



Memorandum

TO: RULES AND OPEN
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: Councilmember Sylvia Arenas

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 25, 2022

Approved

Date 2/25/22

**SUBJECT: ACTIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE AND IN
RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S CRIMINAL MILITARY ACTION**

RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct the City Manager to begin the process of suspending our Sister City relationship with Ekaterinburg, Russia in response to Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, and to report back to the Council regarding a final and complete termination of the Sister City relationship.
2. Direct the City Manager to light City Hall's Tower and Rotunda in the Blue and Yellow of the Ukrainian Flag, as well as raising the Ukrainian Flag, in solidarity with the Ukrainian people, and to encourage the City Manager to fly City flags at half-mast for Ukrainian military and civilian fatalities at the time she determines most appropriately an act of solidarity.
3. Direct the City Manager, via the Office of Intergovernmental Relations, to take an active position of support for Federal policies that put sanctions on Russia, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and those aiding and abetting his invasion, as well as supporting proposals for additional aid to the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian people.
4. Direct the City Manager, via Immigrant Affairs, to engage with the Ukrainian immigrant community in the South Bay to ensure that the community has a direct line of contact and access to available services.

BACKGROUND

Each of us – together – has watched in horror as Vladimir Putin and the Russian Government unleash unspeakable horror upon a peaceful nation, whose sole mistake appears to be yearning for freedom and living too close to the Russian border.

Much has been said about what is happening in Eastern Europe today, but there are two news stories that particularly caught my attention as I write this background.

One was a story about NICU babies hiding in a bomb shelter in Dnipro with the nurses who are trying to keep them alive to escape shelling.¹

The other was a chilling U.S. intelligence report to the United Nations that Russia has compiled a list of Ukrainians “to be killed or sent to camps following a military occupation.”²

These stories only touch on the grave threat to security, peace, and freedom.

In response, the American people and the world community have risen in defiance. At every level of government, in every business association, and in organized civil society, people of conscience are adding their voices.

I propose four steps that the City of San José can immediately take to lend our voices in solidarity to the brave women and men fighting for democracy, liberty, and freedom in Ukraine. I urge my council colleagues to bring forward any additional actions that can be taken and I would welcome their inclusion in our council action.

My first recommendation – ending our Sister City relationship with Ekaterinburg, Russia – perhaps deserves some additional background.

Fundamentally, our Sister City relationship is a formal diplomatic relationship between the municipal government of San José and the municipal government of Russia's fourth largest city. Given Russia's centralization of power in the hands of Putin, our Sister City status with Ekaterinburg communicates to the Russian government whether our city government believes that Russia's actions violate every norm and are substantial enough to break our ties.

Ending a Sister City relationship over political matters of national governments is not a normal action, but across the globe each and every organization that interacts with Russia is asking themselves what their formal relationships communicate in this moment.

Congress will soon be debating ending the “most favored nation” trading status with Russia, ending permanent normal trade relations, and beginning a process to expel the country from the World Trade Organization. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has taken steps to freeze Russia out of the international economic body. The Council of Europe, an international human rights organization, has suspended Russia.

Even the Eurovision Song Contest has decided that no Russian musical act will be allowed to participate in this year's contest and European soccer will no longer host their Champions League Finals in St. Petersburg.

Simply, across the globe, people of conscience are understanding that each of us have an obligation to act. Every action – great and small – is an act of resistance and defiance.

I ask my Council colleagues to support an urgent response.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/02/24/world/russia-attacks-ukraine?smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur#newborns-at-a-dnipro-childrens-hospital-moved-into-bomb-shelter>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/02/20/ukraine-russia-human-rights/>