

Welcome Speech by Linda Mealey-Lohmann, President and Co-Founder of the MN China Friendship Garden Society, on the occasion of the July 14, 2018, St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden Groundbreaking Ceremony at Phalen Regional Park

Nyob zoo (Nyaw zhong)

欢迎大家来参加我们的中国花园 破土 动工 仪式。

Welcome Mayor Carter and honored guests to our St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden Groundbreaking Ceremony.

My name is Linda Mealey-Lohmann. I am the President and Co-Founder of the MN China Friendship Garden Society.

Today we celebrate the **30-year anniversary** of the establishment of the sister-city relationship between St. Paul and Changsha. This relationship was started in 1988 by Mayor George Latimer. One of our board members, Weiming Lu served as First Chair of the St. Paul-Changsha Sister-City Committee, the group that made this happen, and he and Mayor Latimer traveled to Changsha in 1988 when the sister-city agreement was signed. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their foresight and efforts.

Today we also celebrate the **groundbreaking** of the St. Paul-Changsha China Friendship Garden of Whispering Willows and Flowing Waters - the first Changsha-style China Garden in the US. The path to get here has been long. This is a sister-city project that was initiated by the MN China Friendship Garden Society in 2005. At that time, we were just a committee of the USCPFA-MN. Joyce Hsiao, who is here today, and her husband CC, who has passed, and I had a dream of creating China Gardens in MN based on the sister-city relationships with China. The President of US-China Peoples Friendship Association-MN at the time, Mary Warpeha, supported this dream and the 3 of us have been working on this project for the last 14 years. Today our dream is being realized, so let's thank them for their dedication.

We have been working in a **collaboration** with MCFGS and the **City of St. Paul and St. Paul Parks & Recreation Department**. We thank Mike Hahm and Alice Messer for their leadership, and we especially thank architect Bryan Murphy for his unfailing commitment to this project.

This is also a **collaboration with the City of Changsha, Yanghu Wetlands Park**, and the Changsha architects, Jennifer Fan and Jon Wen of Hunan Jianke Landscape Company, who created the beautiful conceptual designs for the China Garden.

It has taken thousands and thousands of **volunteer** hours and dedication by the MN China Friendship Garden Society board and its Advisors to get us to today. These hardworking

volunteers raised more than \$800,000 for the 2018 construction. This is an amazing feat! My husband and I had dinner at a Hunan Restaurant last night and my fortune cookie fortune said it best, "Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

We also thank you, our **donors** and especially to the Groundbreakers who donated \$1,000 or more for this construction. Raise your hand if you are a donor!

We are also here to celebrate the **gift exchange** between Changsha and St. Paul. The gift from Changsha to St. Paul and Phalen Park is the beautiful Xiang Jiang Pavilion, a replica of Changsha's famous Aiwan Pavilion, 1 of 4 famous pavilions in China. The Xiang Jiang Pavilion was designed and fabricated in Changsha, then dis-assembled, and shipped here for installation. Part of that gift also includes the time and expense of the 13 artisans who arrived from Changsha this week. They are here to supervise the installation of the Xiang Jiang Pavilion, and are experts in the ancient architectural techniques of carpentry, masonry, and painting.

In addition to the Pavilion, the **Hmong Heritage Wall** and West Entrance Arch were fabricated in Changsha and shipped here for installation. The Hmong Heritage Wall contains symbols from both the MN Hmong Culture and the Changsha Hmong culture. Through our engagement with local Hmong historians, we have learned that the Hmong here trace their ancestral roots back to the Changsha area of China and that there are @2 million Hmong living in the Changsha area. This has given added a deeper significance to this sister-city China Garden. You can see that this has been a great cross-cultural collaboration and learning experience for all of us on the MN China Friendship Garden Society Board, and in the Phalen community, and the Hmong and Chinese communities.

The MCFGS Society, on behalf of the city of St. Paul, is presented a **gift to Changsha** of a set of 5 Peanuts characters sculptures. The design for Lucy was created by MN Hmong artist Kao Lee Thao and the design for the Snoopy doghouse with MN state symbols in a Chinese brush-style painting was created by MN Chinese artist Shen Yudong. These will symbolize St. Paul, the birthplace of Charles Schultz, and bring a bit of our MN Hmong and MN Chinese culture with them when they arrive in Changsha in a few days. They will be installed in a state-of-the-art Science Museum in Yanghu Wetlands Park.

As many of you may know, this was a somewhat **discouraging week**. On Tuesday, we were very excited to learn that the 5 shipping containers from Changsha had entered the US from Canada. We learned later that day, however, that 1 of the 5 shipping containers had been detained in ND for routine inspection. When that inspection showed that some seeds, *Imperata Cylindrica*, had gotten into the container, we learned that the container may have to be returned to Changsha. We were in shock. Board members of the China Garden Society, along with Bryan Murphy of Parks & Rec and Senator Klobuchar's office, have been working around the clock all week to address the situation. I can report that

the order to return that container back to China is now on hold and we expect it will come to Minneapolis for processing. The other 4 containers are already here in Minneapolis and are awaiting processing by customs. We are hopeful that the process will proceed smoothly, and that the containers will arrive at the construction site soon so that construction can proceed. Please send your thanks to Senator Klobuchar's office for her help in resolving this situation.

The **name in Chinese** of this China Friendship Garden is even more fitting today than when it was first approved by the Board earlier this year. The name is 柳明園 Liǔ míng yuán literally means "willow | bright | garden."

First, look around at all the beautiful willow trees that "light up" this park.

Second, this name has a deeper symbolic meaning. These 3 characters, 柳明園 Liǔ míng yuán, reference a line from a famous Chinese poem expressing beauty and hope:

山重水复疑无路，柳暗花明又一村。

shān zhòng shuǐ fù - yí wú lù , liǔ àn huā míng - yòu yī cūn.

"After endless mountains and rivers that leave doubt whether there's really a path out; Suddenly one encounters the shade of a willow and bright flowers, leading to lovely village."

In other words, after encountering many obstacles on one's journey, suddenly there is hope.

To quote Bill Zajicek: "It's hard to keep track of the various obstacles that this endeavor has encountered over the years, and at each obstacle, the support for the project in the community has grown and our resolve has strengthened."

And so with strengthened resolve, we celebrate today the **unity, friendship, and determination** that 柳明園 Liǔ míng yuán symbolizes. We hope you will appreciate and enjoy the cultural richness this China Friendship Garden brings to this community. Thank you.

INTRODUCTIONS

Acknowledgements:

- We thank Master Lei Yixin, our long-time friend, who traveled from Changsha this week to join this celebration. He is an internationally famous sculptor and created the beautiful “Meditation” sculpture behind us, as part of Minnesota Rocks! in 2006. Master Lei is the same sculptor who created the magnificent Martin Luther King Jr. Stone of Hope Memorial in Washington, DC. He has been a key supporter of this project in Changsha.
- We thank Senator Fong Hawj and Representative Tim Mahoney for sponsoring legislation in 2015 that led to a grant of \$50,000 in Legacy funds for the creation of the conceptual designs for the China Garden.
- We recognize all of our board members – please stand up.
- We recognize our Hmong Cultural Plaza Advisory Group under the leadership of Ying Chuyangheu – please stand up.
- We recognize our Chinese Advisory Group under the leadership of Chen Zhou – please stand up.
- We recognize the MN China Friendship Garden Society’s Honorary Advisory Council – please stand up.
- We also thank Councilmembers Dan Bostrom, Dai Thao, and Jane Prince for their support.
- Rachel Limon, Regional Trade Manager at MN Trade Office
- Erin Stiers, State Plant Health Director, with USDA
- Thank you to the Event Planning Committee, and a special thanks to Romi Slowiak for the beautiful stage decorations here and to Bill Zajicek for setting up the construction site with shovels and hardhats.

Introductions for speeches:

Mayor Melvin Carter is a fourth-generation Saint Paul resident, Saint Paul Public School graduate, former Saint Paul City Councilmember, and a father of three children. As Mayor, he has launched the “Serve St. Paul” Initiative, and has said that “building a city that works for all of us will require all of us to do the work.” He has been working to engage, enfranchise, and uplift people in Saint Paul and across the state and nation. Since taking office, he has been very supportive of this China Friendship Garden and we hope to get him to travel to Changsha in 2019 with us! It is my pleasure to introduce our Mayor, Melvin Carter.

Chen Zhou is a board member of the MCFGS and the Chair of the MCFGS Chinese Advisory Group, and former board member of USCPFA-MN. He is an engineer by training and this week he has put that knowledge to good use as he became our translator for some in-depth construction discussions. He is very active in the Chinese community and helped organize our Groundbreakers capital campaign in the Chinese community. He is an indispensable part of our team. It is my pleasure to introduce Chen Zhou.

Read Letter from Senator Klobuchar. Since arriving in the Senate, Amy Klobuchar has earned a reputation as an effective, results-driven legislator willing to reach across the aisle to get things done. Last Congress, Senator Klobuchar ranked first on a list of all 100 senators with the most bills that have been enacted into law. Throughout her time in the Senate, she has been a consistent and vocal advocate for Chinese-Americans, the Minnesota Hmong community, and other immigrant groups. Senator Klobuchar is also a strong supporter of preserving and promoting our cultural heritage—consistently fighting to fully fund the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. I will read a letter from our Senator Amy Klobuchar.

MN Senator Fong Hawj has been a resident of St. Paul, Minnesota for 25 years and has served as a Senator from District 67 since 2012. Since taking office, he has introduced and passed a number of bills to support affordable housing development, renewable energy policies, economic growth, and education to develop the future workforce. For the Eastside, he has worked hard on youth summer job programs, the development of Metro State Science and Education Center and securing funding for the Eastside Enterprise Center to help small businesses in the district. He has been a huge champion on workforce development and job training for minority communities and new American immigrant communities and currently serves as a Co-Chair of the People of Color Indigenous Caucus. He has been a long-standing supporter of the China Friendship Garden. Thank you! It is my pleasure to introduce to you Senator Fong Hawj.

Dr. Chen Qiong Lin is the Dean of the Design Institute of Hunan Jianke Garden Co., Vice Chair and Secretary General of the Hunan Landscape Architecture Society. We met him during our trip to Changsha in 2015 and now he is here in MN as the leader of the group of 12 artisans from Changsha. Please welcome Dr. Chen Qiong Lin.
