

**Nablus Working Group  
July 27, 2016  
Meeting Proceedings - Final**

**Attendance**

Essrea Cherin  
Sara-Jane Cohen  
Julia Halaby  
Fred Greene

Paul Heller  
Brenda Mehos  
Joan Nagel  
Rob Schware

*Facilitation*

Heather Bergman and Katie Waller

*\* Meeting summaries are a record of what was said at each meeting. A statement's inclusion does not mean that participants agree to its accuracy or intention. At the request of the Working Group, meeting reports capture all the comments made during meetings without summarizing them. \**

**Action Items**

<i>All</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send feedback on the BNSCP commitment document to Heather.</li> <li>• Send ideas for what the Working Group can do to increase understanding and respect.</li> <li>• Send suggestions to the Common Agreements document to Heather.</li> </ul>
<i>Heather</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Send meeting agenda a week in advance of the next meeting.</li> </ul>
<i>Joan and Essrea</i>	Investigate Norway Sister City experience.

**Introduction**

The Group discussed a few housekeeping matters before diving into the agenda items. Below are the details of this conversation.

- Some, but not all, members think that the Group should develop a grievance policy. That is an option to consider for the next meeting.
- Some people indicated that they were not sure why they are here. City Council gave the following guidance during their meeting on April 16, 2016 - "The goal of the committee will be to foster greater understanding and respect, engage in a productive dialog, heal wounds, and explore potential outcomes."
- The Group does not have to do all of this, but that is what will be a success in the eyes of Council. The Group can continue or stop meeting whenever they choose.
- City Council has asked the Group to discuss dates for the Council review of the Boulder Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP) application, and the results show that October will not be possible due to scheduling issues. November dates seem to have more traction.
- One member of the group would like to be able to add some time to the agenda to respond to public comments. It is useful to acknowledge when we get comments.
- BNSCP Board responses to the concerns raised by the Working Group will be discussed at this meeting.

**Review/Discuss Requested Information from BNSCP**

The Working Group previously requested information from BNSCP regarding the people in Nablus who are working with BNSCP, who is anchoring the project there, what the Sister City structure or organization looks like in Nablus, and what other Nablus Sister Cities have experienced regarding the politicization of the Sister City relationship. The group discussed this information, and the details of their comments are documented below. The documents provided are attached to this meeting summary.

- I talked with a number of people who are also engaged in a Sister City relationship with Nablus or another City on the West Bank. I asked them questions that have come up regularly. I asked them whether they have experienced people in their communities or Palestine using the twinning or Sister City relationship to promote anti-Israel sentiments, and if that has happened, how it was handled. I also asked if any harm has come to their community or municipality because of the relationship and if any harm has come to Israel because of their relationship.
- I sent an email to 15 people and heard back from four. I will share any additional comments with the Group if they become available.
- Pretty universally, the relationship has not been harmful, and there have not been problems with politicization. That is their experience, and you can read their comments for yourself. These are statements from my colleagues from around the world.
- Thank you for compiling this information.
- It was enjoyable to have an excuse to reach out to these people.
- I also heard interest in knowing with whom we work. That information is included in the document, "BNSCP Projects and Nabulsi Point-People." I will go over the people who are in Nablus. My counterpart in Nablus is Hakim Sabah. He is also the point person for the Lille, France Sister City project. He has considerable background in working on Sister City relationships. He is the director of Project Hope and the French cultural center. He is also an interpreter. He has three jobs, which is quite common in the West Bank. The wonderful thing about him is that he is profoundly committed to the wellbeing of Nablus. He gives everything he has to help the neediest people in Nablus and supports their wellbeing in any way. Project Hope is a large part of that. They help over 30 organizations in Nablus and coordinate volunteers to serve in Nablus. He knows everyone in the City because of his work, and he is our connector. He makes things happen and knows people in all types of industries. He is a strong individual with whom to be partnered. He organized the Nablus Cultural Festival for which Boulder Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP) send over dancers to participate. We heard this program was phenomenal. Several people have volunteered there with his help.
- Dr. Alia Assali is the Dean of Education at An Najah University and is partnered with a Fulbright Scholar from Naropa University in Boulder. We work closely with her and Rasha, who is a lecturer. Dr. Young is submitting another Fulbright application to continue her work in partnership with Dr. Assali. She is anxiously awaiting her acceptance, and we are hoping to plan another trip to work together.
- We work closely with Pioneers in Nablus. It is a k-12 school with an English immersion program and was founded by an American. All the teachers there have some command of English, so this was a good place to start the pen pal program. We work with Chloe O'Connor and others who are working to find other schools to meet the demand from Colorado. Dr. Assali has offered to connect BNSCP with the Latin Patriarchate School in Nablus.
- For yoga, BNSCP connects with Mirna. She completed her yoga training in Boulder, is very passionate about yoga, and shares it wherever she can.
- While Mirna is the point of contact there, there are other involved. The Boulder-based non-profit Calming Kids is the only yoga non-profit recognized by the American Medical Association. They have produced a booklet that was published by the Boulder Valley School District and has been translated into Arabic. Mirna has been spreading this booklet, and it is used in Nablus.
- These are the major point people, but there are lots of people involved in every project at varying degrees. It mirrors involvement at BNSCP; we have a key group of people who show up consistently and also people who will show up when a project they are drawn to is being implemented. They can choose their type and level of involvement.
- TYO is Tomorrow's Youth Organization, and it works to serve neediest of the needy women and children in Nablus. It is an excellent organization.
- Maya Abu Alhayat is a poet and a storyteller and works with us on the Palestinian Writing Workshop. She wrote the first Palestinian children's book if I am to understand correctly. We are working with her to have it translated into English and published in the US. The cover of her book

as just posted on the BNSCP Facebook page. There is a group of storytellers in Nablus who are working to train more. We are working with them to publish their stories, but also to train more storytellers.

- Suha and Adnan Sawalha are the contacts at Om Sadeq, a senior day center. It is an old building that was renovated and now supports the community. Suha is in charge of the center, but Adnan speaks better English, so he tends to be the point of contact. Many people from Boulder have gone to meet with them.
- Dr. Eyad Othman founded a substance abuse hotline in Nablus, as substance abuse is a large problem in Nablus. It is a challenging task, so BNSCP has been working to connect him with experts here so he can have a larger impact. Volunteers run the hotline, and we are trying to help them by bringing in more experts as resources.
- Dr. Ghawi and Amal Shashtari are the contacts for arts exchanges. An-Najah University has the only fine arts department in the West Bank. Ms. Shashtari is the Director of the National Conservatory of Music. We are working on getting musicians to train in Nablus so that it will be a true exchange.
- Majad Rfaie is the director a young adult dance troupe. He trains them in a cultural center, and they have been to Europe but never to the US. They are between the ages of 13 and 20. BNSCP wants to help get them to the US.
- Will Harris and Tim Bruns are both graduates of Colorado College and asked for BNSCP's involvement in creating a climbing wall in Nablus.
- I will have more questions about this in the future, but I need time to digest.
- Thank you for compiling this information.
- Is it correct that Nablus has eight sister cities, and you have talked to four?
- I sent emails to many others, but I am not sure of their command of English and have not heard back.
- Maybe we could have the Boulder mayor talk to their mayor of Nablus. We could have a homework assignment for someone on staff to coordinate this. Obviously, I think these comments are all genuine, and nothing was filtered out. Regardless, it would not hurt to have the mayors talk since they are both in places where it would be easy enough to arrange some discussion for City Council to hear for themselves.
- We could add the mayor conversation to the table of suggestions for actions that City Council should take.
- Is this list of activities tracking with what other sister cities do? These activities seem like a lot since it is all volunteers. Does anyone have the experience to see if this is similar regarding the amount and type of activities?
- People in the audience can speak to this, but I do not think we should open this to the audience.
- People can send it comments to the email. Are public comments recorded?
- Yes, the public comments are recorded.
- I spoke with two colleagues in Sacramento last night, and their parting words were that they are envious of all that BNSCP is accomplishing. They have been sistered with Bethlehem for eight to ten years. They used the word envy.
- I attend the Boulder Sister City Alliance meetings that are held quarterly, and all the representatives from the sister cities attend. I have heard feedback from other sister cities that they are surprised by how much BNSCP is doing.
- Would the group be willing to consider if this constitutes staying power? That was the question when this issue first arose.
- I came into this not knowing the people or issues other than what was reported in the Daily Camera. My wife is Jewish on both sides, and she was concerned about outside agitators. I did not suspect that, but I think this addresses the question of if there are people on the other side and the state of other Sister City relationships with Nablus. We have a big group on this side, too. Some people who are involved in Jalapa have said that they just do small projects that are important to

them. The people on both sides are happy working on small projects. They are just happy to be engaged in these activities. This is proof that there are people of good will on both sides. We hear about rock climbing in Ramallah because maybe it is part of the many small things that people can share.

- What I notice about this document is that it details many things that are going to happen but are not happening now. It is hard to gauge if these people and activities are going to have staying power. I do not know if it reflects staying power. I like the part about substance abuse. The rock climbers are not in Nablus and are looking for a foothold. These are wonderful programs. Do you think these activities will go forward if City Council does not approve the application?
- You made me realize I should have done a better job presenting. I did not list everything we have done. I just captured a few nuggets to give a better understanding of what is happening. Most of these things have been in planning stages for a long time and are just starting. I would never have thought about rock climbing in Nablus, but a professional rock climber from Boulder went to Nablus and came back and was excited about the project. He said that BNSCP has to get this going because it is some of the best rock climbing in the region and is going to get Israelis coming to the area. He started planning this program five years ago. We are moving along with this project slowly. Some of the things listed are the next steps, while others have been ongoing for years, like the writing workshop. We have a relationship with a substance abuse professional in Boulder, and he is serving as a resource and helps them when they need it.
- The yoga trainings occurred not this year, but the year before. The Calming Kids effort has continued for several years.
- The yoga programs and relationship with Mirna are three years old. In the contextual setting, it takes a lot of time to get any program up and running. It takes resources and commitment. We are dealing with many holidays and other interruptions. Relationships have to be with people who have fires in their bellies and are trying to realize their objectives. They take a while to come to fruition.
- If City Council does not approve this application, the projects will continue to the degree that BNSCP can support it. The dance troupe will be hurt the most, as their success depends on the approval. More resources will be available to them if the application is approved, such as grants.
- I went to the International Sister City website to see what grants are available for sister cities. There was a one-line statement that said there are no funds available for grants at this time. They offer a grants database of other organizations' grants that a Sister City could apply for, but those did not require Sister City status. It does seem that getting the City Council to do something would give BNSCP more legitimacy, but would not be a quid pro quo in applying for funds from a variety of organizations. That is how I understood it.
- My understanding from talking with other sister cities is that more resources would be available.
- Is there a sense that there are people of good will on the Nablus side?
- It looks like gravitas, but I want a chance to digest this and look at some of the listed people and organizations.
- The staying power is not my fundamental concern. This looks like a fine list of programs.
- I am curious about if hearing about experiences of Europeans helps to allay concerns about projects being taken advantage of or being used inappropriately.
- I do not know if this helps and there are problems I continue to have. I have real problems with the Project Hope website and the way they report their work on their website. I do not know what they do in the field. When I read what they want their volunteers to do when they come back, it is very political. It is political to me. When volunteers come back, they want them to go into the world and report of the suffering of Palestinians under occupation without context for why there is an occupation. This is not to say that what Israelis do is right, but it is a much more complex story than what Project Hope suggests their volunteers share. It makes me question when someone says there is nothing political.
- I appreciate what you said about it being complex; it is. It is not our job to say what is or is not political. It is our job to make sure that the application is not political and that the organization

behind it is not doing political things. That is what the Working Group should be doing. I have no power over Project Hope or other organizations. That is not why we are here. We have to stay focused on the ground rules and not bring in extraneous information. Let us stick to what we are supposed to be doing.

- Stavanger, Norway has had a Sister City relationship with Nablus and at some point recently the City Council discussed if they should suspend the relationship.
- I have heard that it was based on the same concerns that have been voiced in this group. I have also heard that they chose not to suspend the relationship. I did not include this because I do not have a relationship with the City Councilors who discussed this. I did not ask my contacts any questions that would have drawn this response. I can ask them more questions if you would like.
- It is not our job to look at the application. We were asked to foster greater understanding and respect, engage in a productive dialog, heal wounds, and explore potential outcomes. It is not our job to edit, flesh out, or critique the application. That is not why I am here. I am here to talk about how the Sister City relationship with Nablus would impact the City of Boulder and the people who live here, and the work BNSCP has done reflects on that question. It also reflects on how the relationships between the two cities will continue to flesh out in the future. To that extent, there is a very serious concern. It is not on the radar of most people that they think they are going to be physically harmed. It is a sense of how this relationship is sanctified by City Council, how I will reflect on Boulder, how it will impact the City, and what can be done to ameliorate these concerns. Those are not physical fears.
- The business of Norway is interesting to me. It may take a while to make contact. I would like to suggest that Essrea and Joan talk to the people in Norway and report back. It may be useful to give those who are opposed to the application a chance to speak to the people in Norway and ask questions *Joan Nagel and Essrea Cherin will work together to investigate the Norway matter further.*
- I want to ask people in this group if they think that we are fostering respect. The things I hear land on me very hard and sound like doom. Under your words, it lands on me that it would look bad if there were a Sister City relationship. To me, this program sounds very inclusive, which is how I think about Boulder. Could you reveal your thinking of how you are fostering greater respect and understanding? I am about to start my 29 th year of teaching and remember when Boulder High wanted to be renamed Obama High. It was controversial and people were mad, but it sparked conversation. I do not know what you see on the websites, but I think you may be putting your interpretation into them. Schools are an institution of exploration. It is likely that some of what you see is the edginess of youth.
- The first thing for me is that these are lovely messages, but they do not address my concerns, and I did not think they would. I do not know what the Jewish communities are like in these towns. There are lots of Jews who do not feel safe in Europe. They are going to Israel or coming to the US. I am not challenging these people, but I do not know them. We all have blindness. I shared last time, and I found it to be poignant and positive to share with the Group. My concerns remain about the Jewish communities that are functioning in these cities. How do these people feel about the string of anti-Jewish sentiments? I have no way of knowing, and you do not either. That is a concern here in Boulder. I would love to respond to your question. The things you have shared, I am hearing and feeling on my side. I, for one, work hard to hear the other, regardless of who they are. These projects are lovely. My concern is that when people hear a Jewish community response, it is assumed that we do not like Palestinians or are anti-Arab, and that is not fair. We need to return to talking about sharing a greater understanding. I do not think people understand my concerns. My concerns are being interpreted as being anti-Palestinian.
- I have been trying to understand the opposition to this project for the past three years. The feeling is that endorsing this application is not okay. I would hope that Boulder would be above that and be more inclusive. I feel like I have not said much, and now it is my turn. Help me understand how these projects we have been doing for the past five years have been harmful to Boulder? It's my

opinion that they do no harm. We have been talking about the benefits, and I think that these activities show the benefits in what BNSCP does.

- There are two points I would like to bring up. First, I read the English language Nablus Sister City strategic plan that was created by the Nablus government. It is a few years old, but it is still operative. One thing it says is that they encourage the creation of twinning relationships or sister cities in Europe and North America as a way to further strengthen connections that will help fight against the occupation. That is not the exact language, but that is how I interpreted it. That is political. To me, BNSCP may be totally apolitical, even if it was not when it started, but the entity with which you propose creating an official relationship has a political goal for wanting a Sister City connection. You are doing some great projects. I am also doing good projects, as are other people in this Group. There are people who are opposed to the proposal and still think BNSCP is doing good work. Other groups who work in the area are not seeking this type of relationship because it is not needed to get the work done. BNSCP does not need this recognition either. BNSCP has been working without the City Council seal of approval. Whether or not the application is approved, people in Boulder who care about this type of work will continue to do it. The concerns are not in the harm of the project, but rather the painful divisiveness in this community. When I look at Nablus, I have no doubt there are good people there. There are good people in Ferguson, Mecca, and Moscow. Even though we see bad things come out of these places, one thing that troubles me about Nablus is Martyrs' Square. It celebrates and glorifies people whom I consider to be murderers. It was said at the last meeting that we all memorialize our dead. We do not memorialize Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols, or the awful man from the nightclub in Orlando. They are murderers. We do not memorialize them. The people being memorialized in Nablus are murderers.
- I want to remind everyone about the last ground rule that we will focus on the application and not geopolitical arguments and religion. I am Jewish, and no Rabbi in the world will represent my Jewishness. We are not here talking about a religious group of people. We agreed in the ground rules to talk about the application. This is complex, and there are murderers in every place. There are assassins and murderers nearby.
- We have struggled with this ground rule. For some people, this is a clear ground rule, but for others, the application cannot be separated from geopolitical issues.
- My question did not get answered. The first rule of compassionate listening is not to make things about you. I have not felt heard when you say that my concerns could also be described as your concerns. It minimizes the things I say. I want to hear that you heard what I said, rather than how you relate to it. This is a practice I have spent years doing. We recognize we have triggers, and they are own baggage. I asked a question about greater understanding, I grew up with deep exposure to this. A martyr has many layers, and I am not convinced that the Square celebrates murderers. It is more complex than this generalization. I have been called a terrorist since I was ten. I have not heard evidence that you are trying to understand these people. Everything is political. What we are doing in this circle is to understand people who live in these conditions far away and what makes them feel, think, or post on the internet. I hear people say that BNSCP can continue their work without an official stamp of approval, and that is telling me we are not worthy to being a Sister City. I have lived here for so long and why is my voice always silenced? For two-thirds of my career, I could not tell people about my life. You have no idea what it is like to be told to continue to do work, but not tell my story to avoid controversy. This makes me feel disrespected and second class. I will go on and live in the shadows. I still want to hear about greater understanding.
- I think what we need to say is how we can be better and what future conversations should entail. I hear you saying the same things and you are talking past each other every time. I think it is making it more frustrating.
- I appreciate your voice and you bringing your heart and honesty. I want to respond to the concern that was shared about the political statements, positions of partner organizations, and their websites that some find political and make them feel uncomfortable. Politics exist and are hard to remove. I founded this project over five years ago and have been involved with many people. I

never ask their political beliefs, and I do not know what beliefs are held by those who are involved in this project. Everyone will have their agenda, and I do not ask because it is unimportant to the work we are doing. At every meeting we focus on reading the mission statement that guides all of our projects. This mission statement reads, "The Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project fosters relationships through cultural, educational and professional exchanges, inspiring lifelong friendships that promote understanding and peace through person-to-person "citizen diplomacy." That is how I want us to be judged. I do not know the politics of our colleagues in Nablus because I do not ask. I foster a friendship based on who they are. If they want to engage with me on the project, I engage. I do not engage on issues of boycott divest sanction (BDS). Are the projects we are involved in promoting a political position or advocating for political beliefs? If you see that they are, we want to know.

- I want to respond about why I am opposed on a personal level. It has nothing to do with the projects or not wanting to engage with the people of Palestine. I have a diary that was given to my father by his first cousins as he was embarking on a boat by himself without family members to get him out of Nazi Germany. He was thirteen years old. The cousins wrote a message in this diary wishing him a bright future and to remember them. Their family chose to stay together and booked passage on the S.S. St. Louis--"Voyage of the damned." The ship sailed all the way to Havana, Cuba, and the U.S. denied the refugees entry; the ship returned to Europe where my father's family and many others perished in Auschwitz. Therefore feel strongly that it is important for there to be a Jewish homeland--a safe place for Jews to go. I am not concerned about the relationship-building aspect of this project. I am concerned that the following will happen: People will go to Nablus and return with observations. They will share observation such as army tanks destroying a house. Someone suggested an idea at the last meeting that BNSCP should clearly state that the views of participants are not shared by BNSCP and have the clear disclaimer. What concerns me is that people will go and describe what they saw in Nablus. They will come back as part of the BNSCP project and ask what they can do. At that point, people connected to BNSCP will assert the disclaimer that they are not speaking in their role as part of BNSCP and they perhaps will promote BDS--the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction against Israel movement or urging Congress to reduce foreign aid to Israel. Those things are not promoting peace. They are not promoting a two-state solution. BNSCP then becomes a platform to delegitimize Israel, and I do not want there to no longer be a safe place for Jewish people to live.
- We need to move on to the things on which we agree. We all agree on certain things.
- People keep coming back to the last ground rule to focus on the Sister City application. I never understood that to mean that we focus on the document. I understood it to mean that we will discuss what the application will mean for Boulder. I never signed on to edit the application.
- I hear all of you saying you feel attacked, and I hear other people saying that you are not attacking one another. I want you to hear what other people are saying, but also understand their intentions and your interpretations. Are we treating each other with respect, or you are failing to receive the behavior as respect? Think about if it is the words you are hearing or the meaning you are giving them that makes you feel harm.
- I feel disappointed about the exchange earlier, and I want to share something. I want to clarify that things I am saying are not about who has suffered more. That is not what I said. I tried to find common ground and share understanding. I am a rabbi, and I understand compassionate listening. I understand what you and other people have said. What may have come across or been heard is that we have suffered too, and that is not what I am saying. I feel the need to get this out; I was saying that there was a desire to find common ground because even you acknowledge you did not understand why people were objecting. I wanted to provide rationale perspectives that were shared in tidbits. We have not discussed the nuances that I have been talking about and why people in the Jewish community would have problems with this Sister City relationship.

## Common Ground

At the last meeting, the Working Group requested that the facilitator prepare a summary of the common ground that has emerged from the discussion to date. The facilitator reviewed past meeting notes and consulted with 6 members of the Working Group to develop the draft document. The document was organized in two parts. The first part listed general agreements; the second part was a table with columns indicating recommended actions for BNSCP, for City Council, and for others in Boulder; the rows indicated actions to be taken before Council reviews the BNSCP application, if Council approves the application, and if Council denies the application. The Working Group discussed the draft document prepared by the facilitator and provided revisions as necessary to ensure that it captures the common ground accurately.

### *General Agreements*

- If we call it common ground, we have to agree on it. No one has seen this document, but I have described it to you. If one person does not agree, the whole group does not agree. I left some things out if I was not sure if was an agreement. I want to know if this is not true for you. The job is not to convince people to agree. The agreements are things I have heard you say. I need to know how you understand all of this. For outcomes, we have talked about what BNSCP can do to help. Then we had ideas for what City Council could do depending on if the application is approved or denied. Actions for others in Boulder are actions that people can take to be part of the solution.
- I suggested that we do this, and I remember feeling like it might be premature, but I am so impressed with this document. As you have revealed, there is lots of common ground. Thank you for putting this together. The first page is a freshly opened wine, and it needs to mature. Some of the wording felt like we are in a playground and not in a university town. Words like good and bad are playground words rather than those of a complex universe. It brings me back to previous comments that we are here to gain a more nuanced understanding. Words like good and bad set our Group back on making judgments that are not helpful. I am happy to provide specifics on where words should be changed.
- When you read these to me, they sounded good. One of my burdens I live with is that I was trained as a lawyer and practiced for a long time. One thing that I learned, and it came up when I read that last ground rule, is that when you put words on paper, you have to think about how others will understand them. My mother always told me never to put anything in writing. As I went through this after getting the written version, I have lots of problems with specific phrases because I did not understand them or did not like the wording. If you want to go over these wording issues, I have comments. I would tweak all of them except for numbers one, six, eight, nine, eleven, and thirteen.
- Some are just mush, such as saying that human rights violations are not acceptable. Of course, human rights violations are not acceptable. Boulder has a relationship with Cuba, and they have been part of many human rights violations. To me, that sentence is meaningless. What I hear is that there are assumptions that people are okay with human rights violations, and that is not meaningful for this group.
- The relationship in Cuba was made before Resolution 631 was amended and there is a chance that the relationship would not have been approved if the application had been considered later.
- I think along the lines of what you said, we should affirm that humans are valuable. We agree to that, and we should add it to the table. That is why human rights violations are not acceptable. *The Working Group agreed to add this to the table.*
- I agree with that statement, but I see it differently in the context that it informs the Sister City application.
- Bullet three should say that there are bad people in Nablus, as that is true for any place.
- In keeping with the idea of why we want this relationship, we could take away the reference to good activities and people and change it to beneficial activities.
- The idea of people of goodwill in Nablus could be worked into the third bullet.
- We need to refine the language.

- I am comfortable with the idea of coming up with a document that puts the points of agreements on paper. I cannot say that this list accomplishes this objective. I have a problem with bullet seven. I do not know what that means, and I cannot agree to it.
- Bullet 12 should use the word trust rather than relationships.
- Conceptually we are unsure if we agree to some of these statements because we do not know what they mean.

*Prior to Council Consideration of the BNSCP Application*

- Many of these are from the first meeting and may be addressed by Essrea Cherin sharing what the BNSCP decided.
- Part of the reason I have not said much is because I want to listen. Part of the reason I am here is because I want good will in the City. I am uncomfortable with the discord. I hope that this will help some of the discord. The Board spent much time thinking about the concerns from the last meeting. All comments are appreciated and helpful.
- BNSCP has learned a lot, and this working group has helped us learn how we can be the best Sister City project we can be. We listened to your input. For three years, I have been exposed to what is in the community and that is coming my way. Some of this feedback has been incorporated into this document is from these meetings. The Board met last week, and we voted on these commitments, and it was unanimously approved after discussion.
- *Essrea Cherin read a document prepared by the BNSCP Board entitled "BNSCP Commitments." It is attached at the end of this document.*
- If there is something that does not work for you, we welcome input. If there is something that can be changed, we welcome your feedback.
- How would this be out in practice? With this commitment, would you be able to show films as you have shown for the past few years?
- In my experience in working with the Board, decisions we make are guided by our mission. With the commitments, we have not tested them with a new project. My experience based on the past is that someone would come to us saying they want to show videos and we would all have to discuss it. People are not shy, and we have very healthy conversations when we grapple. These are our guiding principles, and they are in writing.
- Would you have been able to sponsor these films if these commitments had been in place?
- I am not sure. I did not see them all. What films were shown that did not fit these commitments?
- Would you feel comfortable as the head of BNSCP working on activities that may be counter to these commitments with your hat off?
- I have not felt that desire to date, and I do not anticipate that would change. I would probably step down from my role in upholding the mission and role in the organization if I felt a conflict of interest.
- There are two bullets in the chart to which I do not agree. Bullet four under actions recommended for BNSCP is not accurate. I said just the history should reference the Jewish presence, and others said it should reference other civilizations. Ancient civilizations, such as the Nabateans or Moabites that may have lived in the area of Shechem/Nablus are long gone and not here to complain about being left out of the City's history. It is important to acknowledge the Jewish connection and that there are some who are seeking to delegitimize Israel. Conflating the history of Jewish people in the area with extinct civilizations ignores and devalues the relationship of Jews to this area.
- What I heard in that discussion was interesting. I came away with the understanding that BNSCP should add that Jews were in Nablus, as well as the plethora of other civilizations. Archaeologists have said it is a very interesting area. I heard that we would add recognition for the richness of civilization.
- Our thought was to add in the Jewish presence and make it more accurate.
- These are two different requests.

- We did not talk specifics, but I found it quite elucidating about how many civilizations have lived there. It is fascinating. Jews are living in Nablus right now, and they play a central role in Nablus society. There is a presence of other religious denominations, such as Muslims and Christians.
- There are no Jews that live in Nablus, but rather Samaritans. Samaritans may play a central role in Nablus society, but they are not considered Jewish by other Jews.
- Bullet five under Actions Recommended for BNSCP should clarify whether or not BNSCP is giving tours in Palestine. I had a conversation last week with an old friend, and she shared with me that back in 2012 or 2013, before the application was rejected the first time, she had arranged a trip with a different organization that would cover Palestine and Israel. Then she heard a trip that was being organized or promoted by BNSCP and it dovetailed with her other trip, and she was excited to extend her trip. Whether or not it was officially organized by BNSCP or not, it was being promoted by them. I am bringing this up because we have been assured that BNSCP has never done tours and never promoted them. She said that does not seem to be true.
- I think it may be a semantic issue. BNSCP organizes delegations. We do not organize tours and have never talked about that. A delegation is focused on promoting the mission and vision of BNSCP. It is not a tour where you have a set itinerary and activities. That is why I say we do delegations, not tours.
- Other sister cities do delegations. It is a face-to-face opportunity to weave bonds of friendship. There is no better way to build a relationship.
- We do not agree to bullet five.
- I am concerned that you are not doing your job because you said at the first meeting people cannot say what they have heard from others
- We can say what they heard other people say, but not their intentions.
- I think it is realistic to have delegations. For me, a tour or a delegation is similarly relevant. You will do any number of activities no matter how it unfolds. This agreement should be taken out.
- Take it out because it was based on a misunderstanding and outside information.
- This document is pretty impressive and useful. Given the document presented by BNSCP, we should focus on what they have committed to do. I have a few things that I wish would change, and I want to start focusing on this document. Even as someone who wishes this would go away if worse comes to worse, I want to make sure that certain things are included by BNSCP. If they are not here, they should be. The Board can take our recommendations and say they have gone too far of that they have made a good faith effort. When we are done, everyone in this room has had a chance to say that they should have gone further. When discussing the ground rules, people should say what they want to say. I would rather have issues discussed now rather than be a surprised at the City Council meeting. My greatest hope is that this is not about Israel, and that may be too big of a hope. Relax the ground rules.
- I am concerned about the delegation versus tour. When a Boulder tour was there, and people asked if they could talk to Israelis, they were told that would not occur because the Israeli side is always heard.
- The tour in question was a church group and had nothing to do with or any connection to BNSCP.
- *Working Group members should send it any comments on the BNSCP commitments document to Heather Bergman.*

#### *If Council Approves the BNSCP Application*

- Bullets two, three, and four require us to advise City Council, and that is not our job. We are not here to find a different City or an Israeli counterpart. *The Working Group agreed to take these bullet points out.*
- If City Council approves the application, I think that BNSCP has covered many of these. I heard that not everyone is for drafting a grievance policy.

- It is chutzpadik for us to say that Council must do something if this application is approved. If it is approved, the project will be monitored. If they want to set up a grievance procedure, they will. I do not think that is our place to recommend actions.
- It is up to City Council to listen to community feedback and see if the application is enough.
- *Working Group members agreed to take out bullet two, suggesting that BNSCP adopts a grievance policy if the application is approved.*
- As I considered bullet one under Actions Recommended to City Council and If Council Approved the BNSCP Application this fall, I realized that the annual review for Sister Cities is in March. If the application is approved in the fall, the annual review would serve as a six-month review, and could be an appropriate amount of time to see how it is going. Going forward, the project would be a part of the normal review process that is already in place. This would alleviate the burden of extra meetings for City Council.
- If City Council approves the application, the entire Council needs to be involved in the periodic review, not just the subcommittee.
- Not everyone has confidence in the subcommittee. Its members are Jan Burton, Mary Young, and Lisa Morzel.
- It has to be reviewed by the full City Council.
- I think the whole City Council is there for the review.
- The second bullet under Actions Recommended for Others in Boulder and If Council Approved the BNSCP Application should be taken out.
- We should not be telling people how to interact with BNSCP.
- I think it is great to invite people to interact directly with BNSCP as a means to address lots of the concerns I have heard. There are lots of questions about who BNSCP is and what we are doing. The best way to answer those questions is to come to meetings. We have meetings once a month
- I do not like having that much power, but the whole section of Actions Recommended for Others in Boulder should be deleted.
- Why does one person get to say no? I like this category, and the meaning of this category is to let other engage in this project. Do not just write or complain. Engage to understand better and maybe something will change. These are ways to do that. We as a Working Group would be saying as a way to further exchanges, get involved, study it, or become engaged.
- This could say that people should search for the common ground it would take to reach recommendations to further understanding. I do not know what painful divisiveness means. Are we not here to say if you have an issue, you should ask questions? The joy I had sitting at your table was in building trust and falling in love. If suspicion drove me, then what are we doing for understanding?
- The problem I have with this language is that I see this as a recommendation to becoming engaged with BNSCP. I am not there yet, although I may be in the future.
- For me, the first bullet under Action Recommended for Others in Boulder and If Council Approves the Application is monitoring, and I am not comfortable with that. My role is not to ensure BNSCP is honoring their commitment. The role of BNSCP is to engage. If this happens, they have fulfilled their mission. If we are going to make sure you are following rules, I do not know I support that.
- If City Council approves this application, then it has its stamp. If that stamp is there with the endorsement of City Council and is legitimate, they should pursue their goals. It is the job of the organization.
- I like the job of encouraging people to overcome their inner psychological obstacles. It is easy to see something and feel “ugh.” We have had people come to events who are opposed to the project, and then people will begin to see that we are cool. Having that opportunity is appreciated. It does not have to be done, but I think in general it is healthy to overcome internal psychological obstacles. We are reaching out a hand of friendship.
- I think we suggest encouraging others in Boulder to identify their concerns and seek answers.

- If we take out “other” in both sections and say become engaged in efforts in the region, it does not exclude people becoming involved with BNSCP, but it also does not highlight it. That would make me more comfortable. *The Working Group agreed to amend the second bullet, so it reads, “Become engaged with efforts working to help people in the region and to bring Israelis and Palestinians together.”*

#### *If Council Does Not approve the BNSCP Application*

- If City Council does not approve the application, they can do whatever they want; we do not need to provide any guidance. If City Council disapproves it, they have said they do not want Boulder to sanction it.
- BNSCP can choose whether or not to continue its work. We do not have to make a statement unless some feel it is important.
- If the application is not approved, the Board will convene to discuss if we would submit again in the future. It is not a given that BNSCP would submit again, as there is a diversity of opinions on the Board. If we decided to reapply, then some of these actions may be useful recommendations for BNSCP. The next configuration of the Council could always change their minds, so having recommendations is not a bad thing.
- The State of Colorado uses memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and Governor Ritter had some that indicated they would cooperate in research on water issues. Perhaps the City Council could make a declaration that they support the sustainable Israeli-Palestinian projects. They can approve peace-promoting activities, like the dance troupe or yoga exchange. It would be a way of saying those activities could be fine.
- I think we can delete the whole row. If City Council rejects the application, I would hope they would find a way to say that they are not rejecting Palestinians and are not choosing Israel. This is not a proposal about Israel. They would be saying that because of the divisiveness, the political nature, or whatever their reasons are, they choose to reject the application. They would not be saying that Palestinians are bad or that the community should not engage. They will craft some statement to ameliorate hurt feelings.
- We have work to do on this document and we are going to let it lie for a bit. Send any suggestions to Heather Bergman.

#### **Proposed Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

- Discuss what each Working Group member can do to help heal this divide and report back any actions that have already been taken.
- Share ideas about how the Working Group can consciously work towards increasing understanding and respect among participants.
- Discuss the possibility of coordinating a mayor-to-mayor exchange between Boulder and Nablus.
- Review feedback for the BNSCP document.
- Hear report from Essrea Cherin and Joan Nagel about the Norway Sister City experience.
- Address public comments.



## **BNSCP Projects and Nabulsi Point-People**

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### **Project Hope - Hakim Sabah, Director - point person for Boulder-Nablus sistering effort and Tawfiq, IT Expert, photographer, and Coordinator**

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- Producer of first-ever Nablus Cultural Festival. BNSCP sent two dancers to represent Colorado to perform at Festival and offered workshops to young aspiring dancers.
- Volunteers from Boulder donated combined 8 months of time working with hundreds of school-aged children, teaching English, dance, art, and more.
- BNSCP partnered with Project Hope and One World Futbol to distribute 100 indestructible soccer balls to agencies throughout Nablus who support children's health and well-being.

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### **Fulbright Scholar Collaboration — Dr. Alia Assali, Dean of Education, An Najah University, & Rasha, Head of Montessori Kindergarten, Lecturer, An-Najah University, Child institute**

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- Two professors (CU Boulder and Naropa) have submitted Fulbright applications to continue collaboration with partners at An Najah University in Nablus in the coming school year.
- The US State Department awarded a Fulbright teaching post to Board member Dr. Deborah Young. Dr. Young, of Naropa University's Early Childhood Education Department, worked for 6-weeks with An Najah University in Nablus, September - October, 2015. This is the first Fulbright ever granted to An Najah University. Dr. Young offered 6 workshops to educators and professionals who work with women and children, in addition to collaborating on designing and developing curriculum and programs for educators working with developmentally disabled children.
- Dr. Young's contributions to An Najah's Education Department were enthusiastically received. A report, that was submitted to the US State Dept, of her efforts in Nablus can be viewed on the Boulder-Nablus Sister City website under the Education tab.

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## **Student Pen Pal Programs — Chloe O'Connor, Lower School Coordinator, Pioneers, and Dr. Alia Assali, liaison to Latin Patriarchate School in Nablus**

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- In school year 2016-2017 we anticipate engaging students in three schools in Boulder and two schools in Nablus in a pen pal program, in grades 4, 7, 8, and high school.
- In the past, three schools (4th - 8th grade) in Boulder County have engaged with same-aged students in Nablus. Teachers in both cities conduct activities where the children can share about each other's cities, schools, families, food, and activities through writing letters and creating powerpoint presentations and videos for each other.

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## **Yoga Program - Mirna, Yoga Instructor and Mother**

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- In Spring 2017, BNSCP point person in Nablus, Mirna, is organizing several yoga workshops to offer Boulder-based non-profit organization Calming Kids Yoga to teachers, mental health professionals, and others who engage regularly with children. BNSCP will support the effort by sending Calming Kids yoga teacher trainers to share yoga techniques which are highly sought after in Nablus.
- Mirna currently offers yoga classes at summer camps such as at Askar Refugee Camp, American Academy, and TYO. Holds vision to create a community center in the Old City of Nablus where all women can come to do yoga, paying on a sliding scale so that women of all economic means can benefit from yoga.
- In the past, BNSCP hosted two yoga teachers in Boulder for two weeks. The women were enrolled in advanced yoga training titled, Calming Kids Yoga, that was donated by the Boulder yoga community.
- Once returned to Nablus the women shared their newly acquired skills to educators, counselors, therapists, and others who work with children where they have found very high demand for the breathing, postures and meditation techniques. They have been very effective in curtailing behavior issues in classrooms; the two yoga teachers are working diligently to accommodate requests for additional training.
- Yoga conference in Ramallah, West Bank in May 2015 included four teachers from Nablus and hosted by Boulder-based Give Back Yoga Foundation who are members and supporters of the sister city project. Participation at workshop was at full capacity.

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## **Palestine Writing Workshop — Maya Abu Alhayat, novelist, poet, story-teller**

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- Collaboration with the Awtar Center for Artistic and Cultural Creativeness to train professionals who work with children in skills of storytelling to read books created in both English and Arabic. To include weekly readings at libraries, public cultural centers and into homes and neighborhoods.
- Supporting workshops in Nablus and publishing of 300 children's books for the trained storytellers' use.
- Publishing the first-ever Palestine children's books in both Arabic and English in the US, with proceeds supporting the continuing efforts in Nablus.
- Partnering storytellers and children's book writers/illustrators in both cities.

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## **Senior Day Center — Suha, Chair of Om Sadeq, and Adnan Sawalha, Director**

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- In the future, seeking means to continue supporting this effort in collaboration with partners in Nablus.
- Supported the founding of a new senior center by providing funding to purchase appliances and furnishings.
- Historical building renovated in early 2015, and is now open and serving elders.

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## **Substance Abuse Counseling — Dr Eyad Othman, Psychologist & Director of Substance Abuse Hotline**

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- Connected Substance Abuse professionals in Boulder with those in Nablus to share expertise and offer support for an almost fully volunteer program in Nablus to address this growing concern.

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## **Art Exchange — Dr. Ghawi, Chair of the Fine Arts Dept. of An-Najah University, and Amal Shashtari, Director of Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, Nablus Branch**

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- CU Professor art professor traveling to Nablus in early 2017 to meet with the Art Department in Nablus to establish an art exchange between art students at both universities.

- For 2016-2017 school year, seeking musicians to exchange musical styles with students of the Conservatory and learning Oriental music instruments and traditions while there.
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### **Dance Troupe — Amjad Rfaie — Director, Nablus Association for Social and Community Development (Naseej)**

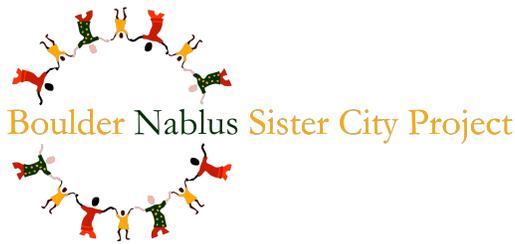
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- Initiating program to host Youth Dance Troupe from Nablus in Boulder — arranging traditional Palestinian dance workshops in high- and middle-schools, universities, and with the greater Boulder community. Will arrange home-stays for the young adult dancers to ensure the greatest opportunity for cultural exchange and relationship building opportunities. Anticipating executing the program in 2017, depending on funding.
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### **Rock Climbing Wall — Will Harris and Tim Bruns, Co-Directors, Wadi Climbing and Bridget Sakowski, International Relations Officer, Office of International Development and External Affairs, An-Najah National University**

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- Invitation by An Najah University to collaborate in designing, equipping, instructing, and construction of a rock climbing wall for use by the citizens of Nablus.
- Engaging rock climbing community of Boulder who are interested in working on this endeavor.



## **Statements from colleagues in Europe who are also sistered or twinned with Nablus**

I reached out to some people who are also building relationships with Nablus or other Palestinian cities or communities. I asked them whether they have experienced people in their community or in Palestine using the sister city or twinning relationship to promote anti-Israel messages/sentiments, and, if so, how did they handle this. Further, I asked them what, if any, harm has come to their community/municipality that arose from the sister city relationship. Some, such as Dundee, have been sistered for over 3 decades, and therefore have considerable history to draw upon in response to these questions.

### **Jean Fitzpatrick, London Ealing, UK, twinned with Sabastiya:**

1) in my experience twinning and friendship links have not been used to promote anti Israel sentiments and propaganda. The focus of Twinning is about getting to know about the history, culture and lives of others. Just as in any twinning or sister city project anywhere in the world.

2) I personally have never suffered any harm in any way because of my twinning activities. Never ever. And I don't know anyone who has.

### **Mike Whitehead, Dundee-Nablus Sister City Chair:**

Twinning in the UK started after World War 2 when we needed to make friends with people who had previously been our enemies. Today I think twinning should bring people together where there are misunderstandings and/or ignorance. Twinning should be challenging.

I am not aware of any use of our group for promoting anti-Israel messages or propaganda. Our focus is on promoting friendship and understanding so that the people of Dundee get a glimpse of life in Nablus. Our twinning is rooted in a formal agreement between the Lord Provost of Dundee and the Mayor of Nablus. Our municipality (Dundee City Council) insists on the twinning being non-political. Our Association is separate from the municipality but works with it to promote the twinning between our cities.

In over 30 years of partnership with the community of Nablus, Dundee has never experienced any incidents of harm, not one.

## **Sir Vincent Fean, Retired British diplomat, British Consul-General**

Friendship and Twinning Groups – Britain and the Occupied Palestinian Territories

My name is Vincent Fean. From 2010 to 2014, I was the British Government's Consul-General in Jerusalem, responsible locally for UK/Palestinian relations. I worked closely with the US Consul-General in Jerusalem, then Michael Ratney (who has moved to another post since 2014).

My job title was Consul-General to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). That is the formal British Government title for the land occupied by Israeli forces during the June 1967 war: Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Now retired, I am patron of the Britain Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network, a grouping of the 30-35 local community organisations in the United Kingdom which befriend a specific community in the OPTs, or the Territories as a whole.

Among the aims of the Network is to reduce the sense of loneliness, of isolation felt by Palestinians under military occupation. This can be done in many ways – school exchanges, pilgrimages from Britain to the Holy Land, scholarships for Palestinians to undertake postgraduate studies in Britain, to give a few examples. The more constructive contact there is between ordinary, decent Palestinians and their British counterparts, the better for all concerned.

The Network is not a political campaigning organisation. It directs its efforts to increase awareness in Britain of the daily life of Palestinians, and to make life in the OPTs better, for the good of all.

No harm whatever has come from these efforts – not here in Britain, not in Israel, and certainly not in the OPTs, where the impact of Network efforts is entirely benign, and much appreciated by ordinary Palestinian people who – just like us – are families trying to get by and improve their children's lives and prospects in difficult circumstances.

Vincent Fean  
Sir Vincent Fean  
Retired British diplomat  
British Consul-General, Jerusalem, 2010-14

## **Anndi Lomeland Jacobsen, Coordinator Nablus - Stavanger Sister City**

I can say absolutely no: we are not anti-israeli or anti-semites. Our aim is to help people see Palestinians and understand their culture and history.

And, we (community of Stavanger) do not suffer any harm due to this relationship, and most people respect our work, also for the sake of Jews and many Israelis.

From: Anndi Lomeland Jacobsen <anndilo@live.no>  
Subject: Re: Nablus Sister City request from Colorado  
Date: July 29, 2016 at 12:54:06 PM MDT  
To: "Joan Nagel" <nagel.joan@gmail.com>  
Cc: "Essrea Cherin" <essrea@embracingconflict.com>

Dear Joan,

It is great you are discussing the possibility of becoming sister city with Nablus. Even if you decide no, the discussion in itself is important. It rises the knowledge and challenge opinions. And I am most happy to share our experiences with you, now in particular on the question from one of the municipal members raised in the council.

The reason for the question as far as I know, was the fact that this member, who I do not think has been to Nablus himself, had heard that a monument raised over a suicider – had the form of Palestine as it was before 1948. His interpellations follows attached. Interpellations can be raised in the end of a meeting from the members, and it is followed by an answer from the mayor as well as an open discussion among the members. He argued that the suicider as a terrorist was honored, and by a memory indicating that Israel was not existing, and this made Nablus a city not worthy our friendship.

The mayor answered by telling about the positive results of the cooperation, and in the meeting members from all the parties except from the Utter Right wing Party, FRP. was speaking for the friendship with Nablus. But even from that party one of the older members who had been in Nablus, came to me afterwards saying: You know I did not agree Anndi, and I was ashamed. The member raising the proposal is one of the young one, and we all regarded it as an attempt to get some publicity before the election last year. It was referred to in one, the 2. newspaper in the city, and somehow it got to the newspapers in Israel. Our friends in Nablus got it on Israely news, and was worried. What was this? And you got it over the Atlantic ocean. A proposal from an outsider belonging to one of the utter right parties seems to be interesting in Israel and in USA, but got almost none interest in Stavanger or Norway.

When I had a meeting with our mayor some time afterwards, she said: You should have listened to the council, Anndi. From many parties, from left to right they were speaking up for importance of the friendship with Nablus, and the good work the Nablus society is doing. We have 8 parties in the Municipal. Yes, I should have liked to be there, but I had a board meeting with the Nablus society the same evening. The reason for their support is very much, I suppose, thanks to our yearly delegations to Nablus. Then we invite politicians as well as partners in our different projects. The municipals strategy for twin-cities in the

third world, is to make it dependant on grassroot movement. They support with money and on some projects, we do more and less the work. For that reason many of our politicians have followed us to Nablus, they know the work and they have got to know about the challenges faced by palestinians as an occupied people. They get to know individuals and institutions work. In fact you have to see to understand.

Stavanger has a twin city in Israel too, and a group working with them. We have tried to make cooperation between the cities, but it is difficult as there is no progress in the peace-processe. And also, because our Norwegian group for Netanya very much is based on a religious opinion that there is no occupation as God has given Israel the land. Our work is not based on religion or on politics, but on culture and developement for the palestinian peope and equal human rights for everybody.

Hopefully this gives you a short idea of our work and our communication and cooperation with the municipal. As you understand I am at our summer house and have only access to the documents on my PC. I think I have the the newspapers article on the interpellation with my answer in my archive at home. I attach some letters that may give som history around it. Hopefully you can put it in a translator, or we could try to skype if I manage the teqnic later. I shall be home the 15. of August.

Attaches:

1. 170815: A letter I wrote to the leaders of the parties as an answer to the interpellation
2. FRP's ... this is the interpellation/ proposal with arguments
3. Agreement between Stavanger and Nablus signed by our mayors 25 years ago. ( our working document)
4. My speach to the Municipal when we were invited to celebrate 25 years of twinning between Nablus and Stavanger ( and also Netanya in Israel and Antsirabe on Madagascar.
5. A speech from one of the members to the Municipal in connection with the interpellation. ( She represents the Rights)
- 6 . Answer from the Mayor.

Good Luck with your facilitating discussion.

As we see it from far away, the destiny of Israel and Palestine lies in the hands of US. So you have an important role to play.

Greetings

Anndi

mobile: +47 907 46 547,

Mayor of Stavanger: Christine Sagen Helgo, 51507090, e-mail:  
[ordforer@stavanger.kommune.no](mailto:ordforer@stavanger.kommune.no)

FRP, Stavanger, 51507301 ,mobile 47 476 02 843, [www.frp.no](http://www.frp.no)

**From:** [Joan Nagel](#)

**Sent:** Thursday, July 28, 2016 5:58 PM

**To:** [anndilo@live.no](mailto:anndilo@live.no)

**Cc:** [Essrea Cherin](#)

**Subject:** Nablus Sister City request from Colorado

Hi Anndi,

I am a participant in a facilitated discussion sponsored by the Boulder, Colorado, City Council. The Council is faced with a decision of whether or not to have Boulder become a sister city with Nablus.

We heard that at one point there was an issue raised with your town council regarding whether or not your city's relationship with Nablus should be suspended. We would like more information about how that came about, what events led the council member to raise it, and how the situation stands now.

Also, if there are any newspaper articles or email communications regarding the request for the suspension, we would like to receive them.

If there is a time when you would be available for a phone call, Essrea Cherin, the head of the Nablus Boulder Sister City Project and I would like to talk to you further about that situation. Please let us know if that is possible and give us your phone number and suggested dates and times.

If you have an e-mail address or phone number for the council member who raised or advocated for the suspension, I would like to receive that as well.

Many thanks,

Joan Nagel



## **BNSCP Commitments**

### **Non-Political Commitment:**

*In accordance with Sister City International guidelines and Resolution 631 of the City of Boulder and in keeping with the legal requirements of being a 501c3 corporation, \* Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project (BNSCP) is explicitly committed to being a non-political organization.*

In practice this means at a minimum:

- No activities current or planned by BNSCP will advocate for or against particular political positions and/or policies. BNSCP will not take a side on any political question nor candidate in the US, Palestine or any other related political situations.
- The BNSCP board of directors will ensure that all projects will continue to be carefully selected for their humanitarian, cultural, and artistic contribution and exchange.
- BNSCP will provide information about our counterpart organization and members in Nablus.
- BNSCP will explicitly prohibit the use of our modes of communication or resources from being used as a platform for political advocacy. The Board of Directors of BNSCP will monitor the use of BNSCP programs to guard against the manipulation of messages that promote any anti-Israeli or anti-Palestinian perspectives. If such messages are found, the Board of BNSCP will take corrective actions.
- BNSCP board of directors will maintain editorial control over all official communications and monitor posting to BNSCP website and will exclude inappropriate and insensitive materials. BNSCP will avoid the posting of images promoting or glorifying violence.
- Blog and other potential postings on BNSCP website, FaceBook page, or other forums will include the disclaimer: "This letter/report/ photo/presentation was prepared or offered by \_\_\_\_\_ in her/his personal capacity. The opinions expressed in



this letter/article/presentation/photo are the author's own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Boulder-Nablus Sister City Project.”

- BNSCP will make sensitivity awareness training a prerequisite for delegations to either city to promote understanding of how messages may be interpreted, and thus potentially evoking unintended threat, fear and/or sadness.
- In keeping with the spirit of Boulder Council Resolution 1178 (Inclusive Community) BNSCP will continue to promote inclusivity in all its projects, as well as fostering environments where people of different backgrounds and beliefs feel welcomed. This will include the continued nurturing of relationships and incorporating feedback from those who might feel uncomfortable with the Sister City relationship, its activities or projects. This will be designed to increase transparency and overcome cultural insensitivities and blind spots. Delegations to either city will be encouraged to interact with each city’s diverse populations of differing faiths and points-of-view.
- BNSCP will amend the application submitted to City Council to ensure it is complete and sensitive to the many populations in the city of Boulder.
- If desired, BNSCP will work with others to build an explicit process and/or governance structure where concerns may be raised and addressed.

### **Human Rights Commitment:**

*While Amnesty International, the UN Human Rights Council, and other neutral agencies have not found a systemic pattern of human rights violations by Nabulsi, we are committed to investigating any potential violations associated with our projects and relationships in Boulder or Nablus. We formally state here and in our application an unequivocal support for human rights, and solicit from those with whom we work likewise a declaration of support for human rights.*

In practice this means at a minimum:

- In addition to Resolution 631’s requirement that an authorized representative sign a commitment to international human rights standards, the BNSCP Board of Directors and principal counterparts in Nablus will sign the same.



- If desired, the Board of Directors of BNSCP will work with members of the wider Boulder community to develop a set of standards for identifying and assessing potential violations and indicators for progress in human rights and inclusiveness in both Nablus and Boulder.
- In the annual report to City Council, BNSCP will devote a specific section on the relationship of our activities to human rights.

\*"Being "501(c)(3)" means that a particular nonprofit organization has been approved by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt, charitable organization. "Charitable" is broadly defined as being established for purposes that are religious, educational, charitable, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering of national or international amateur sports, or prevention of cruelty to animals and children."