

Salem Ota Cultural Exchange | MINUTES

January 4, 2021 / 7 pm | On ZOOM!

Attendees

Chris & Denise Granniss

Connie Arlander

Peter Dolan

Stephen Manning

Kimberly Kozak

Betty Burke

Pam Myrie

Kathleen Salas

Ellen Soares

Elizabeth Emery

Bev Cook

Deb Jackson

Midori Oka

Marlene Warner

Agenda topics

Leadership Change The annual meeting is typically the time of year to vote for new leadership. Denise & Chris were planning to step down as co-presidents now that their family no longer has middle school kids at home. They still hope to do so, providing 1 or 2 people graciously step into their hard-to-fill shoes! This would be an easy year to transition under their good guidance, as there will be minimal activities. Please consider taking on this responsibility; it's a great way to be involved in this organization we all appreciate. We encourage co-presidents, as Denise and Chris have so successfully done, to help expand community involvement. Those with connections to middle school students are ideal candidates for president. The formal vote is postponed until our Feb. meeting, in hopes that new leader/s may appear. Please reach out if you have any interest!

2021 Visitor Discussions? Peter has been in close communication with our contacts in Ota, who continue to think the Olympics will still take place this summer. This would affect potential visits due to overlapping dates (for an adult trip to Ota and a student trip to Salem). After discussion, a majority of participants voted that hosting students, and adults travelling to Ota, unfortunately do not feel safe for 2021 based on so many covid-related unknowns.

We agreed an Ota adult trip to Salem in November may still be possible, so we've postponed making any definitive decisions about this. It may be easier having adults stay in hotels rather than in host families' homes. November marks the 30th year of our sister city connection, so we hope to host a summer gathering for the Salem Ota community and would love to be able to safely host adults in the fall.

Gifts & Greetings Ota really loved the Salem/PEM video sent sending well wishes from our families. If you have not yet seen the video we received from Ota, it is posted on the City of Salem's website. We will be soliciting brief videos by kids of host families this Spring to send well wishes, now that we know we will not be hosting students this summer. Please stay tuned for this request!

Peter received many lovely gifts from Ota City Hall for the holidays that will be distributed to Salem City Councilors and other locations (like the House of Seven Gables) and staff who have supported Ota visits over the years. We plan to send small Salem gifts to Ota for the new year. We will also send 1 special gift to Ota City Offices to honor this 30th year of the Salem-Ota Cultural Exchange. If you have creative ideas that highlight Salem's maritime history, please let us know.

Peter also received textbooks that include photos of several Salem Ota members during visits to Japan. He will be giving copies to each person in those photos, and Chris will upload the photos to the website for all to see. Please keep an eye out, and continue to follow/like our Ota Facebook page.

Momentum & Recruitment Given that the Salem school district has a new Superintendent, we would like to connect with Dr. Zrike to share information about the Ota-Salem CE collaboration. As always we will continue communication with families from the Charter School. This year it's important to stay in touch with involved families who may be available to host in the future.

We also would like to introduce the idea of an Ota-Salem teen film-making collaboration to local schools, based on a project that was implemented between Tokyo and students in Canton, MA in December that several of us were able to view via Zoom.

2021 Scholarship Application We will continue the tradition of providing a \$500 Scholarship for graduating seniors. We'll send emails to families and local high schools when the on-line application is ready (as well as follow up emails to guidance counselors to ensure students are aware). 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 February 22 7 to 8 pm via Zoom.