

**Santa Barbara Sister Cities Board  
Meeting Minutes – September 3, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER: The Board meeting was called to order at 12:07 pm.
2. ROLL CALL:

**ATTENDEES**

Chair: Margaret Saavedra (City at large)  
Vice Chair: Margarita Zaske  
Secretary: Mary McMahon  
Kotor: George Lilly  
Miraflores: Margarita Zaske  
Kotor: George Lilly  
Miraflores: Margarita Zaske  
Toba: Linda Matthews  
Weihai: Jill Stassinis  
Holly Perea, Mayor & Council Liaison

**ABSENT**

Mark Philibosian (Member at Large)  
George Papazacharioudakis (Patras)  
Bonnie Carroll (Puerto Vallarta)  
Randy Rowse (Mayor)  
Oscar Gutierrez (Council Liaison)  
Linda Gunther (Staff Liaison)

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: With one correction, the minutes of July 2, 2025 were approved unanimously by the Board.
4. ANNOUNCEMENTS: Bonnie Carroll notified Ricki Garrett at SCI of the passing of former Regional Chair Pat Fallin, who passed away in early August 2025. The letter of condolence was acknowledged by Ricki Garrett.

Chair Saavedra shared that Colin Hayward, upcoming President of Santa Barbara's Old Spanish Days, is interested in meeting with the Sister Cities Board to discuss possible participation in future events of Old Spanish Days. This will be added to a future agenda.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.
6. 2025 INTERNATIONAL DINNER: A flyer announcing the Santa Barbara Sister Cities International Dinner to be held this year on October 1, 2025 at Direct Relief International has been shared with all Board members. The capacity for the full event is 90.

Each committee is asked to invite its members, with the goal for each of the six sister city groups sending approximately 15 individuals. Each person in attendance can either bring food to share for the potluck (dish for 10-12) or choose to pay \$30 per person in advance. Given the space limitation, no walk-ins can be allowed. RSVPs need to be received by September 21 and may be forwarded to Chair Saavedra. There will be opportunities for volunteers to assist at the welcome table, the bar, or other areas. There will be the chance for set up the DRI room/patio over the course of that day, with doors officially opening at 5:30 PM and dinner to commence at 6:15. Completion of the event will be at 8:00 PM.

All sister city groups can submit slides or videos to be shared as background for the event. Each sister city group needs to bring a basket for a fund-raising raffle. Sister city groups may also bring brochures or handouts to share about their activities. The City Council will be invited; Mayor Rouse will be invited to speak. Music and dance will also be arranged.

7. SISTER CITIES DISPLAY SANTA BARBARA AIRPORT: Chair Saavedra spoke with artist Emiliano Campobello who is updating the SB SI airport display. He has been a bit behind in his projects but said the work should be completed this week. Discussion about whether to have the posting of the display be an official vs. unofficial event was undertaken. There was also a question about where in the SB airport the poster will be displayed.

8. EMERITUS STATUS FOR INACTIVE AND/OR FORMERLY DISSOLVED SISTER CITIES: A proposal to the City Council to allow Cusco, Peru, to request emeritus status is underway. The draft of a letter to go to former SB Sister City Cusco (dissolved in 2003) has been created. Discussion of extending emeritus status to other former sister cities was tabled.
9. SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (SOCAL) SISTER CITIES: The Cal Youth Leadership Summit and the Cal Young Artist Expo were topics. Bonnie Carrol presented the PV Marketing Program for which the award was made as a Best Practice to the SoCal group. It was clarified that the SoCal artist competition (for high school and college students) differs from the Sister Cities International artist competition which allows ages 13 and up. Santa Barbara Sister Cities participates in the national Sister Cities International Young Artists and Authors Showcase.
10. SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL: Chair Saavedra noted that she collected input and submitted a vote on behalf of Santa Barbara for the Sister Cities International Board of Directors. The Sister Cities Fall Leadership meeting will be held in Tempe, Arizona. They sponsor an Oktoberfest fundraiser which nets over \$200,000 each year.

The 2025 US-Japan Sister Cities Summit is September 16-19, 2025 in Osaka, Japan. Linda Matthews and Takako Wakita will attend. The Sister Cities event overlaps with the Osaka World Expo which is underway from April through October 2025 in Kansai. The Japan-US Leadership Summit will be held October 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> as a multi-city conference.

#### 11. REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:

- Weihai: Jill Stassinis announced that the monthly SB Weihai Sunday Brunch will be held September 7<sup>th</sup> and reminded the Board that RSVPs are required for adequate table seating. A Weihai board retreat will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September. Sister Cities International is holding a conference on sustainability in Hangzhou in late October (25-27) which falls right before the SB SI visit to Weihai October 28-31<sup>st</sup>. Four members of the Weihai group have expressed interest in attending.
- Kotor: George Lilly shared that all activities mentioned at the last meeting (music, opera, swimming, water polo) are ongoing. Of note, the new original Our Lady of the Rocks opera was performed at the close of the 2025 Kotor Art International Music Festival and was very well received. The opera (funded by the Friends of Kotor Classical Music Committee) will continue to be performed at other music festivals in the months ahead. Scott Reed and Jonathan Bishop, Founders of Lane 4 Fundraising, will visit Kotor this month to discuss plans for a US/Montenegro Cultural Center.
- Miraflores: Margarita Zaska reported that 85 people attended the July 27<sup>th</sup> celebration of Peruvian independence with music, food, raffle and games in Manning Park in Montecito. Work continues to raise funds to assist in medical care as part of Peruvian-American Medical Society efforts. The 2026 16-day trip to Peru which will take place in April 2026 is now open to those outside the Miraflores SB membership group.
- Toba: Linda Matthews shared that a pool party was held July 27<sup>th</sup> at Samarkand pool to welcome the Japanese exchange students to their stay in Santa Barbara. She noted that it was a particularly artistic group of students this year. The Toba group will soon begin advertising for the next student exchange which will take place in 2026.
- Puerto Vallarta: Margaret Saavedra reported that the PV committee recently celebrated its anniversary with a fundraising dinner at the Friendship Center. Work continues with firefighter training in the use of equipment donated to PV. The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Cruise for a Cause is set for October 11<sup>th</sup> to raise funds to benefit the families of children with cancer in Puerto Vallarta. The next trip to PV by SB is December 1-11<sup>th</sup>, and has an estimated cost of \$1800/person. Thirty people have already signed up and although the deadline has passed, there may still be the opportunity to join.

12. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 1:11 pm.