

City of Newport Sister City Commission 2025 Annual Report

Meetings & Attendance

The Sister City Commission met formally nine (9) times during 2025:

February 20; March 20; May 15; June 9; July 17; September 18; September 25; October 2; and October 16. In addition, Commissioners participated in multiple planning meetings related to the Kinsale and Shimoda official visits. The Commission also attended five (5) City Council meetings on relevant matters. The Chair attended each of the Mayor's Meetings with Commissions.

Attendance Summary:

- George Antone: 0 (Resigned)
- Brenda Bachman (Chair): 9
- Delaney Daley: 0 (Resigned)
- Erin Donovan-Boyle: 5
- Brooke Eaton: 5
- Michael Falcone: 3 (Resigned; former Vice Chair)
- Michelle Gallagher: 4
- Carmela Geer (Secretary): 4 (Resigned)
- Amy Ironmonger: 1
- Mary Jameson: 8
- Joseph Logue: 2
- Michael Murray: 3
- Alexa Waluk (Vice Chair): 7

Activities & Accomplishments

Despite fluctuating membership and multiple resignations, the Sister City Commission remained highly productive throughout the year. A key focus was increasing community awareness of the Commission's mission and expanding participation in Sister City activities. Major accomplishments include:

- **Kinsale Twinning Celebration:**
In collaboration with the Newport–Kinsale Club, the Commission played a significant role in planning and supporting the celebration of Newport's twinning with Kinsale, Ireland. The Commission hosted the Welcome Reception, contributed to the Twinning Ceremony, attended the Farewell Brunch, and supported the Mayor's Office in multiple related efforts.
- **Community Outreach & Media Exposure:**
The Sister City Commission was featured as the cover story in *Newport Life* magazine (March/April), providing the community with a deeper understanding of the City's twinning relationships and the Commission's mission.
- **Newport–Skiathos Reengagement:**
The Commission reconnected with the Newport–Skiathos Club and, for the first time,

hosted a public information booth at the Hellenic Fair. Planning was initiated for the 30th Anniversary of the Newport–Skiathos Twinning, scheduled for May 2026.

- **Governance & Strategic Planning:**

Recognizing the need for greater structure and governance, the Commission held a special workshop on June 9 with professional facilitator Trent Heroux. A proposed Mission Statement and strategic priorities were identified. Continued work in this area will be a priority in 2026.

Members of the Commission attended workshops on “Open Meetings” and “Ethics”

- **Shimoda Official Visit:**

A major accomplishment was the development of a revised and enriched program for the official visit from Shimoda, Japan, with a strong emphasis on community involvement. The Commission planned and widely promoted multiple public events through the Broadway Street Fair, Thames Street banners, and social media.

Highlights included:

- A meeting between the Superintendents of Newport and Shimoda
- A visit to Commissioner Mary Jameson’s art studio
- A well-attended public karaoke event sponsored by Rocky Kempenaar
- A collaborative Japan Friendship Festival in Touro Park, organized with the Japan America Society of Southern New England
- A ceremony at the Perry gravesite
- Homestays for four visiting students

The Commission again supported all efforts of the Mayor’s Office throughout the visit.

- **Educational Outreach:**

To enhance student understanding of the Shimoda–Newport connection, the Commission provided copies of *Commodore Perry in the Land of the Shoguns* by Rhoda Blumberg to the libraries at Newport High School and Thompson Middle School.

Priorities for 2026

- Finalize the Commission’s mission statement, governance, and organizational structure, and address issues raised by Councilor Smyth in Resolution 2023-29
- Elect officers
- Collaborate with Newport Public Schools and parents to develop a financially sustainable student exchange program
- Explore funding sources for Commission initiatives
- Plan official visits to Kinsale (March) and Imperia (September)
- Plan the 30th Anniversary of the Newport–Skiathos Twinning
- Host the first student exchange from Imperia through local homestays

Submitted by:

Brenda M. Bachman, Chair

December 28, 2025