

Cultural Connections Committee Minutes

Location: City Hall Auditorium

Date/ Time: 6/24/2026 12:00-1:00PM

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00PM by Chair Iraida Muñoz.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Iraida facilitated introductions and posed an ice-breaker question: “What do you do during the summer time?”

3. Attendance- 17 people

- Members in Attendance (In-Person): 8
Barbara Costa, Iraida Muñoz, Xianglan Zhu, Meta Vornehm, Jenn Hosking, Donna Marceau, Claudia Decker, Lynne Boyer
- Non-Members in Attendance (In-Person): 4
Alejandro Urrutia, Manoj Chourasia, Jessica Hagg, Anya Gatchell,
- Attending via Zoom: 5
David Holt, Nonny Egbonu, Yu Aloe Rioux, Elizabeth Berry, Angela Mercado

4. Multicultural Festival Update

- Planning Committee meets every other Friday afternoon on Zoom(same Zoom link).
- Recommended members to walk through Renaissance Park when there is a event there to have some feelings about the place.
- Most secured; still in early-stage processes for sponsorships and performers.
- Sponsorships: Outreach letters sent; limited responses so far attributed to staff turnover and vacations (May–June). Expect increased traction July–August.
- Performers: Ongoing recruitment; Planning Committee to focus on communications and connections in coming weeks.
- Vendors: Two food vendors verbally committed; working through certification to finalize.
- Participation: Members invited to follow up with Iraida to get involved in specific roles.

5. Guest Presentation - India Association of New Hampshire (IANH)

Speaker: Rep. Manoj Chorasias, President, IANH

Context and Mission:

- IANH is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization serving NH for 30+ years.
- Mission pillars: cultural heritage, education, and community service; building goodwill with the broader community.

Cultural Programs:

- Annual spring celebration and Diwali festival.
- Participation in Multicultural Festival (September) and “Passport to India” at Nashua Public Library.
- Platform for Indian diaspora youth to perform and maintain cultural connections (dance, music, literature, regional traditions).

Education:

- Partnerships with local schools/youth for academic bees (spelling, math).
- Emphasis on education access; funds raised support student needs in India (e.g., mid-day meal programs).

Community Service:

- Longstanding support for Nashua and Manchester soup kitchens.
- Fundraising for the renovated Nashua homeless shelter (~\$60,000 from the Indian community).
- Disaster relief contributions (e.g., Puerto Rico hospital support via Southern NH Medical).
- Assistance to Indian families via consular services (visa/passport camps).

Personal Civic Role:

Manoj serves on NH House Commerce & Consumer Affairs; focuses on insurance/healthcare legislation:

- Mental health coverage for youth (under 18): bill advanced to interim study; intends to reintroduce with modifications.
- Continuous Glucose Monitoring (CGM) coverage for non-insulin-dependent patients: advocacy for expanded insurance coverage.
- Ambulance balance billing reform: move to protect patients from surprise balances; insurer responsibility clarified.

6. Guest Presentation - Rotary Club (Hudson/Nashua area)

Speaker: Dr. Alejandro Urrutia

Rotary Overview:

- Founded 1905 (Chicago, Paul Harris).
- Approximately 1.2 million Rotarians worldwide.

- Focus areas: water/sanitation, disease prevention, maternal/child health, education, community development, peace.

Global Health & Disaster Response:

- Polio eradication: Rotary's mobilization model foundational to global efforts.
- Vaccination campaigns: Experience vaccinating thousands of children in Uganda against measles using Rotary mobilization strategies.
- Disaster logistics: Coordinated shipments for Central American hurricane relief (e.g., Mitch) by leveraging Rotary's global network (e.g., Chiquita cargo backhauls), supplemented by U.S. partners (e.g., Senator engagement, airlift support). Lesson: community donations require logistics planning; Rotary excels at coordination.

Collaboration Ethos:

- Rotary brings together individuals across political and social divides to work on shared community goals.

Local/International Links:

- Mention of Rotary collaborations in India (Goa) and Portugal-linked clubs as examples of cross-border service.

Participation and membership opportunities –“Have fun doing good”

7. Discussion after the presentation

Q: How does your organization reach members, spread the word, and mobilize participation?

- IANH - membership; it's only \$15 for the whole year which will give discounts for some events. Regular email newsletters (monthly; increased to biweekly/weekly leading up to events). Public info is also posted on the IANH website.
- IANH maintains a WhatsApp group for heads/leads of local organizations; they push event info there for downstream sharing to members.
- Rotary - Collaboration model: Rotary partners with non-Rotary organizations to aid, speakers, and support aligned to community projects.
- Rotary - Membership each club sets its own fee (example range provided: high fee Boston-area club vs. lower fee Hudson club ~ \$200 paid twice per year).
- Access/support: Some clubs offer scholarship/assistance for those needing help with dues.

Q: How does India's historical caste system manifest among Indian communities abroad, including within IANH?

- Historical context acknowledged, but its role has declined significantly in urban India and among the diaspora due to geographic mobility, diverse workplaces, and interregional interaction.

- IANH is inclusive and not organized along regional or caste lines; programs are pan-Indian (representing North/South/East/West languages and traditions).
- Social boundaries can persist more in rural/interior parts of India (e.g., marriage patterns), but they are softening over time.
- In the U.S. context, caste is generally not a factor in how community groups operate or how people engage.

8. Community Announcements

- Planning Committee: Every other Friday; next session this Friday via the usual Zoom link.
- Transportation: new bus service connecting toward Nashua (currently to the border; route extends to Lowell). Launch is targeted around July 6 which will significantly increase regional mobility; outreach planned to build ridership.
- Family Day at the Gloria Timmons Community Center: July 11, 2–4 pm. Free and open to all ages. Activities include yoga classes, dance classes, tie-dying outdoors, games, and crafts.
- Teen Leadership Camp: July 13–17. Full week, completely free. Applications on the Center's website; deadline July 1. For ages 13–17; includes field trips and leadership workshops.
- Tree Streets Block Party: July 11, 9 am–3 pm Suggested flow: attend Tree Streets first, then come to the Center.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00PM.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, July 29th, 2026 at noon- Nashua City Hall

Auditorium with a virtual option for nonmembers as needed.