

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF ONLINE SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2025, AT 5.00 P.M. TO SIGN THE DECLARATION OF FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN LIMERICK, IRELAND AND SAVANNAH, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.**

**PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:**

Councillor D. McSweeney, Príomh Chomhairleoir.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mayor Moran.

Councillors Benson, Butler, Collins (B), Collins (M), Conway, Daly, Donoghue, Doyle, Foley, Hartigan (S), Hickey-O'Mara, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Sullivan (O), O'Sullivan (T), Pond, Ruddle, Sheahan, Slattery, Stokes, Talukder, Teskey and Ward.

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Ryan (M) and Teefy.

**OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Director General (Dr. P. Daly), A/Director, Corporate Services, Human Resources and Organisational Development (Mr. J. Clune), Director, Regeneration, Sports and Recreation (Mr. J. Delaney), Director Transportation and Mobility, (Mr. B. Kennedy), Director Planning and Place-making, (Mr. V. Murray), Director, Finance, Economic Development Digital Services and ICT, (Mr. M. White), Director of Service, Rural, Culture, Community and Tourism Development (Mr. S. Duclot), Administrative Officer, Marketing and Communications (Mr. E. Clarke), Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services and Governance Department (Ms. C. Farrell), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services and Governance Department (Ms A. Foley), Staff Officer, Corporate Services and Governance Department (Ms. J. Tierney)

**SAVANNAH DELEGATION:**

Van R. Johnson II, Mayor of the City of Savannah, Georgia, USA , Trip Tollison, President and CEO, World Trade Center Savannah, Marty Hogan, CEO, US Intermodal Corporation, WTC Savannah Board of Directors, Secretary/Treasurer, Jay Melder, City Manager of City of Savannah, Marty Johnston, Deputy Assistant to Mayor Johnson, Ryan Sewell, Partner | Board Member, Sterling Seacrest Pritchard, Joe Marinelli, President and CEO, Visit Savannah, Mike Lynch, Senior Vice President, Bank of America, North America.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir welcomed everyone to the Council Chamber for the Special Meeting, which was convened to sign the Declaration of Friendship Agreement between Limerick and Savannah, Georgia, United States of America. He extended a warm welcome to the Mayor of Savannah, Mr. Van R. Johnson II and the delegation from Savannah that travelled to Limerick for this momentous occasion.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir outlined the history that is shared between Limerick and Savannah and referred to both location's love of storytelling and talent for hospitality. He noted this Friendship Agreement reflects a commitment to building international relationships, strengthening cultural ties and creating a welcome embrace for Limerick people visiting Savannah and for Savannahians visiting Limerick.

The Mayor of Limerick stated he was delighted to welcome the Mayor of Savannah, Mr. Van R. Johnson II, and the Savannah delegation to Limerick. He acknowledged that the declaration of friendship will allow Limerick and Savannah to foster mutual understanding, promote tourism and encourage economic development through shared initiatives and projects.

Mayor Moran referred to Savannah's rich past and dynamic present which makes it a perfect partner for Limerick, and he looked forward with anticipation to what the future friendship will bring. He noted both Limerick and Savannah are ready to embark on this friendship journey and highlighted that a place is not just made of buildings and roads but of people and communities. He outlined that the ideas exchanged between both parties, and the common goals pursued is what will make this friendship agreement successful.

The Mayor of Savannah, Mayor Johnson, thanked the Mayor of Limerick, the Príomh Chomhairleoir and the Director General for the warm hospitality and welcome they received during their visit to Limerick. He referred to Limerick as a beautiful city with very friendly people. He stated he was looking forward to many more visits to Limerick to strengthen the Friendship Agreement and emphasised the importance of combining strengths to work together in pursuit of common goals. He highlighted the strong Irish heritage in Savannah and the shared similarities including comparable population sizes and locations on estuaries.

Mayor Johnson informed the meeting that this friendship was in the making for quite some time. He noted the signing of the agreement was the formalisation of this historic partnership and looked forward to working together on elements that matter to both cities and counties, especially through the promotion of tourism and economic development.

Members welcomed the Mayor of Savannah and the delegation to the Council Chamber. They expressed their delight at bringing both parties together to formalise the long standing friendship. Members acknowledged that this significant milestone reflects the commitment to build international relationships and enhance cultural and economic development in both Limerick and Savannah. They referred to the vast similarities in both the City and County of Limerick and the City of Savannah, particularly the Foynes Port, the Port of Savannah and the colleges and schools, highlighting how they hoped businesses and connections would grow and benefit from this partnership.

The Members also referred to the strong Irish connections with Savannah and highlighted the pride they take in the renowned St. Patrick's Day Parade held in Savannah annually, stating it is the second largest in the world after New York City. They highlighted the importance and honour of taking part in this event. Members paid tribute to Marty Hogan, CEO, US Intermodal Corporation, WTC Savannah Board of Directors, Secretary/Treasurer, for all the work he had put in to form this partnership and commended him for flying the flag for Limerick in Savannah.

Members outlined the opportunities and experiences they received during their visits to Savannah over the years, including visits to the Ports and educational institutions, pointing out the benefits from these visits. Members referenced the need for direct flights from Shannon to Savannah for ease of access to both locations. They were very excited about what the future will bring and thanked everyone involved over the years, in forming this friendship.

The Director General commended all the work that had been carried out to agree the declaration and stated it is a testament to the strong ties that already exist between Limerick and Savannah. He outlined that by working together great things can be achieved with lasting benefits created for both communities. The Director General noted that Limerick City and County Council is excited about the possibilities that this friendship agreement will bring.

Before the friendship agreement was signed, Mayor of Savannah asked each member of the delegation from Savannah to introduce themselves. In doing so, each delegate referred to this formal signing as an exciting time and looked forward to working with the Members and the Executive of Limerick City and County Council to further strengthen this partnership.

The Friendship agreement was formally signed by both Mayor of Limerick, Mr. John Moran and Mayor of Savannah, Mr. Van R. Johnson II. The Agreement stated:

Mayor John Moran, Mayor of Limerick, Ireland, and Mayor Van R. Johnson II, Mayor of Savannah, Georgia, United States of America, herewith sign this Friendship Agreement, so as to confirm and strengthen the established bonds of friendship between Limerick and Savannah, and to affirm a mutual aspiration to work together in unison for the benefit of both.

Both agree, on the basis of cooperation, equality, and mutual benefit, to continue to develop and cultivate relationships in order to promote and broaden their economic partnerships and cultural exchanges. Both will work together to examine issues of common interest and to look for areas of future cooperation.

Now, therefore, be it proclaimed that Limerick, Ireland, and Savannah, Georgia, United States of America, do hereby acknowledge and affirm a Friendship Agreement between the two counties, executed this 18th day of February, 2025.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir thanked the delegation from Savannah and all involved over the years to form this great friendship and he looked forward to the agreement bringing prosperity and joy to the people of Limerick and Savannah.

This concluded the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Príomh Chomhairleoir

Date: \_\_\_\_\_