

## Salem Ota Cultural Exchange | MINUTES

---

Feb. 22, 2021 / 7 pm | On ZOOM!

### Attendees

Chris & Denise Granniss  
Connie Arlander  
Peter Dolan  
Stephen Manning  
Kirky DeLong

Kathleen Salas  
Ellen Soares  
Dan Geary  
Hugh Stewart  
Kimberly Kozak

### Agenda topics

**Leadership Change** Since this is our annual meeting we discussed the difficulty inspiring new leaders in this “quiet” year for Ota CE. Denise & Chris were planning to step down as co-presidents now that their family no longer has young kids at home but have generously agreed to continue in their roles for 1 MORE YEAR. Which means this year we are looking to inspire members with young children to become more involved.

Peter has offered to be co-president for 1-2 years; with his extensive history and involvement with Ota, including close contact with our partners abroad, this will allow someone new to the position to learn under his great guidance. Salem residents with connections to middle school students are ideal candidates.

If anyone is interested, please reach out to learn more about the responsibilities involved. This is a great year to gradually learn more about Ota CE through our short monthly meetings.

**Please consider stepping up to help this organization we all love!**

Chris is willing to continue supporting the website moving forward, so a new leader will not need to manage this aspect. He continues to ensure the website is up-to-date and enticing to interested families by adding new photos periodically to freshen the site.

**Future Visits?** Peter is open to considering a trip to Ota with Mayor Driscoll and City of Salem staff or Councilors in 2022. Our partners in Ota City Hall are hesitant to discuss any travel or celebrations b/c of their current limit on work hours and community restrictions, based on rising COVID numbers and fears ahead with the Olympics scheduled for summer.

**Honoring 30 years & Momentum** Gifts are on hold for now, while masks with City of Salem logos are perfected to send as gifts.

Mayor Driscoll and team are enthusiastic about honoring the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Ota Salem sister city connection in November. To honor this partnership and continue gathering the Salem Ota community, we hope to host an Ota Festival at the PEM this summer and invite School Board, faculty, our new Superintendent and community members; ideally we create

interest from middle school global studies, geography, language teachers, etc. It would be great a video of family and student testimonials for display and include entertainment as we've done in the past (think Taiko drummers). Ota community members talented in creating film and video are welcome to help if we can proceed-including SATV. Goals of this event- beyond a reunion for host families- are to generate attention to our Cultural Exchange, expand general interest in Japan, and recruit host families and students interested in travel to Japan. We will bring up this possibility with the PEM, in hopes that restrictions for public programs will be lifted in coming months to make this feasible.

**2021 Scholarship Application** Because of so many students delaying their transition to college during the pandemic, families have asked if seniors deferring college should apply and would be able to delay the scholarship money for 1 year. We agreed this is an unprecedented situation affecting many people, and will encourage all interested students to apply; their potential delay beginning college will not affect their application for this \$500 Scholarship. The on-line application is not yet ready. The due date for 500-750 word essays and the on line application will likely be May 7. As always they'll be read "blind" prior to award ceremonies at the high schools.

---

**Next Meeting:** Monday March 29 to 8 pm via Zoom.