



## STAFF REPORT

**Meeting Date:** June 18, 2013  
**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council  
**From:** Megan Roach, Marketing & Economic Sustainability Manager   
**Subject:** Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association Overview and Funding Request  
**Attachments:** 1. None

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### INTRODUCTION

This item provides an overview on the activities of the Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association and requests City Council direction regarding a funding request from the Association for \$5,000 for website development.

### DISCUSSION

The City of Beverly Hills is a member of Sister Cities International, Inc., a nonprofit, citizen diplomacy network that creates and strengthens partnerships between U.S. and international communities to increase global cooperation at the local level.

A sister city is a long-term partnership between two cities, which becomes official with a signing ceremony of the top-elected officials of the two local jurisdictions, following approval by the City Council. Sister city partners engage in an array of mutually beneficial projects, in diverse areas of interest, including arts and culture, business and economic development, education, humanitarian assistance, public safety, and youth involvement. Beverly Hills has long had formal sister city partnerships with Cannes, France and Acapulco, Mexico.

In 2007, the City Council supported the development of Beverly Hills Global Partners ("BHGP"), a new sister city organization that was an independent community non-profit corporation. The goal of BHGP was (a) to foster and support the existing relationships with Cannes and Acapulco and (b) to establish new sister city relationships with a city in Israel and China. As a result of these efforts, new sister city relationships were established with Herzliya, Israel, and Pudong, a district in Shanghai, China. In 2011, one of the two founders of BHGP, who was also the chair of the Pudong sister city committee, became embroiled in a personal controversy and has since moved away from Beverly Hills and is no longer involved in the City's sister city efforts. As a result, BHGP will be dissolved and sister city ambassador positions under BHGP will be terminated.

In 2012, a group of Beverly Hills residents expressed interest in renewing support for Beverly Hills' relationships with its four sister city partners and fostering new

relationships with potential sister cities. This new effort is intended to make next year's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the incorporation of Beverly Hills a truly global celebration. With leadership from Howard Szabo, Sharona Nazarian, Myra Lurie and Alissa Roston, the group has met over the past year to develop a new organization – Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association (“BHSCA”) - along with a recommended organization governing structure, mission statement, goals and objectives. On May 24, 2013, the BHSCA provided an update on their activities to the City Council Sister Cities Liaison Committee (Mayor Mirisch and Vice Mayor Bosse).

### **Proposed Structure of Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association**

**Mission Statement:** The mission of the Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association is to develop and promote friendship with the sister cities of the City of Beverly Hills through the exchange of culture, education, technology, art and community well-being.

The goal of the new organization is to operate as a self-sustaining, 501(c)(3) non-profit entity – utilizing corporate support and other fundraising. However, the early years of the program may require a minimum contribution by the City until the program is able to evolve into a self-governing and self-sustaining organization.

**Proposed New City Relationships:** The BHSCA is exploring new sister city relationships and the first to be presented to the City Council at the June 18 study session meeting for consideration, is with the Gangnam District in the city of Seoul, South Korea. The Gangnam District is widely known for its heavily concentrated wealth and high standard of living, which has been compared to western cities such as Beverly Hills. South Korea is known for its high standard of education and Gangnam is considered as the national capital of education, which is one of the decisive factors to make Gangnam the most attractive destination in South Korea.

**Centennial Celebration:** The BHSCA is exploring collaborations with the City for the 2014 Centennial Celebration including opportunities to promote Beverly Hills to current and prospective sister cities. In February the City Council approved the Centennial program budget, which includes \$25,000 for sister city-related activities. The BHSCA is currently exploring initiatives to support the Centennial and will return to the City Council with a recommendation for this funding.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Fiscal Year 2012-13 budget includes \$500 for the annual Sister Cities International dues. In addition, the BHSCA is requesting \$5,000 for a website development consultant, which will help promote the BHSCA as they meet with prospective new sister cities. Funding is available in the Policy and Management Department budget.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council:

- 1.) Terminate sister city ambassador positions established in connection with BHGP; and
- 2.) Provide direction on the new governing structure of the Beverly Hills Sister Cities Association; and

3.) Provide feedback on the proposed sister city relationship with the Gangnam District in Seoul, South Korea; and

4.) Provide direction regarding the request from the BHSCA for \$5,000 for the development of their website.

Don Rhoads  
Finance Approval 

Cheryl Friedling  
Approved By 