



**CITY OF HOLLAND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
HOLLAND CITY HALL - Training Room, 2nd Floor
May 14, 2026 at 5:30 PM**

International Relations Mission Statement

Mission Statement

We build and maintain meaningful relationships between the people of Holland and the wider world through cultural, educational, and professional contact.

Vision

The City of Holland connected to and growing with the wider world.

Values

- **Respect:** We commit to the highest levels of courtesy and fairness for those who serve on this commission and those whom this commission serves.
 - **Reliability:** We fulfill our commitments to ourselves, Holland residents, its government, and our local and global partners.
 - **Collaboration:** We seek great ideas and resources in our community and beyond our borders.
 - **Hospitality:** We strive to make Holland a welcoming community for everyone.
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A. Call to Order

B. Mission, Vision, Values

C. Roll Call

D. Special Presentation

Allison Hoving Baraza, Executive Director, Empowering Youth Global Connections Presentation

E. Approval of the Meeting Minutes

Approval of the April 2, 2026, meeting minutes. **Call to Vote.**

1.

F. Next IRC Commission Meeting:

The next International Relations Commission will be June 4, 2026, in the City Hall Training Room at 5:30 p.m.

G. City Council Liaison Update

H. Student Representative Update

I. Chair Report

1. Election of the Commission Chair. **Call to Vote**

2. Election of the Commission Chair-Elect. **Call to Vote**

J. Department 2026 Strategic Goal Update

1. World Affairs Council Great Decisions. Completed.

2. Reel Time Film Series. Completed.

3. International Festival of Holland for 2026. Completed.

4. International Fashion Show. Completed.
5. Sister City/Friendship City Review Process. Completed.

K. Commission FY 2026 Strategic Goals

1. Goal 1: Create Quarterly Calendar Update.
2. Goal 2: Support the Creation of Welcome Center.
3. Goal 3: Build a stronger relationship with Santiago de Queretaro/City of Assen.

L. Other Business

M. Adjournment

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: In addition to addressing the Commission during public hearings and under "Public Comment," members of the Audience may address the Commission, on items after a motion is pending on a particular item, by addressing the Chairperson. Audience participation shall be five minutes or less per item.

CELL PHONES: Please be courteous and turn cell phones off during the meeting.



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- 087Present:** Chair Start and Commissioners Cuellar, Hoekstra, Neal, O’Malley, and Pierce.
- Others:** City Council Member Lyn Raymond and City Staff Member Esther Fifelski.
- Absent, excused:** Commissioners Nathan Slauer and Commissioner Joseph Bonadies. Student representatives Yazlen Ochoa, Ano Mangwiro, Komi Ke.

- 2026.04.01 Call to Order.** Meeting called to order at 5:33 by Chair Start.
- 2026.04.02 Mission, Vision, and Values.**
- 2026.04.03 Roll Call.** See above.
- 2026.04.04 Public Comment.** None.
- 2026.04.05 Special Presentation.** Fifelski reminded the commission that Allison Hoving Baraza, Founder and President of Empowering Youth Global Connections will be our featured speaker.
- 2026.04.06** Approval of March 5, 2026, meeting minutes. Motion to approve March 5, 2026, meeting minutes by Commissioner Neal, support by Commissioner Hoestra. **Motion carried unanimously.**
- 2026.04.07 Next IRC Monthly Meeting.** **Thursday, May 14, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.** in the 2nd floor Training Room at City Hall.
- 2026.04.08 City Council Liaison Update.** The city is currently in the final stages of final budget review before accepting the budget.
- 2026.04.09 Student Representative Updates.** None.
- 2026.04.10 Chair Report.** Chair Start reported that Commissioner Joseph Bonadies reported in March that he would be resigning in April. Commissioner Bonadies was to roll into the Chair position. Chair Start comes off as Chair in June. The International Relations Commission was asked to consider nominations for Chair and Chair-Elect at the May meeting. Commissioners interested in serving as Chair or Chair-Elect are asked to come to the May meeting with their speech for selection to serve as Chair or Chair-Elect.



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2026.04.11 FY 2026 Department Report Update.

1. **World Affairs Council Great Decisions. 100% complete.** Next event scheduled in Winter 2027. We had two great topics, but only one was popular. Fifelski suggests commission take more time to review the speaker options we have. No further updates until November/December 2026.
2. **Reel Time Film Series Update at the Knickerbocker Theater. 100% complete.** Films will be pre-selected during the summer. No further update until November.
2026 Reel Time Film Series. Final Film Update:
 - A. Dear Future Children, Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The turnout for the youth film was 22. Fifelski reported the youth pick was not well attended. We had 29 attendees.
 - B. No Other Land, Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Fifelski reported there were over 130.
 - C. Porcelain War, Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Fifelski reported we had 66 attendees.
3. **International Festival of Holland. 15% complete.**
2026 International Festival Date: October 10, 4 to 7 p.m.
4. **International Fashion Show, 75% complete.** Saturday, April 18, 2026, at the Herrick District Library. completion. Commissioner Pierce offered to help Fifelski organize.
5. **Sister City/Friendship City Review Process. 100% complete.** The commission reviewed the document. They are to send recommendations to finalize. Fifelski will add quality control check to the document.



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2026.04.12 FY 2026 Commission Strategic Goals Update.

Goal 1: Create Quarterly Calendar. Commissioner O’Malley leading the effort on Academic Worldquest™. He was in contact with his Traverse City contact.

The team wants to host a viewing FIFA soccer event at Kollen Park or the Civic Center. They will research the costs to host this event. This would be an unbudgeted expense they would have to fundraise.

Fifelski will inquire about Kollen Park and Civic Center. She will also check with the Parks Department.

International Fashion Show. Fifelski and Commissioner Pierce are working to recruit more models. There were discussions around #Holland and City of Holland social media platforms. The Herrick District Library rooms are reserved, and Esther is getting the data for the cultural model descriptions, for the Master of Ceremony, as they walk down the runway.

Goal 2: Support the creation of a Welcome Center. Allison Hoving, Executive Director of Empowering Youth Global Connections, will be coming to speak at the May International Relations Commission meeting.

Goal 3: Build a stronger relationship with Santiago de Queretaro/City of Assen.

Fifelski reached out to Sinclair, they are asking if the Queretaro side will work with customs. The following questions were posed to Daniela Quintana Mena, Queretaro International Liaison:

- a) Measurements of playground space where the equipment would be installed? This will help us identify an appropriate equipment footprint.
- b) Will the Santiago de Queretaro team accept delivery of the equipment and handle the logistics of getting things through customs and to the park location?
- c) Would the Queretaro parks department be able to help install the equipment. Our playground provider



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will have specifications they will need in place for installation.

Daniela said she would check with the team and get back to us. Fifelski sent an update and we have not received a response.

2026.04.13 Other Business. None.

A. SAVE THE DATE.

1. International Fashion Show, Saturday, April 18, 2026, at Herrick District Library – Main Campus. Event starts at 10:00 a.m.
2. WACA Vandenberg Prize with General H.R. McMaster (ret.). April 7, 2026, at Noon in the Huizenga Grand Room @ Frederick Meijer Gardens.

2026.04.14 Adjournment. There being no further business meeting adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Esther C. Fifelski
Director, Human Relations Department
Human Relations/International Relations/Youth Services