

Peekskill Mayor receives warm welcome in Castlebar

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IT is now over five years since the official twinning of US city Peekskill and the county town Castlebar but the link between the two towns was furthered cemented last week when Mayor of Peekskill, John Testa, headed a delegation on a whistle-stop visit.

Mr Testa was accompanied by his wife, Nancy, daughter Katie and son John and there was a very warm welcome for them at the Town Council's monthly meeting in Marsh House on Thursday night last.

Peekskill is located on the Hudson River approximately 40 miles north of New York City and is known as the 'Gateway to the Hudson Highlands'. This was Mayor Testa's first visit to Castlebar and he told the meeting it was a real honour and a pleasure for him to cement the relationship between the two towns through this visit.

He had received quite a number of delegations from Castlebar since the original twinning had taken place and he now hoped that there could be annual events to maintain the relationship.

"There are a large amount of people from our city who are very proud of their Irish heritage and we very much want the relationship we have established with the Castlebar area to be maintained and developed. I have only spent two days in Castlebar yet I feel at home here and we have been given a tremendous welcome," stated Mr Testa who then presented Mayor of Castlebar, Cllr Brendan Henaghan, with a proclamation which he said



KINDLY HOSTS The visiting delegation from Peekskill, New York are pictured with Castlebar councillors and officials before last week's monthly meeting at Marsh House.

Pic: Tom Campbell

was to re-affirm the twinning and also commits to expansion in future years. He added that there was a definite opportunity for the towns to organise a link through music or the arts as both appeared vibrant in both towns.

Cllr Henaghan said he was delighted to welcome a delegation from Peekskill to Castlebar as it was one of his first official duties as Mayor of the town.

"As towns, we certainly have a lot in common and I think we can learn a lot from this twinning. We are both towns of around 20,000 people and we are both trying to attract

industry. I also believe, like Mayor Testa, that we can utilise the arts and music societies in the towns to create important cultural links."

Mayor Henaghan also welcomed the other members of the delegation, Pat Garvey, who was influential in the setting up of the twinning and Westport native Cathal McGreal, who had been living in Peekskill for the last eight years.

Cllr Michael Kilcoyne said he had travelled to Peekskill on five occasions since the twinning and each time he had gone with the support of the majority of councillors.

"Each time I have gone the twinning has been progressed that bit further. The reality is that we can't live in a hamlet, we need to expand our horizons and we can definitely learn a lot from each other," stated Cllr Kilcoyne.

Cllr Blackie Gavin stated there was a lot more that can be done to insure that the twinning continues to be a success and he suggested that perhaps a soccer match could be organised between the clubs in both towns. Cllrs Mee, McCormack, Guthrie, Campbell and Crowley all gave their support to the expansion and development of the twinning.