



Re: MIRA 2026 Budget

November 4, 2025

Dear Mayor Nickels, Finance Committee Chairman Sitkiewitz, members of the Finance Committee, and Common Council,

I am submitting comments related to the 2026 budget for MIRA.

The MIRA committee is an all-volunteer group that is part of the city of Manitowoc and is supported by the Tourism Department. Our focus is to continue the variety of community connections between Manitowoc and our sister city in Kamogawa, Japan. The wide variety of programs include adult delegation visits, annual high school student exchanges, and pen pal, origami, and student artwork exchanges. Adult delegation visits between our cities continue to connect people every few years, and ever since the sister city relationship began in 1993. Each of these connections continues to bring our cultures together, deepening the bonds of friendship and enriching the lives of our citizens.

Many of you were able to join the Kamogawa adult delegation visit Welcome Dinner on September 30th which celebrated 32 years of sister city friendship and connection. Mayor Nickels and Mayor Sasaki reaffirmed the commitment to continue our sister city connections and collaboration during that evening. The proclamation issued by Mayor Nickels acknowledges the exchange of citizens, education, and promotion of economic ties and culture, while pledging to continue to nurture and encourage this bond for future generations. The Consulate General of Japan representative from Chicago, Deputy Consulate General Naoya Kishi witnessed the affirmation of the sister cities. The presence of the consulate at this event highlights the significance of our citizens sharing our cultures through connection.

Not long after the delegation visit, the Japanese American Society of Wisconsin held a meeting in Appleton to connect people from Wisconsin communities with a sister city in Japan. DCG Kishi from the Japanese Consulate in Chicago was in attendance as well. His speech highlighted the visit to Manitowoc and the immense value that he witnessed during the warm cultural gathering of citizens from both communities.

While discussing the MIRA budget at our recent committee meeting, it was advised that the 2026 budget recommendation for MIRA is \$5,000.00.

\$5,000.00 will not meet the funding requirements for MIRA based on the historical past practice of the past 16 years of exchange activities guided by Mayor Nickels. Therefore, the volunteers of the Manitowoc International Relations Association respectfully request that the amount of **\$10,000.00** be allocated to the MIRA fund to accomplish the goals, commitments, and exchanges as set forth in the proclamation signed by Mayor Nickels on September 30, 2025.

The value to continue cultural exchanges between our sister cities truly benefits the city and its citizens in a multitude of ways. Every person that experiences another culture becomes enriched by the connection that is made. It is the moments of connection and the experiences that we continue to share that lead us to become better citizens and human beings in the world, and truly an international city.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Kaesermann
MIRA Vice President