

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
REPORT FOR THE VILLAGE COUNCIL WORKSHOP
JANUARY 27, 2009 AGENDA

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
Cultural Exchange History & Sister City Consideration	Resolution Ordinance Motion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only	Michael Baker Deputy Village Manager

SYNOPSIS

Discussion is requested regarding the formalization of a Sister City program between Beitigheim-Bissingen, Germany and the Village of Downers Grove.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Village's Mission identified *Partner with Others* and *Make a Great Community*. Supporting objectives of these goals include *Working with Community Organizations and Institutions to Achieve Vision, Goals and Mission* and *Honoring Our Heritage and History*.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Village would incur some costs participating in the Sister City program. The annual cost could range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 and includes transportation of Village officials to Germany for the formal ceremony, the creation of a Village plaque, art commission, and subsidized travel for Bietigheim-Bissingen residents to Chicago. These expenses could be budgeted for in the FY10 Budget. Alternatively, these costs could be paid for by community groups.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends action at the discretion of the Village Council. If the Village Council is interested in establishing a Sister City relationship with Beitigheim-Bissingen, staff will arrange for a meeting with Beitigheim-Bissingen officials in the summer of 2009 and draft a resolution declaring Beitigheim-Bissingen a Sister City for consideration at a future Village Council Workshop.

BACKGROUND

According to the Illinois State Chapter of Sister Cities International, a sister city program enables citizens to become directly involved in international relations in a unique and meaningful way by allowing citizens to exchange ideas, gain international perspective and increase their understanding of global issues. Sister cities build the foundation for increased tourism, reliable business contacts, and cross cultural awareness. In formalizing our already ongoing relationship with Bietigheim-Bissingen, Downers Grove would join over 50 Illinois Sister City International member cities.

A formalized Sister City relationship would acknowledge an existing relationship between Beitigheim-Bissingen and Downers Grove that has been ongoing for 25 years and supports ongoing cultural, musical, and commerce exchange. In 2010, these two communities will be celebrating their 25th anniversary of ongoing musical and cultural exchange. Community High School District 99 requests a coordinated, governmental proclamation between the Mayors of Bietigheim-Bissingen and Downers Grove to acknowledge the sustained cycle of cultural/musical exchanges between the communities.

The cultural exchange is the product of nearly 25 years of ongoing musical tours between the District 99 schools and the Bietigheim-Bissingen Musikschule. In 1985, the first visit of German students to

Downers Grove was coordinated. District 99 sent their first music ensembles to visit Germany in 1993 and in 2008 made their 5th tour to Germany. District 99 has hosted many different Musikschule tours over the past 23 years, including multiple visits by their concert band, string orchestra, guitar orchestra, recorder ensemble, and accordion band. Downers Grove Government has been very supportive of welcoming these guests.

Upon formalizing a Sister City relationship, opportunities for the Village include:

- Inviting Bietigheim-Bissingen to enter into a Sister City relationship;
- Developing an official proclamation;
- Traveling with District 99 Orchestra to Germany for events, ceremonies, and an official proclamation;
- Hosting government officials from Germany to participate in several events and ceremonies;
- Inviting a local visual artist from Bietigheim-Bissingen to exhibit in the Downers Grove Fine Arts Festival;
- Commissioning a visual artist from Downers Grove to produce a piece (representing our community) for the city of Bietigheim-Bissingen. Similarly, a visual artist from Bietigheim-Bissingen would be commissioned to produce a piece for our Village; and
- Subsidizing travel to the Chicago metro area for citizens from Bietigheim-Bissingen if they chose to stay in Downers Grove during their visit, providing a connection as well as a positive economic impact on tourism.

The Mayor of Bietigheim-Bissingen as well as other elected officials will be traveling to the United States this summer and if the Village Council shows interest in establishing an official relationship and extends an invitation to Bietigheim-Bissingen delegates, they would visit Downers Grove and take the opportunity to meet the Mayor and Council as well as tour the area. This would give the Council and Bietigheim-Bissingen delegates the opportunity to meet before committing and developing an official proclamation declaring Bietigheim-Bissingen an official Sister-City. Staff would work with Community District 99 to host officials for this brief stay.