

**CITY OF ABILENE
SISTER CITY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

**February 217, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.
Abilene Public Library
209 NW 4th St. Abilene, KS 67410**

Members Present: Jennie Hiatt (Chair), Jerry Rankin (Vice-Chair), Kim Shafer (Treasurer), Corina Ryland (Corresponding Secretary), Christal Hall (Member), Mary Montgomery (Member), Samantha Geissinger (Member), Kevin Unruh (Member) and Heather Unruh (Friends of Sister City).

Members Absent: Jennifer Hager (Member)

Additional Present: Finance Director, Kelsey Briand

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Jennie Hiatt at 6:03pm.

Approval of Agenda

Corina moved to approve the agenda with the correction of #6 "Sister" spelled correctly, seconded by Kevin. All in favor.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes – January 13, 2026

Kim moved to approve the minutes with the following changes: adding "Corresponding Secretary" to Corina, adding closed) to member behind Mary's name, adding "Member" behind Kevin's name, Mary seconded. All in favor.

Public Comments and Correspondence

- a. News from Omitama - None
- b. Official Correspondence – Makoto sent over forms to fill out for the March 22nd trip. There will be a welcome dinner and a tour to a whiskey distillery and flower garden.

Financial Report

New Balance: \$10,000

Kim shared the general fund for Sister City is at \$10,000, she asked for clarification on remaining funds from previous year. Staff clarified that the remaining balance does not carry-over. The scholarship fund has \$8,110.00.

Jennie shared that the gift came out of the 2025 budget, but the framing costs came out of the 2026 budget.

Kevin moved to accept the financial report. Corina seconded. All in favor

Friends of Sister City

Heather shared the Friends of Sister City balance is \$7,938.78. She requested that the board start thinking about what Friends of Sister City could do for the trip this summer. Jennie shared the request from Bob Bow regarding the Longford water order. Jennie will pass along the email to Heather. Jennie asked for clarification on who makes up the Friends of Sister City, currently it is Andrea Taylor as president and Heather as Secretary/Treasurer.

School Programs

Jerry shared that the Japan Club met today with 22 fourth and fifth graders, they talked about Daruma (a doll that is used to set goals at the beginning of the year). The eyes of the Daruma are left blank, once you have established your goal, one eye is colored in and the other eye is not colored in until that goal is met. They also talked about the Lunar New Year. Jerry also shared that in January, Josh Guston, came on a Tuesday and Thursday to talk to the Japan Club, sharing his experience and artifacts from his trip to Japan.

Corina shared that her group of ten 8th graders will meet Friday and they want to describe American symbols to the Japanese students.

Cristal shared that she was invited to Blue Ridge Elementary School's third grade class to show the student's Kimonos and the kids were able to try on the Kimono.

Old Business

- a. March 22nd visit to Japan: Everyone who is going to Japan has their tickets. Jennie asked who was going to travel with the gift, Jerry will take the gift with him. Jennie asked if there was any type of certificate that we want to present Omitama with? The Board requested a proclamation from the Mayor congratulating Omitama on 20 years and affirming our continued partnership. Staff will add this to the March 9, 2026 City Commission meeting.
- b. By laws: Jennie and Kim met to review the by-laws and make recommendations to update them. The board discussed the recommendations. Jennie and Kim are also working on updates to the city website for Sister City as well.
- c. Sister City International: Ashley with SCI, assisted Jennie with adding Omitama under Abilene on their website. SCI extended the deadline for the Youth Leadership Summit. Harmon Geissinger submitted his application to the Youth Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Jennie submitted board information to Cindy with SCI.

New Business

- a. Gift for Summer Delegation: Jennie will invite Heather (artist) to the next meeting to discuss the four seasons paintings. The spring painting is the gift for the March 22nd trip, and the summer painting will be for the summer delegation gift.
- b. Sister City Fund – Community Foundation: Jennie will reach out to Elizabeth Weese at the Community Foundation to set up a meeting to determine the Sister City funds at the Community Foundation.
- c. Longford water order: Jennie will reach out to Bob Bow to inform him of the number of students/adults coming to Abilene this summer to place the water order.

Adjournment

Next meeting: March 10, 2026. Corina made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mary. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:37pm.

Minutes Approved,

Attest:

Jennie Hiatt
Sister City Board

Kelsey Briand
Kelsey Briand, Finance Director