

RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025 AT 12:00 PM

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (hereinafter referred to as "Authority" "the CCA" or the "Board" was held on April 22, 2025. The meeting was held in the McCarvill Boardroom, Second Floor, Rhode Island Convention Center, pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center, One Sabin Street, Providence, RI and the Amica Mutual Pavilion, One LaSalle Square, Providence, RI.

Board members in attendance were Ernest Almonte, Jeffrey Hirsh, Dale Venturini, Peter Mancini, and Carol Lombardi

Board members unable to attend included George Nee, Paul MacDonald, Oscar Vargas, Diony Garcia, Esq., and Jennifer Goodrich Coia, Esq.

Others participating were Daniel McConaghy Convention Center Authority; Dan Schwartz and Mike Gravison The VETS; Christina Montanaro, Cheryl Cohen, Rebecca Ponder, Casey Hoover, and Samantha Bottoni, RI Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo, Tom Riel, Neil Schriever PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; and Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

Ms. Venturini called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.

2. Announcement of Next Meeting Date

Ms. Venturini stated that the next meeting will take place on Thursday, May 22, 2025 at 12:00 p.m.

3. Approval of March 2025 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

Ms. Venturini requested a motion to approve the March 2025 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes. Upon a motion from **Chairman Almonte**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the March Marketing Committee meeting.

Ms. Venturini asked if anyone had seen the new signs at the IDG and commented on how wonderful they looked.

4. Marketing Updates

a. PWCVB – Kristen Adamo/Tom Riel

Mr. Riel welcomed Neil Schriever back to the CVB who was the Director of Sales 14 years ago when he left for a job in Washington, DC. He mentioned how good it is to have him back with his expertise of being entrenched in the DC market. **Ms. Venturini** commented that a lot of people come back to their new/old positions, and Mr. Riel said there are a lot of "boomerang" employees and the CVB is thrilled to have Mr. Schriever back in Providence. Mr. Riel then reviewed the PWCVB March report before the Committee (see attached). He stated that 25 new bookings came in with over 13k room nights. He expressed his appreciation for how the renovations were handled with no loss of business. He then discussed prospective bookings with a slow down in lead distribution with a significant shift in room nights of almost 50% less than last year at the same time. He stated that meeting planners are standing back and waiting to see what is going to happen. He reported that we always have 2-3 months where leads take a dip, so this is not necessarily a bad sign. He stated that there are 6200 room nights associated with the Convention Center with over 61k room nights year to date directly related to the Convention Center. Mr. Riel then reviewed new prospects at the Convention Center and April's hotel performance stating that we came in at the end 16% less than last year, and they thought they would flat to last year. He stated that they are researching where exactly it fell off. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned if the rates were higher, and Mr. Riel responded yes. He stated that they want to make sure they are booking the right events in the month of March and if a group does not perform as expected they would need to make some changes. **Mr. Hirsh** asked for meetings and conventions what cities are more or less affected by things, and Mr. Riel replied that there is a trickle down effect.

He said we do not have international transient bookings and when Boston sees a drop we might not get a direct push. He stated that if Boston has a \$400 room night rate, we can do better, and people will want options and come here for a cheaper hotel room night charge. He stated that April is slow and March is the new high season for conventions noting that JLC Live wants more and to accommodate them, another event needs to be taken out, which begs the questions if we displace another event and take that revenue out of March are we getting it at another time during the year. He commented that it is not only related to revenue for the building but the market as a whole. He stated that if we allow for a shift, we will need to get a five year commitment in writing. Discussion then ensued on a new TID-funded incentive which would allow the CVB to continue to group groups with larger peak night blocks. He stated that this incentive would be the possibility of adding shuttle services to a group, which may or may not pull other hotels into the mix and bring major customers into this building. He stated that they need to spend TID funds responsibly and make sure there is a return on any investment. Ms. **Venturini** commented on how incredibly important TID is to the market. She stated that there are several layers of accountability when it comes to spending any funds from the TID, first with the CVB and its Board of Directors and the TID has their own Board of Directors, all trying to find the best way to spend these funds the best, and she wanted to make sure everyone was aware of this. Ms. Adamo further commented that they also answer to the City and **Ms. Venturini** noted the State Legislature too. Mr. Riel stated that they are trying to figure out how to make more money by determining what events are best to put in the building which may result in some uncomfortable conversations. He then reported on site visit that will take place next week with Northstar Media together with the CVB and the Graduate Hotel, for an industry tradeshow in the Fall. Ms. Adamo then discussed Advertising and Digital Media noting that an updated Visitor's Guide has been printed and distributed throughout the State. She mentioned that the CVB did a lot of work around the NCAA tournaments in town last month and will talk more about the Lil Rhody Laugh Riot and the Culinary Collective events at Thursday's meeting. She then reported on PR and noted that the CVB was up for another Stella Award for Best CVB in the Northeast and asked everyone to vote for them. She stated that they won in 2023 and sat out in 2024 and are hoping to win the award in 2025. She then talked about WaterFire who was losing \$1 million and is now down to only a couple of thousand dollar loss. She stated that the CVB and the Mayor's Office are helping them with having smaller and larger waterfires that will equal the money they contribute every year. She stated that by doing so it allows Mr. Riel the flexibility when booking conventions to offer another incentive to a group to attract more business by adding a WaterFire. Ms. Adamo then reported that Anika is leaving Commerce the end of April and wanted to mention to the Board. **Ms. Venturini** stated that it is a big loss to the State. **Ms. Venturini** then asked if Ms. Adamo could provide a printed guide to Board members on Thursday which Ms. Adamo agreed to do.

b. AMP/RICC – Cheryl Cohen/Becca Ponder

Ms. Ponder then reviewed the RICC November report before the Committee (see attached). Ms. Ponder reported on the monthly sales review noting contracted business and pending business. She stated that contracts that have been signed but are awaiting a deposit will not be confirmed until a deposit is received. **Chairman Almonte** questioned the likelihood of not receiving a deposit, and Ms. Ponder replied unlikely. **Chairman Almonte** noted the conservative approach to finalizing events. Mr. Riel commented that typically a letter of intent is also signed, which is another level of advancement for confirmed events. Ms. Ponder then reviewed the April events at the Convention Center noting that there is a mix of business with a lot of repeat business and only three (3) dark days in the month. She then mentioned Royal Rumble and the inability to keep their courts up because there were other events between their weekend events. She also mentioned Gordon Foods and that Ms. Venturini brought this event to the Convention Center. She stated that there have been some minor challenges with an event of this size with the State Fire Marshal that they had to work through. **Ms. Venturini** stated that this group felt very heard when they were looking to host their show at the Convention Center and that they love coming here. Ms. Ponder then reviewed Q2 2025 highlighting the events coming in May and June, specifically the Yu-Gi-Oh! Championships which started as a very small event and now we host their Championship Series, and also USA Gymnastics which will utilize both the Convention Center for practices and the AMP for elite athlete competitions. Ms. Ponder concluded her report by reviewing their Sales and Marketing Initiatives for the month.

Ms. Venturini then expressed her appreciation to Ms. Cohen for taking care of her during the recent Kane Brown concert when she could not sit in the seat she purchased and Ms. Cohen made arrangements for her to watch the show from the press box, which proved to her that there really is not a bad seat to watch a show.

Ms. Cohen reviewed the AMP Monthly Marketing Report before the Committee (see attached). She reported that the AMP had an amazing March and there will be two concerts going into May along with Providence Bruins playoff games and finishing up this season with USA Gymnastics. She reported that WWE Raw will be coming back in July and Creed went on sale, which starts the AMP off strong for next fiscal year.

Ms. Cohen then reported that the food and beverage sales for the month of March came in over \$2 million, which was the largest revenue month ever at the arena. She stated that the per cap for NCAA Basketball was a little over \$33 per person. She commented that our ability to sell alcohol and the game times allowed us to sell more food. She stated that the wave started with the Providence Bruins, then PC, and then Sebastian Maniscalco which does not have an intermission. **Ms. Venturini** asked if this was the first time selling alcohol and Ms. Cohen replied yes but not for the Division III Wrestling. She noted that a change was made before Covid for the basketball tournaments. She stated that they had sold out of tickets the day tickets went on sale and before teams were even announced. She then reviewed NCAA visitor stats noting the zip code list and where fans visited while in town for the games. **Chairman Almonte** commented that these stats support what Mr. Riel was discussing earlier. Ms. Cohen reviewed the crime report as well. **Chairman Almonte** commented that this is good information to know but no way of knowing it had to do with the event. Ms. Cohen replied that OVG is working on expanding this data and there are different levels you can invest in such as how many nights spent in the market, average hotel spend, and year over year percentage changes. **Ms. Venturini** asked how we can manage with what Mr. Riel is doing to determine the value of an event. Mr. Riel replied that it would be measured the same way just different metrics. Ms. Adamo commented that people always think that Providence only profits from the events at the AMP and Convention Center rather than the entire state. She stated that having this information helps us for funding. Ms. Cohen stated that as we get more into the platform we can add more features, and we will be able to pull more information. Ms. Cohen mentioned that credit cards are attached too, which is a great way for us to see what the average spend is, how many days, etc. She stated that this also helps us with sponsorship valuation. She then mentioned that there is a lag of getting reports, specifically 8-10 weeks for a tourism report and a 3 week lag for events. She stated that she plans to combine this data with data from Ticketmaster and overlay all this information which should be able to give us a good profile. She promised to keep the Board updated on this information. **Chairman Almonte** questioned if the Ticketmaster data is who is coming to the event or who is buying tickets to the event, and Ms. Cohen replied who is buying. She stated that media coverage for the NCAA is important to Amica, and we used to have a service, but it was too expensive. She noted that she did a trial to get the information contained in her report. **Chairman Almonte** agreed with the importance of having this information during any contract negotiations.

c. The VETS – Dan Schwartz/Mike Gravison

Mr. Gravison reviewed The VETS Monthly Marketing Report before the Committee (see attached). Mr. Gravison stated that three (3) new events were just announced and that they will finish off the 24/25 season with a variety of events. He then reviewed the upcoming event listing noting that there were a dozen more shows in the pipeline as they work on next season. He then reported on some box office updates with new ticketing software now that most people do a lot more things on their phones, there are a lot more marketing opportunities available to them. He concluded his report stating that they will be a presentation on the Lil Rhody Laugh Riot at Thursday's meeting.

5. Executive Director's Report – Daniel McConaghy

a. Market Conditions Update – Tom Riel

Mr. Riel reviewed the PWCVB Pace & Industry Trend Report (see attached). He stated that long term pace related they are fine and 20% ahead of where they thought they would be through 2029. He stated that there are disruptors in the market that they will continue to monitor now noting \$4.3 million in direct spend that fell out with government funding, which is what hotels are reporting. He reviewed the list of contracts lost and that an additional one was added yesterday. He stated that there were six (6) definite cancellations with \$1.1 million lost in direct spend. He stated that they have created a watch list and they have identified seven (7) groups to watch totaling \$12.3 million in direct spend. He said that the sales team is staying close to organizers, and they are proactively reacting. He noted that there are societal disruptors too. He stated that meeting planners want safety and security, and they want them to show them we are a safe destination and welcoming to all, especially the LGBTQ community. He stated the importance of keeping in mind who our customer is. He stated that we are New England, which is a progressive part of the country. He stated that meeting planners will be sold on coming to Providence, but they need the ammunition to go back to their Board of Directors to get them to approve us as a destination. He stated that they are working with the Mayor's Office and the Chief of Police's Office to arm the sales team with information. He stated that we talk about our brand through trade shows and collateral pieces that say, "you are welcome here." Ms. Adamo commented that there was a presentation that was branding a theme "you belong here" and it was a great presentation. **Chairman Almonte** offered his assistance with the Chief of Police if they needed any help, and Ms. Adamo thanked him for his offer. Mr. Riel stated that the size of the customer given them different concerns with smaller groups getting here is a concern and bigger groups having safety as their main concern. He said we can learn from that and provide them with the information they need. He further commented that they are coming up with more tools, for example sports related events take place on the weekends, do officials need space in the days before the event. He stated that they are trying to plan what help we can offer them and what else is in the silo of those events.

Ms. Venturini noted that we are talking about this because we do not want any surprises. She then questioned the use of shuttle buses and who they planned to use, and Mr. Riel stated that there would not be an exclusive and it would be who is available. Mr. McConaghy asked Mr. Riel if he would be available to present at the Board meeting on Thursday, and Mr. Riel replied yes and that it is important that people know we are not just sitting here waiting for something to happen. Ms. Adamo commented that they have been talking about this issue nonstop. Mr. Mancini asked if there was any update on the parking tax, and Mr. McConaghy replied that nothing has been filed yet. He then mentioned that there is a ticket tax at the City Council level, which has not come together yet, but everyone is waiting for it. He stated that this is something else we need to keep our eye on. **Ms. Venturini** commented that she is proud to be here representing the work that everyone does and how much everyone is appreciated.

6. Adjournment

With there being no other business to be discussed by the Marketing Committee, **Ms. Venturini** asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by **Chairman Almonte**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn at 1:29 p.m.