

RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY  
MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025 AT 12:00 PM

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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 February 25, 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 Dale Venturini, Jeffrey Hirsh, Peter Mancini, and Carol Lombardi

Board members not in attendance were Ernest Almonte, 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; Lawrence Lepore, Christina Montanaro, Cheryl Cohen, Casey Hoover, and Samantha Bottoni, RI Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo, PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; and Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

**Ms. Venturini** called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

2. Announcement of Next Meeting Date

**Ms. Venturini** stated that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 12:00 p.m.

3. Approval of January 2025 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

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

**VOTED:** to approve the minutes of the January Marketing Committee meeting.

4. Marketing Updates

a. PWCVB – Kristen Adamo/Tom Riel

Ms. Adamo reviewed the PWCVB January report before the Committee (see attached). She noted a little dip overall, but the year is incredibly strong with two (2) definitive bookings at the Convention Center totaling 2700 room nights. Ms. Adamo further stated that the CVB is closely monitoring the recent flux in government spending and how it affects bookings. She stated that they have flagged all business funded by the federal government and will quantify that data. She stated the importance of letting Senator Whitehouse and Senator Reed know that this is an issue and how it is affecting our State. She noted that they are among the first people talking about it in our industry. **Ms. Venturini** commented that a lot of Canadian business is being cancelled. **Ms. Venturini** suggested keeping track so three (3) years from now we remember that two (2) government funded meetings were cancelled at the Convention Center. On a brighter note, Ms. Adamo mentioned a potential medical convention that Providence was one of 18 cities that met the criteria AMA is looking for to host this convention. Mr. Lepore questioned whether there has been any impact to the World Cup in light of the current government climate, and Ms. Adamo replied that there are so many die-hard fans, they will probably come any way, but she worries about travel restrictions. Ms. Adamo then stated that they are still in the interview process of finding a replacement for Anissa Ladd who is moving to Virginia Beach. Ms. Adamo concluded her report by stating that their LinkedIn numbers are strong, the Lil Rhody Laugh Riot and Providence Culinary Collective events have been receiving great coverage, and it will be an "all hands-on deck" for March Madness. **Ms. Venturini** mentioned that she would like to talk to Ms. Adamo about what events she recommends for her to sign up for the Providence Culinary Collective.

b. AMP/RICC – Cheryl Cohen/Becca Ponder

Ms. Cohen reviewed the AMP Monthly Marketing Report before the Committee (see attached). She reviewed the AMP Event Tracker noting that because of the back-to-back NCAA Tournaments a lot of events shifted, and many events may not actually fall in the month they were budgeted. She then reported that we recently confirmed a show with two (2) rehearsal days and two (2) show days in December 2025. She noted that Attorney Leach has been very helpful in working with us on this contract and there is one last language piece that hopefully will be settled shortly. She then reviewed events “In Process” noting that there are quite a few holds from Live Nation. Mr. Lepore noted that Peter Luuko from OVG reached out to Don Law to get more shows in Providence and also Live Nation wants to be more active in the market in lieu of the new stadium in Pawtucket. **Ms. Venturini** noted that she is very impressed by the stadium and heard that they currently have five (5) concerts booked already. Ms. Adamo commented that they have a turf field and are actively trying to get a grass field at the State’s expense. **Ms. Venturini** commented that their season ticket prices are very reasonable. Ms. Adamo mentioned that she had spoken to them about a rugby event, but the event wanted concessions, but we were not willing to give it to them. **Ms. Venturini** noted that there is a lot of construction going on that she is happy to see. Mr. Lepore questioned the economic impact noting that there is nothing to do in the area. Ms. Cohen continued with her report stating that the AMP hosts approximately 8-10 concert per year, which is our sweet spot and is good considering all the competition in this area. She noted that other tertiary markets are not getting 8-10 concerts per year, which means that we are still a strong market for entertainment and live events. She continued by stating that it is always a fight, and we have to continue to be creative with incentives with Amica to get them to come here. She noted that big shows are being added every day to other venues in our region. She stated that a lot of “B-acts” that could successfully play us are opening acts at stadiums for major headliners. Ms. Cohen noted the great presence of The Rosendale Group, specifically Frank Manfredi, who has successfully booked shows here and is looking to book more shows, which is good for us. She commented on the event that will have two (2) rehearsal days and two (2) show days. She stated that in addition to their food and beverage caps being high, this event will provide a great economic impact because people will travel to come to this event. She noted that as a partner, Amica is invested in us, and wants us to succeed in getting shows and is willing to partner in different genres of music and they understand it is not about putting their name on it. Mr. McConaghy stated that during a recent meeting he and Chairman Almonte had with the Governor, they suggested the next time the Governor sees Amica to thank them for what they do for us. Vice Chairman Nee questioned the George Strait show that was just announced, and Ms. Cohen replied that this is a prime example of “B Acts” going on these stadium tours. **Mr. Venturini** asked if they could do both, and Ms. Cohen replied that they could, but they would not. **Mr. Mancini** commented that back in the day there were 25-30 concerts per year, which is so not the case now with all the competitive venues in the area. **Ms. Venturini** commented that she was at the country show at The VETS on Saturday night and was surprised at the age range of people attending that concert. Mr. Schwartz stated that it was a great show, and the staff did a great job getting her out there given her recent knee surgery.

In light of Ms. Ponder being on vacation, Ms. Dotson reviewed the Convention Center Monthly Marketing Report before the Committee (see attached). She noted that February of 2025 was a mix of business with three (3) sporting events, two (2) public shows, and two (2) small meetings and trade shows. **Ms. Venturini** questioned whether it was necessary to go and revisit event contracts in light of the renovations or whether they are all new contracts, and Mr. Lepore replied that we try to negotiate terms and prices are provided to some clients. **Ms. Venturini** asked if prices were increased and if there was any pushback, and Mr. Lepore replied yes there were increases and there has been some pushback. **Ms. Venturini** noted the importance of communication with clients. Mr. Lepore agreed and stated that one of the biggest changes will be once the ballroom renovations are complete we will be charging a rental fee. Ms. Dotson further reported that there were only seven (7) dark days in the month of February, even though they only had the ability to sell the exhibition halls. She stated that the sports business is very strong. **Ms. Venturini** asked how the RV show went, and Ms. Dotson replied that it went well. She stated that sports has been the highlight over the last two (2) months and reviewed the recap noting The Cheer Tour is growing and has booked two (2) years out and this year their food and beverage increased by \$20k. She stated that the Ghost Town Showdown cheer event also increased their food and beverage by \$20k. She further reported that the JVC Volleyball event does four (4) events a year and food and beverage the last time they were here came in at \$75k. She reported that Athletic Cheer food and beverage was up \$15k from last year. Ms. Dotson further reported that clients are happy to see the renovations going on. She noted that the Chexpo event never wanted to book the Exhibition Halls for their event but in light of the renovations, they did not have a choice but to utilize the Exhibition Halls and they are very happy with the space. **Ms. Venturini** asked what kind of show Chexpo is, and Ms. Dotson replied that it is a food show with exhibit booths, and they donate any extra food at the end of the show. Ms. Montanaro commented that the setup for this show is very easy. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned who their audience is, and Ms. Dotson replied that it is a trade show and not open to the public. Ms. Dotson then reviewed the last page about using LinkedIn as a sales marketing tool, which allows them to continue to engage with clients. Ms. Dotson concluded her report by stating that their quarterly newsletter resulted in two (2) dance leads once it was sent out.

c. The VETS – Dan Schwartz/Mike Gravison

Mr. Gravison reviewed The VETS Monthly Marketing Report before the Committee (see attached). He distributed their Spring brochure and reported that January and February were good months at The VETS and their programming has been very successful. He stated that they just announced Theresa Caputo in May, which will be her second time at The VETS, with her performing last year at PPAC. He further stated that Ralph Barbosa and Rene Vaca were recently announced as well and will take place in July. He commented that a lot of their shows are trending towards sellouts. He stated that the last two (2) shows have been announced for the Lil Rhody Laugh Riot – Puddy and Peterman (taking place at the Comedy Connection) and Alex Edelman (taking place at The VETS). Mr. Gravison then reported on a Festival Pass for the Lil Rhody Laugh Riot, which offers a 25% discount if you buy tickets to 3 or more shows. **Ms. Venturini** commented that it is a very good discount. Mr. Gravison stated that he provided a quick overview because we will be going into more detail with the next agenda item.

5. Executive Director's Report – Daniel McConaghy

a. PWCVB & PFM Collaboration Efforts on the Providence Culinary Collective & Lil Rhody Laugh Riot – Kristen Adamo & Dan Schwartz

Ms. Adamo addressed the Committee members stating that the same weekend was picked for the culinary and comedy events unbeknownst to each other and it has been a pleasure working together on these two (2) events. Ms. Adamo then reviewed the event schedule (see attached), noting the VIP reception that is closed to the public on Thursday from 5-7pm followed by the Comedy Festival After Party at 9pm. **Ms. Venturini** asked if she can go online and purchase tickets to anything, and Ms. Adamo replied yes, with the exception of the Feed the Children event. Mr. Adamo continued reviewing the event schedule, highlighting the luncheon at Bellini, dinner and wine experience to benefit RI PBS, the Stag's Leap wine dinner at Café Nuovo, food trucks at The VETS with Leslie Jones event, Ballroom at the G featuring three (3) expert-led panels, a cocktail hour and dinner celebrating Jacques Pepin's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday at CHOP, a Sip with the Stars, which is wine and astronomy night on the Rooftop at the G, and a Food Truck Drag Brunch Block Party on Sunday. She noted that there will be a VIP Industry event, which is not listed. She stated that they have received a lot of in-kind product donations to partner with them, noting that Narragansett Brewery is working with them. She reported that the marketing push is going on now with some contests that are being coordinated with the comedy festival where you can check in and win prizes. She stated that there will be regional and national media coming and there will be branding and signage tying together all the events. **Ms. Venturini** asked where the reservations are going, and Ms. Adamo replied that a bulk of the paid events are part of the Winex Clearinghouse, which is one stop shopping otherwise there would be a 10% fee. **Mr. Hirsh** asked about pricing, and Ms. Adamo replied that the high end is \$200, and the low end is \$125, noting that there are no corporate sponsorships, and they will hopefully build their ROI. She stated that tickets go on sale March 3 but that most people buy later versus in advance. She stated that one more announcement will be coming, which will be a Beer Pavilion at Trinity Brewhouse. **Ms. Venturini** suggested that all Board members should attend and maybe the Authority buys the member ticket, and the member buys another ticket for their spouse or guest. Mr. McConaghy stated that he will make a note and check the marketing budget. Mr. McConaghy commented that it worked out really well with both events happening on the same weekend. Mr. Schwartz stated that these two (2) events are beyond us and a lot of their efforts and hard work has snowballed into this great event. It is a great partnership and people want to be a part of it and experience the City. He stated that they have high hopes of expanding this event in the future. Mr. Schwartz then reviewed the schedule with over 25 artists that represent a broad range of demographics. He noted that there are over 35 events happening in addition to the culinary events going on. He reported that over 11k tickets have been sold. **Mr. Hirsh** asked if people are going to more than one (1) event, and Mr. Schwartz replied yes, and people are taking advantage of the 25% discount code. Mr. Schwartz further reported that this event is being promoted up and down the Interstate 95 corridor through the Commerce grant which will bring money into Rhode Island. Mr. Schwartz stated that in addition to the schedule there are a lot of free events available with new comedians and local comedians having the opportunity to be an opening act for the bigger artists. Mr. Schwartz reviewed the partnership with the CVB and Ms. Adamo stated that they are partnering with collateral pieces with Lil Rhody Laugh Riot on one side and the Providence Culinary Collective on the other side. **Ms. Venturini** asked with they have been working with the Mayor's Office, and Ms. Adamo replied that Mayor Smiley is very well versed on what will be happening in his City in the last week of March. Mr. Schwartz commented that they hope these will become Providence's signature event, similar to the Newport Jazz Festival and more on a national level. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned if the comedians will interact with each other, and Mr. Schwartz replied that they have encouraged artists to come early and support one another. He mentioned that there will be a little reception as well. Ms. Adamo stated that they will be offered tickets to the culinary events if they are interested. Ms. Adamo also mentioned that they are working with Ken Stetson on some cool stuff, and **Ms. Venturini** asked if he will be doing a Lil Rhody purse. Mr. Schwartz mentioned that there will be custom cups for the comedy events. He mentioned the Aloft hotel partnership that all room keys for the month of March will be in Lil Rhody Laugh Riot envelopes, as well as the comedy bus brunch tour, food truck event, comedy at Bellini Rooftop, as well as free comedy trivia event at the

Malted Barley.

Ms. Adamo reported that they are working with the City for banners on 38 light posts throughout the City, as well as coasters at 15-20 restaurants. She mentioned that this week and next week poster teams will be hitting all the cities and towns in the State and putting up posters in the final stretch. Ms. Adamo mentioned that the new website launched and went live at the same time. **Ms. Venturini** commented that it is a very exciting time, and they are "killing it." Mr. Schwartz stated that being the first year, they were very careful with partnerships, and he is already being contacted by companies that want to be a part of it for next year. Mr. Lepore commented that he knows a producer at Netflix who may be interested in producing three (3) comedy shows at once during this festival in the future. Mr. McConaghy mentioned possible tax credits and he could work with the Film Commission. Mr. McConaghy then encouraged everyone to follow all socials for the Little Rhody Laugh Riot and Providence Culinary Collective. **Mr. Hirsh** asked if they were promoting the event at the local colleges and universities, and Mr. Schwartz replied yes and that they are working with students in the event program from Johnson & Wales to be festival representatives. He stated that all colleges are promoting it, and they will be working with RISD on posters for next year. Mr. Schwartz stated that they are looking for ways to make the event "cooler" in light of the fact that they are well aware of the competition. He stated that the comedy event has gotten the industry's attention seeing the schedule come together with agents stating that we need to put certain artists on the schedule for next year. **Ms. Venturini** offered her congratulations. Ms. **Venturini** then reminded the committee of the new CEO for Discover Newport, Victoria Cimino, and stated that once she is settled in her new position she would like to invite her to a committee meeting. **Ms. Venturini** then shared the sad news that David DePetrillo, whom everyone knows, is in hospice. **Mr. Hirsh** thanked her for keeping them updated on him.

#### 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 **Mr. Mancini**, which was seconded by **Mr. Hirsh**, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to adjourn at 1:20 p.m.