



# AGENDA REPORT

Finance Department

<b>DATE:</b>	May 5, 2026
<b>TO:</b>	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
<b>FROM:</b>	Shasa Curl, City Manager Nickie Mastay, Deputy City Manager – Internal Services Emily Combs, Director of Finance LaShonda White, Deputy City Manager – Community Services
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Appropriate Funding for Sister Cities Commission Partner City Delegations
<b>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</b>	Approval of this item will result in a General Fund appropriation of \$69,000 to support Sister City delegation activities as follows: Zhoushan, China (\$23,000), Regla, Cuba (\$23,000) Sebastia, Palestine (\$23,000). The City Council previously approved \$23,000 for Shimada, Japan.
<b>PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:</b>	February 17, 2026
<b>STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:</b>	The Sister Cities Commission has requested funding to support official delegation exchanges with its three partner cities—Zhoushan, China; Regla, Cuba; and Sebastia, Palestine. This matter is before the City Council to consider approval of funding necessary to maintain these exchanges, which are a core component of the City’s commitment to international partnerships, cultural diplomacy, and community engagement.
<b>RECOMMENDED ACTION:</b>	APPROPRIATE \$69,000 in General Fund to the Sister Cities Commission to support delegation activities with Zhoushan, China; Regla, Cuba; and Sebastia, Palestine; AUTHORIZE the City Manager, with approval as to form by the City Attorney’s Office, to enter into agreement(s) with qualified third-party administrator(s) and take all necessary actions to administer appropriated funds in

	support of eligible costs associated with the Richmond–Zhoushan Sister City program; and AUTHORIZE city staff to develop and implement a scholarship program, in collaboration with the Zhoushan Sister City Commission, to support travel costs – Finance Department (Emily Combs/Nickie Mastay/Shasa Curl 510-620-6740).
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**DISCUSSION:**

The City of Richmond maintains active Sister City relationships that are sustained through reciprocal visits, cultural exchange, and public engagement. These exchanges foster international goodwill and provide educational and cultural opportunities for Richmond residents.

The City has historically supported Sister City delegations by providing funding for lodging, transportation, and meals, particularly when hosting official visitors or reciprocating prior hospitality.

The Sister Cities Commission is requesting a total of \$69,000 from the City’s General Fund to support delegation activities for its three partner cities: Zhoushan, China; Regla, Cuba; and Sebastia, Palestine. This amount reflects \$23,000 per Sister City and is consistent with the funding level previously approved by the City Council for Shimada, Japan. The Zhoushan Commission is currently planning a trip scheduled for late June 2026, so the proposed use of funds is described below. Plans for the other Sister City commissions are still under development and have not yet been finalized.

These expenditures serve a valid public purpose by strengthening international partnerships, promoting cultural understanding and diplomacy, supporting community engagement opportunities for Richmond residents, and maintaining parity and consistency across Sister City relationships. This approach ensures equity across Sister City partnerships and maintains consistency with prior City Council actions supporting international delegation exchanges.

Proposed Use of Funds for Zhoushan, China

The proposed Zhoushan partnership includes a youth-focused educational and cultural exchange program scheduled from June 30 through July 8, 2026. The program is designed to provide Richmond youth and young adults with a meaningful opportunity to engage directly with their peers in Zhoushan, fostering cross-cultural understanding and strengthening people-to-people connections. Through structured activities and shared experiences, participants will gain exposure to different educational systems, cultural traditions, and global perspectives.

As part of the program, participants will visit a local school or university in Zhoushan to engage in discussions on education and student life, and will participate in hands-on workshops highlighting traditional Chinese arts such as calligraphy and paper-cutting.

The itinerary also includes visits to significant cultural and historical landmarks, including Putuo Mountain and the Great Wall of China, providing important historical context and enriching the overall educational experience.

Interest in the program, organized in partnership with the Richmond–Zhoushan Friendship Commission, is strong, with 50 participants currently registered as of April 30, 2026. To support this initiative, The Commission would like to use the \$23,000 to assist eligible participants with key travel-related expenses, including visas, passports, and airfare, particularly for those with demonstrated financial need.

This program directly responds to ongoing requests from Zhoushan officials to expand youth and community engagement as a means of sustaining long-term awareness and participation in the Sister City relationship. By prioritizing youth and community participation, the program supports the development of future cultural ambassadors and strengthens international relationships at the local level.

To promote equitable access, a scholarship program will be administered for eligible Richmond residents between the ages of 16 and 45 that submitted an application by the April 30 deadline. Scholarship funding will help offset travel costs, with applicants required to contribute a minimum of \$500 toward the trip and encouraged to contribute more if feasible to maximize the number of participants served. Scholarship recipients will also be expected to provide a written report following their participation to share their experiences with the broader community.

Consistent with City policy and to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with applicable laws, the scholarship funds will be administered by a qualified third-party entity. Due to timing, staff is requesting authorization for the City Manager, in collaboration with the City Attorney, to enter into agreement(s) with qualified third-party administrator(s) and take all necessary actions to administer appropriated funds in support of eligible costs associated with the Richmond–Zhoushan Sister City program; and direct staff to develop and implement scholarship guidelines, in collaboration with the Zhoushan Sister City Commission.

**DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:**

None.