



Rochester Hills

Minutes - Draft

Sister City Committee/Rochester

*Rochester Hills: David Blair, Theresa Mungioli, and David Walker
Rochester: Debbie Jones, Steve Sage, and Marilyn Trent*

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Tuesday, June 3, 2025

5:30 PM

1000 Rochester Hills Drive

CALL TO ORDER

Member Mungioli called the Sister City Committee/Rochester meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present 4 - Debbie Jones, Marilyn Trent, Theresa Mungioli and David Walker

Absent 2 - Steve Sage and David Blair

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ken Elwert, Director of Parks and Natural Resources

Erin McKay, Adult Liaison, Rochester Hills Government Youth Council (RHGYC)

Eliza Pizzuti, Chairperson of the Rochester Hills Government Youth Council (RHGYC)

Siddh Sheth, Vice Chairperson of the Rochester Hills Government Youth Council (RHGYC)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Jones, seconded by Trent, that the Agenda be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 4 - Jones, Trent, Mungioli and Walker

Absent 2 - Sage and Blair

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(Member Blair arrived at 5:47 p.m.)

Present 5 - Debbie Jones, Marilyn Trent, David Blair, Theresa Mungioli and David Walker

Absent 1 - Steve Sage

2025-0159 Approval of Minutes - Sister City Committee - February 26, 2025

Attachments: [02262025 Meeting Minutes.pdf](02262025_Meeting_Minutes.pdf)
[Resolution \(Draft\).pdf](Resolution_(Draft).pdf)

A motion was made by Trent, seconded by Jones, that this matter be Approved as Presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 4 - Jones, Trent, Mungioli and Walker

Absent 2 - Sage and Blair

Resolved, that the Minutes of the Sister City Committee/Rochester Meeting held on February 26, 2025 be approved as presented.

DISCUSSION

Rochester Hills Government Youth Council:

Member Mungioli introduced - Erin McKay - Rochester Hills Government Youth Council (RHGYC) Adult Liaison, Eliza Pizzuti, Chairperson, RHGYC and Siddh Seth, Vice Chairperson, RHGYC

Ms. McKay provided an overview of the Rochester Hills Government Youth Council and shared that she had joined the City in August 2024 as the adult advisor for the RHGYC, which is comprised of 16 members representing all four districts of Rochester Hills. The RHGYC was established in 2005 by the City Council to give young people a voice in the City. It operates similarly to the City Council, with monthly meetings and agendas. Members must reside in Rochester Hills. She explained that the Bylaws require 15 members. The RHGYC meets on the first Wednesday of each month, with exceptions for special circumstances like elections, special meetings and planning meetings for events like the annual cultural fair. Members serve a one-year term from September to August and may reapply, if in good standing. The RHGYC recruits members through word of mouth, social media, the City's website, promotion of RHGYC applications at City events and through the local schools attended by Rochester Hills residents.

Eligible applicants must be Rochester Hills residents and current high school students; incoming freshmen are eligible. The selection process involves a completed application, two letters of recommendation from adults, and answers to three essay questions. The application deadline for the recent cycle was May 23rd at 5:00 PM. Four vacancies need to be filled and interviews will be conducted by City Council President Ryan Deal, Ms. McKay and two youth council members, including Ms. Pizzuti.

Ms. McKay stated that she and President Deel attend every RHGYC meeting to help develop ideas ensuring they represent the City and the Youth Council well.

Ms. McKay stated she also oversees the budget and conducts biannual reviews in February and August for each youth council member, providing constructive feedback for growth.

Ms. McKay introduced **Ms. Pizzuti** and **Mr. Seth**, two long-time members to share their experiences.

Ms. Pizzuti stated that she has been a two-year member of the Green Space Advisory Board and is currently serving on the Deer Management Advisory

Committee. She discussed the monthly meetings of the Green Space Committee, Deer Management Advisory Committee, etc. and stated that the RHGYC members attend the City Council Meetings seated at the dais to report to City Council regarding their activities. RHGYC has a board comprised of a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary; biannual elections are held for each respective position. This process mirrors city council elections and is competitive especially among upperclassmen. She stated that she and Mr. Sheth have held all three leadership roles.

She continued that the RHGYC actively participate in City events, volunteering at occasions like Oak in the Hills, the Community Foundation Tailgate Party; they also organize their own events, including the Social Reset and the popular Cultural Fair. They provide input to City departments, particularly the Planning Commission, offering a youth perspective on the City's master plan and learning about the City's inner workings. Team-building activities, such as an annual Christmas pajama party and a final meeting with boat rentals at Spencer's Park are also organized.

RHGYC's year begins with a swearing-in ceremony at a City Council meeting, where members take an oath, receive oath of office certificates, and meet City Council members and new youth council members. The RHGYC is highly involved in various City events and initiatives. They play a significant role in the annual State of the City event, assisting with preparations, distributing programs, and participating in on-stage activities with the Mayor. One of their favorite events is the Rochester Hills Fire Department (RHFD) open house, where they act as Sparky, the RHFD's mascot, and interact with children, assist with games and manage check-ins.

They also contribute to the Community Foundation Tailgate Party by checking in attendees and selling raffle tickets. At the annual Rochester Hills Fall Festival for City employees, they help with photography, maintain the bonfire for s'mores, and serve popcorn, fostering connections with City employees and their families.

The RHGYC actively participates in community outreach, including delivering toys for children and distributing winter gear to senior homes. They also organize their own events, such as the Social Reset, which focuses on mental health awareness and features guest speakers, therapy dogs and yoga sessions.

Additionally, the RHGYC participate in environmental efforts like the Clinton River cleanup, where they actively remove trash and were featured on the local news for their efforts. For events like the Cultural Fair, the RHGYC divides into committees (logistics, marketing, vendors and entertainment), gaining experience in professional correspondence and event coordination. They also manage volunteer coordination with recruitment of students from local schools, further engaging the community.

She commented that she and Mr. Sheth are both three-year members of the RHGYC entering their fourth year, emphasized the members' accountability and passion for Rochester Hills, exemplified by their matching Rochester Hills

sunglasses. She described the youth council as a group of genuinely passionate and dedicated students who are willing to work hard and build strong social connections. They highlighted the welcoming environment for new members, and mentioned a freshman who had participated in the Clinton River cleanup.

Discussion ensued by Committee Members as to the RHGYC Members balancing their school commitments along with the youth council's commitments.

Both Ms. Pizzuti and Mr. Sheth shared that the RHGYC significantly benefits them as individuals and students, offering opportunities to meet inspiring adults and City Council Members. They noted that the Social Reset event focused on mental health awareness and was inspired by a Rochester Hills event with the goal of providing a valuable resource to the community.

Ms. McKay then introduced Mr. Sheth to speak about the application process and his experience with the RHGYC.

Mr. Sheth stated that RHGYC applicants apply and are interviewed by President Deel, Ms. McKay and two (2) RHGYC Members; the selected applicants are notified by phone and letter, followed by an orientation and swearing-in ceremony at a City Council Meeting for all of the RHGYC Members. During Orientation, members engage in team-building, identify skill sets, and review expectations, and sign a Letter of Agreement regarding meeting schedules, attendance and committee participation.

He continued that core opportunities include being appointed to City Boards, Commissions and Committees, such as the Planning Commission, Green Space Advisory Board, and Deer Advisory Management Committee; members then provide their individual committee updates to the youth council. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 PM at City Hall, with additional special meetings as needed; proactive communication for absences is expected. Youth council officers meet weekly to create agendas and delegate tasks for larger events like the Cultural Fair.

The youth council participates in numerous community events, including the Wake Me Up Before You Go Go 5K where they cheered on runners and provided water, and the Rochester Trails Strong Bike Show where they tallied votes for bike categories and ran game stations. They also helped with parking and collected donations at the Stonewall Pumpkin Festival, raising over \$900 for the splash pad fund in spite of rainy weather. At Light the Village, they distributed glow items and connected with community groups.

He stated that the RHGYC participates in the Annual Rochester Hometown Christmas Parade to promote the youth council; they also engage in holiday shopping to purchase gifts for children through Rainbow Connection and winter gear for Next Steps for Seniors. The annual holiday party serves as a team-building event with a potluck and white elephant gift exchange.

During midwinter break, the RHGYC visited the state capitol and participated in

Legislative Day in Lansing, visiting with the state legislature and connecting with figures like a Michigan Supreme Court Justice, Senator Webber and State Representative Tisdel to learn about state government and potential future opportunities.

He continued that the RHGYC's largest event is the annual Cultural Fair, a culmination of months of planning with multiple special meetings. The 2025 Fair focused on diverse cultural representation, featuring performers, food and informational booths which attracted over 500 attendees. This event provides members with valuable experience in event planning, vendor relations and community engagement. He stated his opinion that the RHGYC significantly boosts their confidence and presentation skills.

Member Mungioli introduced Ken Elwert, Director of Parks and Natural Resources.

Mr. Elwert discussed a planned dog park project on a 40-acre parcel located on Adams Road. The project is halfway through the design process, with building expected to begin next year. The City of Rochester Hills is considering a partnership with the City of Rochester, as a dog park has been a top citizen request for several years. The proposed dog park will be 3-4 acres, with separate areas for small and large dogs, supporting parking, year-round restrooms, a dog wash station and other amenities. The estimated cost for the dog park and some parking is around \$600,000. The plan is for it to be a gated-facility with an annual pass system, similar to what other communities like Sterling Heights use, with potential resident and non-resident charges to be reviewed by City Council. Rochester Hills has concerns about capacity and is interested in understanding Rochester Hills' plans and potential partnership levels. Options for partnership could include sponsoring an area (potentially six figures) or supporting members by covering the difference between resident and non-resident rates. The demand for the dog park will be assessed before committing to such options. Sterling Heights' smaller dog park has 800-1000 members and Rochester Hills anticipates around 1,500 members. The facility will require dogs to be vaccinated and licensed. The larger park project, which includes the dog park, is budgeted for approximately \$7.5 million dollars. The park will also feature a significant playground, larger than others in the community, to serve the northwest quadrant of the City which currently lacks such facilities. This new park is intended to be a community park rather than a regional one, similar to how Rochester Hills' other parks like Bloomer and Spencer are managed with associated costs or fees.

He confirmed that there are no current plans to charge for access to the proposed new park, unlike other larger parks, due to its smaller size and potential use as a community hub, possibly for early voting. He estimates the park's design is 75-80% complete, with the main remaining uncertainty being the building addition. Citizen requests consistently prioritize nature trails, with dog parks being a top-three request for the past decade and playgrounds are always needed, especially in the park's specific area. Water connections also emerged as a significant public input. The park's proposed name, honoring a conservationist who was also a dog owner, has the support of his family, which could address potential challenges from those opposed to a dog park in that

location. The discussion regarding a potential partnership with Rochester on the dog park was initiated by Rochester, stemming from earlier conversations and questions about dog parks.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NEXT MEETING DATE - Tuesday, August 5, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Committee, it was moved by Member Blair and seconded by Member Walker to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m.