Mailchimp account before we advance to a paid account. Angelique suggested that we try one month with the free account. Jennie felt that the paid account was a small price to pay for improving our communications. Elodie pointed out that because using a spreadsheet to keep contact information is difficult, Mailchimp would help us manage contacts from various sources. Jim Holloway, ACSCC liaison from the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), said that they would be getting a new ticketing system, but in the meantime, the display of contact information for ticket purchasers is not separated into fields, which makes it hard to use. Because ACSCC member Antoine Dula Lopez said he could separate the information, Jim said in the future he will send the contact information to Antoine.

ACSCC member Ashlee Harper-Johnson explained that we needed to make sure that we have an unsubscribe option on the emails we will be sending out using Mailchimp so that we could meet

legal requirements. Also, she said that we should take advantage of the training Mailchimp offers to users once we sign up. Stephen emphasized that we should have multiple committee members who could use Mailchimp so we could spread the work. He recommended that we commit to using Mailchimp for a year capping at 1500 contacts so we can clean up the email addresses we maintain by deleting those that bounceback. There was a consensus among committee members to go ahead with Stephen's recommendation.

C. Budget Update

Stephen referred to the estimated FY-24 budget he sent to committee members and OHA following the February committee meeting, which presented a realistic picture of our expenditures and revenues based on actual performance. It included eight events plus two communications tools. Estimated expenses are almost \$15,000, but estimated revenues exceed expenditures and add to the committee's lifetime balance. In developing the budget report, Stephen said he used conservative estimates.

Stephen said the budget gets "an A for effort, but a C for being on time." He explained that he found out after the fact that the estimated budget needed to have been submitted to OHA earlier in this fiscal year so it could be used in the budget planning process. According to Stephen, Gretchen Bulova, OHA Director, said that they can make the \$15,000 in estimated expenditures that ACSCC itemized work.

Antoine asked Stephen how the committee will be updated in the future on budget execution. Stephen said he would report to the committee on the actual revenues and expenditures against the estimated budget periodically.

D. School Exchange Update

Jennie said that she received a positive update about the school exchange between Alexandria and Caen from Jessica Krantz, a former ACSCC member who is currently a French teacher at George Washington Middle School. The exchange program will resume in 2024-2025 and St. Paul School in Caen will be the host school for Alexandria students.

According to Jennie, Jessica described the Caen school as "private light" meaning that although it is a private school, students do not pay much to attend, as they do in our country.

E. An Evening of French Classical Music – 4/14/23

ACSCC member Michael Skardon provided an update on the April 14, 2023, piano and organ recital at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 228 South Pitt Street, Alexandria, by Adriano Spampinato.

- Michael met with Adriano, who was flattered that we asked him to perform and proud to represent his country.
- Adriano will perform for 45-50 minutes on the piano and organ, and Michael relayed to him that he could also play music from a non-French composer.
- Michael referred committee members to an excellent article that the *Alexandria Gazette* wrote about Adriano in December 2022 and hopes that they include another article about Adriano's April concert.
- A contractor will set up and take down the event for \$300. The church will pay half, and the committee will pay the other half. ACSCC member and secretary Leslie Tourigny asked if this was in addition to fees that were considered when the committee voted a \$1,000 budget at last month's meeting to pay for the honorarium and church rental fees,

- and Michael said this was not an additional cost.
- The reception will be held in the church courtyard.
 - Michael said he needed to sign a contract with the church during the week of March 13 and asked if Angelique were available to go for a walk-through of the church with him. Because she would not be available, ACSCC member Kyly Larriviere agreed to do the walk-through with Michael.
 - Michael said there was some on-street parking near the church and the closest paid parking is under the restaurant La Madeline. Jim said that attendees could be referred to a parking pdf on the City website.
 - Michael suggested, and the committee agreed, to raising the ticket price to \$12 per person from the \$10 originally designated by the committee. Also, committee members considered, but rejected, a small \$2 discount per ticket for those 65 and over because the tickets are inexpensive and the discount small.
 - Michael listed several volunteer assignments that we would need to fill at the event, to include committee members to check-in attendees, serve as ushers, and work the reception.
 - Michael said that one additional issue that came up is that the piano at the church needs to be tuned and that will cost around \$250. There was much discussion about whether or not this is a cost the committee should incur. Some members felt that this is something the church should do. Jim, who manages the Lyceum for the city, says that there is a piano there. He says that piano tuning is expensive so it is not something that is routinely done, only when it is going to be used for an event.

F. Advertising Update (Continued)

Antoine said that he had developed and sent to committee members for review a new committee website on Wix, but received very little response from committee members. Both Angelique and Jenny suggested that Antoine resend the link to the new website to committee members for comment. Antoine reiterated comments he made previously concerning the committee's legacy Wordpress website, i.e., it was outdated and contained too much information. He said he designed the committee's website to introduce ACSCC to whomever visits the website. Elodie concurred, adding that the website is the first entrée anyone has to our brand. Otherwise, Antoine said that Instagram and Facebook would be used for pictures and to publicize our events so that they wouldn't take up much space on the website.

There was much discussion about whether the committee needed to spend additional money to upgrade the free Wix website. Ashlee expressed that we needed more analytics about the effectiveness of the website before we could decide whether we needed to upgrade. ACSCC member Laura Withers said that we had to "walk before we run." She added that the website is an effective email harvesting tool and suggested that we tell our friends to go to the website and sign up to receive mailings from us. Both Jennie and Angelique wondered if we needed to collect more email addresses because our events have been filing up without any additional measures.

Angelique raised a motion, that was seconded and then approved, for the committee to switch from the Wordpress website to the free Wix website that Antoine developed.

G. D-Day Commemoration and Lecture

ACSCC member and D-day Subcommittee Chair Kerem Bilge distributed a list of

subcommittee members and preliminary assignments, last year's D-Day proclamation, and the schedule for the June 4 D-Day commemoration. He then provided an overview of the June 1 lecture and the June 4 commemoration.

1. **Lecture**-Kerem said that the lecture is Thursday, June 1, beginning at 7 pm. The topic is "Women Spies of D-Day." He said that Dr. Holien usually speaks for around 45 minutes and then allows time for Q & A. Following that, there will be a short reception. There was a committee consensus that we should charge \$10 per person to attend the lecture and not have it simultaneously shown on Zoom. Jim said that he does not know yet if C-Span will be filming the lecture as they did last year. However, if that happens the committee agreed that it would be recorded and posted later so that it would not compete against in-person attendance at the lecture. Kerem indicated that committee members are needed to handle advance publicity, and on the day of the event, setup and breakdown, food and beverage assignments, and ticket taking.
2. **Proclamation**-Kerem said that Leslie, once again, would be handling the proclamation, which is always presented by the Mayor and City Council sometime at the end of May. Leslie said that she has been in touch with Gretchen to alert her to the upcoming proclamation. No date has been scheduled yet for Council approval. Kerem said that the proclamation does not change much from year to year, but there are usually small changes. Angelique said that one thing she sees missing from the proclamation is mention of how many years ACSCC has been presenting a commemoration. Kerem asked committee members to look at last year's proclamation and make any suggestions to Leslie by March 27.
3. **Commemoration**-Kerem went over the schedule for the June 4 commemoration, highlighting various points:
 - Set-up on June 4 will be from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00p.m., at which time the general public arrives. We need to be out of Market Square by 6 p.m.
 - Kerem has reached out to sound support vendors, reenactors, swing bands (including the Alexandria Citizens Swing Band), and the Town Crier. Also, he said that former ACSCC member Scott Campbell will contact the military Color Guard, Fife and Drum Corps, and the bugler.
 - The formal program begins at 2 pm. Angelique will do opening and closing remarks. The Mayor will deliver remarks, and he and City Council members will do readings.
 - Kerem applauded Jennie for her success in enlisting sponsors for the commemoration. So far, the total money pledged from sponsors is \$1,000. Jack Taylor, Alexandria Toyota, will once again be a \$500 sponsor, along with a private couple, who will also be donating \$500. The Kona Ice truck will be on-hand at the commemoration and will give the committee 20% of their sales, which could be substantial on a hot day in June.
 - There was some discussion about seeing if Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts can help at the commemoration.

IV. New Business

A. Open Floor

Angelique reminded committee members that near the end of their 2-year terms the City Clerk's

office will send them a notice informing them of this and the process and timetable for reapplying. She emphasized that if a member wants to reapply, they must do so by the deadline, and if City Council approves them for another term, they must sign the oath by the deadline they are given, or else they won't be reappointed. She said the committee is very popular and there are many people waiting for an opportunity to get on the committee

B. Public Comment

Yin Mei Hueskes attended the meeting and although she is a resident of Fairfax County, she thought the committee would be interesting because she is a French teacher in McLean. She then asked if the committee were only open to residents of the City of Alexandria. Angelique told her that the committee meetings were open to the public, but explained that the Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee is an official committee of the City of Alexandria and only residents of the City of Alexandria can be appointed by the City Council as citizen members of the committee. However, Angelique told Ms. Hueskes that if she wanted to volunteer at any of the Committee events, we would welcome her participation. Ms. Hueskes said her college-age son might also be interested in the work of the committee.

V. Adjournment

Angelique adjourned the meeting at 9:11 p.m.

2023 Calendar

January –

February – Cocktails & Confections 2.9.23

March – France and the Gauls: From Caesar to Astérix Lecture 3.30.23

April – An Evening of French Classical Music 4.14.23

May –

June – D-Day Lecture 6.1.23, D-Day Commemoration 6.4.23

July –

August –

September –

October –

November –

December –

ACSCC Member Attendees:

Kerem Bilge

Elodie Guillon

Ashlee Harper-Johnson

Stephen Hartka

Kyly Larriviere

Antoine Dula Lopez

Angelique Moss

Jennifer Reading

Michael Skardon

Wesley Thomas

Leslie Tourigny

Eric Trimble

Laura Withers

City of Alexandria Government Attendee:
Jim Holloway

Public:
Former ACSCC member Alex Jevgrafovs
Yin Mei Hueskes, Resident of Fairfax County

Leslie Tourigny
ACSCC Secretary