



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-4177

Agenda Item Number: 13.

Agenda Date: 8/11/2016

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Economic Development Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Rene Dominguez

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City-wide

SUBJECT:

Sister City Agreement with the City of Windhoek, Republic of Namibia

SUMMARY:

The Sister City Agreement with the City of Windhoek is meant to encourage greater friendships and understanding between other nations and U.S. cities, counties and states. In order to foster these goals, the people of San Antonio and the City of Windhoek, Namibia agree to collaborate for the mutual benefit of our communities by exploring educational, economic and cultural opportunities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Sister City Program, administered by Sister Cities International, was initiated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956.

San Antonio has hosted numerous Namibian delegations over the years beginning soon after Namibia's independence from South Africa in 1990. The three most recent Namibian ambassadors have visited San Antonio and our elected officials almost annually for the past 10 years. San Antonio is also home to an Honorary Consul of Namibia who is active in fostering strong linkages between the two communities.

As part of a strongly held objective to build a connection to Africa, Mayor Taylor signed a Friendship City Agreement with the Mayor of Windhoek, Republic of Namibia, on April 21, 2015. In September 2015, The Mayor welcomed the President of the Republic of Namibia to San Antonio along with the Deputy Prime Minister and three cabinet-level Ministers of State. During this visit, the University of Texas Health Science

Center at San Antonio signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Republic of Namibia to establish cooperative relations especially in the development of academic and cultural interchanges and other areas of mutual interest.

Through the signing of the Friendship City Agreement and the MOU, Windhoek and San Antonio jointly support continued efforts to strengthen relations, promote economic cooperation and bilateral trade and exchanges in fields including renewable energy, health services, social affairs, culture, tourism and education. Such activities and visits have resulted in great exposure for San Antonio as well as new links and potential business opportunities for large scale construction, design services and energy production as Namibia seeks to further develop their national infrastructure (roads, hospitals, housing, utilities production). During the President's visit last year, the Minister of Energy remained in San Antonio to tour the Mission Solar plant at Brooks City Base. In further support of creating mutually beneficial economic development opportunities for both cities and furthering a closer working relationship, the President of Namibia has invited the Mayor to lead a delegation of civic, educational and business leaders from San Antonio in October 2016 to formalize Sister City relations and identify initiatives to expand commercial ties.

In further support of this effort, the President of Namibia has invited the Mayor to lead a delegation of civic, educational and business leaders from San Antonio in October 2016 to formalize Sister City relations and identify opportunities to expand commercial ties.

San Antonio currently has two sister cities in Mexico, two in Europe and five in Asia. If a Windhoek Sister City relationship is approved, it would be the first such relationship for San Antonio on the African continent.

ISSUE:

Sister Cities International requires the signatures of both Mayors and ratification of the agreement by the respective city governments. In following the protocol of Sister Cities International, the governments of Windhoek and San Antonio are required to acknowledge the importance of their intent to approve the Sister City Agreement. In this vein, this agreement will increase foreign direct investment, trade, tourism, cultural and educational exchanges which will broaden and deepen the relationship between Windhoek and San Antonio.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council could choose not to approve a Sister City Agreement with the City of Windhoek, Republic of Namibia. However, this would be inconsistent and contrary to prior City policy of entering into agreements establishing mutual understanding and friendship with other cities.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Sister City Agreement between the City of Windhoek, Republic of Namibia and the City of San Antonio, Texas, contains no specific commitment of funds. However, the International Relations Office budget supports ongoing sister city programs.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of an ordinance authorizing the City to enter into a Sister City Agreement between the City of Windhoek, Republic of Namibia and the City of San Antonio, Texas.