

**Santa Barbara Sister Cities Board
Meeting Minutes – May 6, 2026**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** The Board meeting was called to order at 12:04 am.
2. **ROLL CALL**

<u>ATTENDEES:</u> Chair: Margaret Saavedra Vice Chair/ Miraflores: Margarita Zaske Secretary: Mary McMahon Kotor: George Lilly Patras: George Papazacharioudakis Puerto Vallarta: Bonnie Carroll Toba: Linda Matthews Weihai: Jill Stassinis Mayor: Randy Rowse Staff Liaison: Linda Gunther	<u>ABSENT:</u> Council Liaison: Oscar Gutierrez Mayor's Assistant: Holly Perea
---	---
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of March 4, 2026 were reviewed and, with one date correction, were approved by the Board.
4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** It was shared with the Board that a student from Santa Barbara High School would be observing the meeting. Chair Saavedra shared that yesterday the Santa Barbara City Council held interviews for prospective candidates for appointment to the Board membership; no word yet on the selection.
5. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.
6. **GRAN CANARIA EXPLORATION:** Following up on the public comment by Nimita Dhirajlal at the March meeting, Ms. Dhirajlal shared her discussions with and demonstrations of interest by those in sectors of Santa Barbara businesses and community that might align well with the consideration of a Santa Barbara-Gran Canaria sister city affiliation. Mary McMahon, Bonnie Carroll, Margarita Zaske, and Margaret Saavedra will work with Ms. Dhirajlal to review procedures and processes for sister city affiliation to explore this idea.
7. **SISTER CITY AIRPORT DISPLAY:** Following the discovery of the display's damage due to flooding in the airport storage room, Chair Saavedra contacted airport staff to inquire whether the airport's insurance would cover the cost of the canvas. No one has yet responded. Bonnie Carroll again expressed interest in exploring options for replacing the Sister Cities airport display. Jill Stassinis agreed to assist her. Linda Gunther also agreed to help as needed.
8. **INTERNATIONAL DINNER COMMITTEE:** Chair Saavedra shared that Direct Relief is still unable to commit to a date in the Fall for the SB Sister City International Dinner. Inquiries were submitted to other Santa Barbara locations, but other locations will require a non-refundable deposit and expense for facility use. With October 1 just five months away, the need for a date to advertise, and the associated SC anniversary visit by the Toba Japan group, the Board voted to go with the Carrillo Ballroom. An inquiry about the specific October 1 date will be made; the subcommittee will discuss and arrange the deposit as needed.
9. **YOUNG ARTISTS & AUTHORS SHOWCASE 2026:** It was agreed that the YASS event went very nicely this year. With contributions from the SC boards and funds carried forward from last year, expenses were met. The Toba committee indicated its continued disinterest in this initiative but agreed to pay the requisite \$100 as paid by all SB committees.
10. **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (SOCAL) SISTER CITIES:** No report.

11. **SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL:** The annual Sister Cities International membership dues are \$800. Payment is due by July 1.
12. **REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS:** In advance of the rep reports, everyone was reminded to use the calendar that Linda Gunther had created for general and committee activities. Some indicated difficulty getting into the calendar.
- **Puerto Vallarta:** Bonnie Carroll reported that PV held a general meeting March 11 with the focus on help for the PV Kids with Cancer facility. On April 16, the PVSC and Rotary International Alliance held a fundraiser which brought in \$6,800 from attendees. May 5 was a second general meeting and on May 31 PVSC and the SB Rotary Club will hold a fundraising "Peace of Mind Walk." A tentative annual visit is planned in SB for guests from the SC Puerto Vallarta the week of July 2-8. The Veterans Fiesta Breakfast will be held on August 9 at the American Legion Post 49 in Santa Barbara.
 - **Kotor:** George Lilly reported that two graduate students from the UCSB Bren School are doing a study of possible pollution in the bay of Kotor. A UCSB jazz trio with a UCSB professor will be going to Kotor to perform in several music festivals in the months ahead. A young woman who is an actress/writer/producer recently shared her film here in Southern California under the sponsorship of SC Kotor. Additionally, the original Lady of the Rocks opera continues with performances in varied locations. It was mentioned that although there is some uncertainty about whether the individual in the Kotor government with whom SB has been working will continue in his official role, it is expected that all SC undertakings will continue as planned.
 - **Toba:** Linda Matthews reported that tomorrow is an informal happy hour at her home. Toba exchange students will arrive in late July, and the traditional welcome pool party will be held. SB exchange students will then leave for Japan in August. The 60th anniversary of the SB-Toba sister city relationship will be celebrated in late September and as part of their visit Toba representatives will attend the October SB International Dinner.
 - **Miraflores:** Margarita Zaske listed upcoming events including a celebration of Peruvian Independence Day on Sunday, July 26 from 2-6 pm at the Mesa Park. She reported on the recently completed 2025 visit to Miraflores and other locations that included northern Peru, the Amazon rainforest, and the Galapagos Islands. Donations were brought to many local Miraflores service agencies. Plans for next year's trip May 30-June 15, 2027 are already underway. Stops will include Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Chile, and include Miraflores, Cusco, Machu Picchu, Iguazu Falls, and the Easter Islands.
 - **Patras:** George P spoke about a meeting of the SC board, with planning underway for a mid-September 2026 trip to Greece including an associated cruise to Spain. The SC fundraising efforts have resulted in a donation to a local Patras hospital. Work is ongoing to develop a student exchange plan with Patras. Appreciation was expressed about the support of the SB Rotary Club in these varied efforts.
 - **Weihai:** Jill Stassinis reported that the Weihai SB members visited Glendale on March 28 via Amtrak train. In April, 45 Weihai students submitted poetry, essays, and artwork for the YASS SB SC event. Of these submissions, 14 were selected as winners, were displayed at the SB County Office of Education YASS event, and submitted to the SC International YASS competition. The monthly dim sum event was held May 3rd and the next will be June 7th at the China Pavilion. The SB-Weihai 2026 photo contest exchange is ongoing. The 2026 theme is Flowers and the entry deadline is December 31, 2026.
13. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.