

## Staff Report

**PARTNERSHIP WITH PODUJEVA, KOSOVO**

December 10, 2019

**BACKGROUND:**

At the City Council meeting on November 12, 2019, representatives of the Ames International Partner Cities Association (AIPCA) presented a request from the City of Podujeva, Kosovo, to form a partner city relationship with the City of Ames.

A subcommittee of AIPCA has explored the prospective partnership with Podujeva and has met with representatives of the Kosovo consulate in Des Moines. At the City Council meeting, AIPCA representatives conveyed that representatives from Podujeva and Kosovo have been very eager to initiate a partnership with Ames.

Ames has an existing partner city relationship with Koshu City, Japan. This partnership has existed since 1993. Although Ames and Koshu City have alternated sending and receiving adult and youth delegations each year in the past, the cities now send and receive only youth delegations in even-numbered years. Ames had a partner city relationship with Frydek-Mistek, Czech Republic, beginning in 1993. However, that partnership dissolved in 2013 at the request of the City of Frydek-Mistek. Since the dissolution of the relationship with Frydek-Mistek, AIPCA has explored a variety of prospective new partnerships, but no new formal relationship has been established.

The City contributes funds to AIPCA through the City Council Outside Funding Request process each year during the preparation of the City Budget. AIPCA received \$6,000 in this process in FY 2019/20. Of this amount, \$2,500 was to finance partial expenses for a trip to Podujeva to explore a potential partnership. AIPCA has typically received approximately \$5,000-\$7,000 in City funds per year since 2010. These funds help offset chaperone travel expenses, host gifts, and other miscellaneous materials. Delegates are responsible to pay for their own flight expenses, with host families providing lodging during the exchanges.

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

There are no statutory regulations relating to partner cities. The City Council is free to determine what partnerships are in the best interests of Ames and its residents. The goal of such partnerships is to foster and promote friendly relations and mutual understanding between the people of Ames and the people of cities in other nations.

**If the City Council wishes to pursue a new partnership, the Council can authorize the Mayor to respond to the Mayor of Podujeva and indicate Ames' interest in a partner city relationship.** If pursued, the letter would be exchanged to Podujeva through the Kosovo consulate. The partnership would be subject to approval by the Kosovo Ministry of State. Once approved, the mayors of both communities would have to meet to sign a partnership agreement.

Previously, the City Council has authorized the use of City funds to send an official City representative to a partner city. This happened most recently for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the partnership with Koshu City in 2013, when the City Council authorized up to \$2,400 from the Council Contingency Fund to send the Mayor to Japan. Should the City be asked to send a City government representative (either the Mayor or his representative) to Podujeva, the City Council will have to approve funding for the trip from the Council's Contingency Account.

In addition to these formal steps, AIPCA is recommending to send AIPCA representatives to Kosovo as part of an Iowa Sister States delegation in June. Funding for this trip would come out of the City's FY 2019/20 appropriation to the Ames International Partner Cities Association.