

Subject: AED - Sister Cities

**FY 2022 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

4/9/2021

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Mr. Dorsey at the work session on 3/11/2021, regarding the following question:

What has been the scope of activities for Sister Cities during FY 2021 and what is expected through FY 2022?

During the past year, the Arlington Sister City Association (ASCA) cancelled or postponed its' planned student and professional educational inbound and outbound exchanges as a result of the pandemic. While the pandemic has made it particularly difficult to plan for these kinds of activities given public health concerns, Arlington's Sister City committees continue to be in ongoing communication with their counterparts to plan for in-person educational exchanges once these activities can resume. Currently, ASCA is looking at the Spring semester of 2022 for the exchanges depending on travel restrictions and other public health measures. Furthermore, ASCA leadership utilized the last year to re-evaluate and assess its organizational needs and to further build its capacity moving forward.

Highlighted activities during FY 2021 include:

- **Hired a New Executive Director** – ASCA has been run primarily with community and volunteer support. Upon assessment of the skills and experience needed to reposition the organization for the future, the ASCA Board created a part-time Executive Director position to oversee daily operations. After a successful recruitment, a new Executive Director, [Christy Walika](#), was hired in March.
- **Established a New Friendship Committee** – As part of a several year relationship-building effort, the ASCA Board unanimously voted to support inviting Setagaya, Japan to become a Friendship City to Arlington. This is an important step in formalizing the relationship as part of the process to become an official Sister City with Arlington. Plans are underway to formalize the next step with a formal document signing by both groups.
- **Explored New Online Program Opportunities** – With the shift to offering virtual programming and activities during the pandemic, ASCA has been exploring several online educational activities. The Arlington Setagaya Committee hosted a student exchange Zoom forum for middle and high school students in both Tokyo and Arlington to practice speaking English and Japanese. They are planning another language practice forum in April. Other Arlington Sister City Partnerships are planning similar virtual exchange and educational programs.
- **Joined as a Complete Vaccination Committee Organizational Partner** – ASCA signed up as an organizational partner with the Arlington Complete

Vaccination Committee sharing timely news about COVID-19 vaccine information within its network.

- **Joined as a DRE Partner to Build a More Equitable Arlington** – ASCA joined the Dialog on Race & Equity (“DRE”) as a partner and trained several ASCA Board members to hold a DRE training for its leadership to be held in April 2021. ASCA is also planning a community training session in May 2021.
- **Transitioned Two Sister City Partnerships to Emeritus Status** – Sister Cities International requires regular reviews of Sister City partnerships under the local leadership of ASCA.
 - **Coyoacán, Mexico:** As part of this review, the Sister City partnership with Coyoacán, Mexico was inactive for a period of several years. Despite numerous efforts to re-activate the relationship with the City of Coyoacán, the Arlington’s Sister City affiliation was placed into Emeritus Status. Because there are no current active members of the committee, this status provides the possibility of re-activating the affiliation as Sister Cities at a future date if there is mutual agreement and support to do so.
 - **San Miguel, El Salvador:** The San Miguel Sister City partnership fell into non-compliance as many of its committee members were not current Arlington residents and active within Arlington County. The same requirement for committee members to live and be active within the Sister City applies to the committee in San Miguel. Furthermore, the Committee of Citizens in San Miguel and the Arlington Committee were not in frequent contact with each other to engage in ongoing projects of mutual interest and benefit in support with the Sister City mission. As a result, the Sister City relationship with San Miguel was placed into Emeritus Status. Because there are still current active members in Arlington, this Emeritus Status offers both Sister City committees two years, until January 2023, to come into compliance and re-activate the partnership on an official basis between the two governments.

For FY 2022, ASCA is planning to offer more online educational opportunities for exchanges and other program activities, in-person programming, and event planning as part of a post-pandemic recovery and to increase the visibility of the organization within the community.

Other key areas of focus are membership growth and retention, marketing, and communications with an increased presence on social media, and fundraising efforts to diversify funding in support of ASCA and its committees.

As part of its ongoing capacity building efforts, ASCA is actively recruiting volunteers to serve on the Aachen, Germany; Reims, France; San Miguel, El Salvador; and Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine committees and recruiting for board members to lead the organization into the future.

The County's \$45,000 contribution to the ASCA in the FY 2022 Proposed Budget maintains the same level of funding as FY 2021.