

Hickory International Council
Thursday, May 15, 2014; 5:30 pm

A regular meeting of the Hickory International Council (HIC) was held on Thursday, May 15, 2014 at 5:30 pm in the Moretz Board Room at the Arts & Science Center of Catawba Valley.

Members Present: Hani Nassar, Karl Wolfe, Ken Humphreys, Jack Crawford, Alex Mezei, Becky Mich and Toshiaki Satake

Members Absent: Marc Swinnen, Ramona Hodge, Michael Kuchinsky, and Bawol Cabiri

Others Present: none

Guests Present: Joe Geitlin of Boy Scouts of America, Mike Loeb, and BSA-IYC members Lucas Kelly, Efrain Palafox, Laura Velazquez, Maria Gomez, Christina Hart, Hailey Galit, Eva Clarke, and Elizabeth Greene

Staff Present: Assistant City Manager Andrea Surratt, Executive Assistant to the City Manager Yaidee Fox and Minutes Clerk Anne Starnes

A quorum was present.

Call to Order: Hani Nassar, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm and welcomed everyone present.

Introduction of Guests & Board Membership Changes: Mr. Nassar introduced Assistant City Manager Andrea Surratt. He said eight members of the BSA-IYC (International Youth Council) were attending the meeting.

Mr. Nassar said Alex Mezei was approved by City Council as a member of the HIC.

Approval of April Meeting Notes and March Minutes: Mr. Nassar said a quorum was not present for the April meeting, so the April meeting notes and March meeting minutes would both need approval. They were distributed to members in advance.

Karl Wolf moved, seconded by Jack Crawford, to approve the April 17, 2014 meeting notes. The motion carried unanimously.

Ken Humphreys moved, seconded by Karl Wolfe, to approve the March 20, 2014 meeting minutes, with the one correction as noted in the April meeting notes. The motion carried unanimously.

“Citizens Briefing” Presentation: Andrea Surratt, Assistant City Manager, shared a PowerPoint presentation with members, reviewing statistics regarding Hickory’s population growth and decline by age category over the past 12 years, along with industry and workforce changes. She said 45,407 jobs were lost between 2000 and 2012, and said Hickory needs to change this trend. Hickory also needs to grow its population in the 20 to 44 years age range to keep the economy strong. The growth rate for Catawba County during 2010-2013 was 0.3%.

Ms. Surratt discussed the recent Innovate Catawba, Innovate Hickory, and Inspiring Spaces economic development initiatives. She reviewed current and proposed projects, including initiatives along Hickory's waterfront at Geitner Park, in the central business district and commercial centers, and for a new 200-acre business park. She addressed questions and comments made by members. She said these efforts require a mix of public and private sector funding sources to spur growth.

Ms. Surratt discussed how bonds work, how they are repaid, and the possibility that City Council will decide to place a bond referendum on the November 2014 ballot in order to pay for the proposed projects. She said the City must take the lead in building the future, including jobs and amenities to attract young people to live and work in Hickory.

In closing, Ms. Surratt quoted a City Council member who recently said, "If nothing changes, nothing changes." Hickory must make changes in order to reverse the current trends in job loss, growth, and population. The presentation will be available on the City's website. Mr. Nassar thanked Ms. Surratt for presenting the information.

Old Business:

BSA-IYC (International Youth Council Update – Mr. Nassar said one of the IYC members, Efrain Palafox, attended TEDxHickory. Efrain said it was a great experience, the speakers were amazing, and he enjoyed attending.

Jack Crawford reported their members met last month for a social, with no format meeting. He thanked all of the IYC members who participated in Model UN during March. He recognized IYC member Laura Velazquez for her Honorable Mention, received representing Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Nassar said the IYC is an affiliate of the Hickory International Council (HIC), and invited their members to participate in HIC events during the year. The next event will be Folkmoot on Sunday, July 20, which he hopes IYC members will attend.

Mr. Crawford said the international Boy Scout would arrive on June 15 to attend the local BSA camp. Dr. Humphreys said the scout's name is Jakub Stros. He is 19 years old, lives in Prague in the Czech Republic. He will attend the HIC's July 17 meeting and discuss his U.S. visit. Jakub's interests are backpacking, hiking, camping, photography, and canoeing. Mr. Crawford said that over the June 21-22 weekend, Jakub will be his family's guest, and they may take him to Carowinds. If other IYC members would like to go along, let Mr. Crawford know.

Mr. Crawford said members of the IYC are interested in meeting the HIC members after the meeting.

TEDxHickory Summary – The 3rd annual TEDxHickory event was held on Saturday, May 10, 2014. Mr. Nassar said the majority of the 10 speakers making presentations were excellent this year.

Folkmoot USA Update – The Folkmoot performance will be on Sunday, July 20, 2014, in the SALT Block Auditorium, with three international groups performing. Mr. Nassar said that in previous years, they sold a third of the total tickets sold on the day of the event, which presented a challenge. He plans to sell tickets online with reserved seating this year. Joe Geitlin asked if the advance ticket price could cost less, to encourage people to purchase earlier. Mr. Nassar said his main goal is to

have a full house before the event date. The Folkmoot organization is sending brochures to Mr. Nassar, which he will distribute at the next meeting. Members requested that he e-mail the brochure to them so they can forward it to friends and family.

Dr. Humphreys asked for clarification of the on-line ticket sales, and Mr. Nassar said tickets purchased through Folkmoot are \$16, but if purchased through the HIC's website they are \$10. Mr. Nassar would like to allow children 12 & under to attend free this year, if attending with an adult. Members discussed the fact that all seats are reserved and assigned this year; also, seats need to be paid for in advance to help ensure that tickets will be used. Dr. Humphreys advised that, in order to maintain control, it should be set up for children to pre-order tickets for \$5 each, paying in advance. When they arrive at the door and turn in their ticket, they will receive a \$5 refund. If they do not attend, they will not get their \$5 back.

Great Decisions Update – Mr. Nassar said Great Decisions is a foreign policy debate on topics relative to world current events. The program will be held September 16 – October 21, 2014 in the Keiser Community Room on the SALT Block, facilitated by Paul Martino. Currently, 20 people have signed up, and only nine seats remain; anyone interested should contact Mr. Nassar ASAP to reserve a seat. A list of topics for discussion is on the HIC website. There is no age limit, so IYC members may also attend.

Foreign Movie Screening – The Footcandle Film Society offers four foreign films each year. The next foreign film will be on Thursday, June 19, 7:00 pm at the Carolina Theater in downtown Hickory, free to attend. Mr. Nassar reviewed the three movies being considered. He asked members to watch the trailers and give him feedback to decide which film to show.

2014 HIC Grant Application Update – Mr. Nassar plans to put grant information on the Facebook page Karl Wolfe is setting up for the HIC. Grant recipients must be selected by June 30, or this year's budget will expire with the current fiscal year. Mr. Nassar plans to post the 2013-2014 grant requirements on the website grant page.

Typically, two grants of \$500 each are awarded annually, for projects related to the HIC or IYC's purpose. The cost of projects must be a minimum of \$1,000 and the grant provides for 50% of the project expenses. Mr. Crawford suggested the IYC members develop a grant project, related to the City's efforts discussed earlier in the meeting, such as "reinventing" or "inspiring" and promote the international flavor of Hickory.

Mr. Nassar said that since the fiscal year ends on June 30, anyone interested needs to act quickly. HIC members will consider grant project requests at their June meeting. Mr. Wolfe said if HIC members know of an organization that may be interested, send them a link to the grant page and encourage them to apply quickly.

HIC Budget Update – No discussion.

New Business:

Other – Mr. Nassar introduced HIC member Becky Mich from Romania. He said that each year, she and other women from the Romanian Baptist Church prepare the refreshments for their choir's

Christmas program, held in the SALT Block Auditorium in December. She said they would again hold the choir performance in December.

Self-introductions were made by members of the HIC and IYC; each stated their native country and/or city/state in the U.S.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be on Thursday, June 19, 2014, 5:30 pm in the Moretz Board Room at the Arts & Science Center.

Adjournment: Mr. Crawford said the IYC's monthly meeting would begin after a short break. He asked HIC members to remain and meet the IYC members.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Hani Nassar, Chair
Hickory International Council

Anne Starnes, Minutes Clerk