RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2026

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (hereinafter referred to as "Authority" "the CCA" or the "Board" was held on July 7, 2026, pursuant to notice which was posted at the Amica Mutual Pavilion, One LaSalle Square, Providence, RI and the RI Convention Center, One Sabin Street, Providence, RI.

Board members in attendance were Ernest Almonte, George Nee, Paul MacDonald, Jeffrey Hirsh, Peter Mancini, Carol Lombardi, and Farouk Rajab

Board members unable to attend were Jennifer Goodrich Coia, Esq., Sarah Brasko, Oscar Vargas, and Diony Garcia, Esq.

Others participating were Daniel McConaghy, Dana Peltier, Linda Maroun, and Melissa O'Connor Convention Center Authority; Alan Chile, Dan Schwartz, and Mike Gravison, PFM/The VETS; Lawrence Lepore, Al Fera, Cheryl Cohen, Chris Spolidoro, Tim Sullivan, Sam Bottoni, and Hannah Capece Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; Michael Crawley, Citrin Cooperman; Joe Dolan, Oak View Group; Sal Swaleha, Paul McKeever, and Sean Toomey TVS; Mark Morin, Jim Devol, and Vivienne Seested LiRo/Hill; Jose Ruis and Cindy Lopez Viva Mexico! Cantina & Grille, and Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Almonte called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

2. Announcement of Next Board Meeting Date

Chairman Almonte stated that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 1, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

3. Consent Calendar Items
    a. Approval of the June Board Meeting Minutes
    b. Approval of the June Finance Committee Report

Chairman Almonte requested a motion for the Consent Calendar Items. Upon a motion from **Vice Chairman Nee**, which was seconded by **Mr. Rajab,** it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the June Board Meeting, and the June Finance Committee Report.

4. Marketing Committee Report – *(Deferred meeting to July)*

5. Finance Committee Report – Chair Jeff Hirsh

    a. Review and Consideration of the Revised FY27 Budget

Mr. Hirsh deferred to Mr. McConaghy to discuss the revised FY27 budget. Mr. McConaghy stated that the Authority is required to submit the fiscal budget for the following year to the State and our budget is folded into the overall budget for the state but typically every year at this time, this is revised because more information is readily available and there is a clear vision on what will taking place versus 7-8 months ago. He stated that the revised budget was reviewed in detail at the Finance Committee meeting but touched on each venue's changes and challenges. **Mr. Hirsh** commented that the team put forth a lot of effort in revising the FY27 budget and it was unanimously supported by the Finance Committee.

With there being no further discussion, **Chairman Almonte** requested a motion to approve the revised FY27 budget. Upon a motion from **Vice Chairman Nee**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the revised FY 27 Budget.

6. Business Highlight – Jose Ruiz (Viva Mexico! Cantina & Grill)

Chairman Almonte stated that while they typically highlight an employee at their monthly meetings, this month it was decided to do something different and showcase the impact our venues have on local businesses. Mr. McConaghy welcomed Jose Ruiz of Viva Mexico! Cantina & Grill which is located on Washington Street. Mr. Lepore stated that he spoke with Mr. McConaghy about highlighting businesses downtown and their willingness to tell us what is important to them. **Chairman Almonte** welcomed Mr. Ruiz and Ms. Lopez, and Mr. Ruiz thanked the Board for having them. He stated that they have been in Providence for 15 years and his family opened one of the first authentic Mexican restaurants in Providence back in 1990. He stated that Rhode Island has a lot to offer in terms of restaurants, and they do not see their restaurant as Viva Providence but as Viva Rhode Island and New England. They want people to come in and always need to come back. He introduced Ms. Lopez and stated that they have worked together for three (3) years, and she is his girlfriend and soulmate. He commented that he has always had fun being a part of the restaurant, but this chapter has been the most fun. He noted that they had been working on what to do when the FIFA World Cup was first announced, they prepared for it and capitalized on all the people coming into town. He expressed his appreciation for the Convention Center and the AMP and how business increases when there is an event at the two (2) venues. Mr. McConaghy asked him to speak about his family story because he was most impressed by it. Mr. Ruiz stated that his parents play a big part in the business with over 40+ years' experience. He stated that they do not want to change anything in Providence and they will continue to stick to their roots. Ms. Lopez stated that she has been working in hospitality since she was 13 years old and has brought everything she has learned along the way to Viva Mexico in order for it to be successful. Mr. Lepore asked which event has been most impactful, and Mr. Ruiz replied Comic Con and cheerleading events stand out for sure. He stated that he takes each event just as serious as the next. **Mr. Hirsh** commented on how hard he sees Mr. Ruiz work, especially as an ambassador on the street. Mr. Ruiz stated how much he enjoys greeting guests and how much he wants to be that one stop for people looking for good authentic Mexican food. Mr. Lepore stated that the convention center staff is working on a TikTok channel on 'where the staff eats' and it will be launched soon. **Vice Chairman Nee** asked what his biggest challenge is, and Mr. Ruiz replied that parking is a big one and getting locals to come into the City is challenging. **Mr. MacDonald** asked if they have experienced trouble with hiring staff, and Ms. Lopez replied that they have a system in place with cross training being an integral part of that system so if there is a void someone else can step in. She stated that guests are surprised they have been open for 15 years and **Mr. MacDonald** commented that being open for 15 years means they are doing something right. Mr. Lepore touched upon the homeless issue, and Mr. Ruiz noted that they try to be respectful to everyone they come in contact with. **Mr. Hirsh** commented on the inconsistency of restaurants in the area noting that a lot of people do not realize or understand the impact that the Convention Center and the AMP have on local businesses. Mr. Ruiz agreed that without the two venues it probably would not make sense to be there. **Chairman Almonte** asked what they can do to help their business and other businesses be more successful, and Mr. Ruiz replied more events. Mr. Ruiz then commented on the positive impact the two (2) Goose shows at the AMP affected business and how he did not realize how much their fans travel from city to city. **Chairman Almonte** asked what top three menu items should be ordered when visiting their restaurant, and Ms. Lopez replied the pork tenderloin, crispy quesadillas, and taco fiestas. **Chairman Almonte** then asked how they each define success both personally and professionally. Ms. Lopez replied that she defines success personally by maintaining her relationships with family and friends and professionally she defines success as having good relationships with staff members and providing a good, safe working environment for all employees. Mr. Ruiz replied that before Ms. Lopez he defined success as having five (5) restaurants and a certain amount of money in the bank but now at the end of the day if you find something that makes you happy you are successful because you do not know what is going to happen tomorrow or the next day. **Chairman Almonte** expressed his gratitude and stated that they are the reason why they are here. He further stated that the State gives us $22 million for bonds and we generate $300 million in economic impact. **Mr. Hirsh** asked Mr. Chile if PPAC does an economic impact study, and Mr. Chile replied yes that they typically do one after some big shows noting that when they did Jersey Boys in the summertime and Hamilton, the restaurants saw the impact of those shows on their business. He noted that in season everyone is busy, but when they do shows off season, it really helps these businesses be successful. He stated that it is not like Gillette Stadium and it is much different here because everything we all do drives business into the local economy.

7. <u>Executive Director's Report – Daniel McConaghy</u>

a. Re-appointment of RICCA Board of Commissioners Officers

Chairman Almonte requested a motion for the reappointment of RICCA Board of Commissioners Officers as follows:

Ernie Almonte – Chairman
Jeff Hirsh – Treasurer
George Nee – Vice Chairman
Paul MacDonald – Secretary

Upon a motion from **Mr. Mancini,** which was seconded by **Ms. Lombardi,** it was unanimously

VOTED: to reappoint all current RICCA Board of Commissioners Officers.

b. Revised Marketing Committee Schedule

Mr. McConaghy stated that the Marketing Committee meeting schedule has been revised and is contained in their packet (see attached).

c. OVG Update

Mr. Dolan addressed the Authority and stated that the concert industry is very competitive, and it is a challenging landscape, but he is very optimistic. Mr. McConaghy commented that we have to be creative and entrepreneurial and look through a different lens what shows will deliver. Mr. Dolan stated that this time of year is a slow time and there are big shows that are being worked on. He stated that overall he is very optimistic about what is contained in the revised budget. He noted that there is a good bit of activity in the touring world and they are putting their best foot forward and believe the revised budget to be achievable and it will be up to them to get it done.

d. Executive Session Items:

i. Pursuant to RI General Laws Sections 42-46-5 (a)(5) in connection with the discussion related to the acquisition or lease of real property for public purposes.
ii. Pursuant to RI General Laws 42-46-5 (a)(1) regarding the Executive Director's Contract

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to adjourn into Executive Session pursuant to RI General Laws Sections 42-46-5 (a)(5) in connection with the discussion related to the acquisition or lease of real property for public purposes and pursuant to Sections 42-46-5 (a)(1) regarding the Executive Director's contract. Attorney Leach noted for the record that Mr. McConaghy was given the option to have the discussion about his contract renewal in either Open Session or Executive Session, and he chose Executive Session.

Upon a motion made by **Chairman Almonte**, which was seconded by **Mr. MacDonald**, a roll call vote was taken:

Chairman Almonte	Aye
Vice Chairman Nee	Aye
Mr. Hirsh	Aye
Mr. MacDonald	Aye
Mr. Mancini	Aye
Ms. Lombardi	Aye
Mr. Rajab	Aye

With the roll call vote being unanimous, the Committee members adjourned into Executive Session at 9:42 p.m.

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to reconvene into Open Session. Upon a motion from **Mr. Hirsh**, which was seconded by **Mr. MacDonald,** it was unanimously

VOTED: to reconvene into Open Session.

With the vote being unanimous, the Committee reconvened into Open Session at 10:52 p.m.

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to close and seal the minutes of the Executive Session. Upon a motion from **Mr. MacDonald**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini,** it was unanimously

VOTED: to close and seal the minutes of the Executive Session.

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to proceed further with Scheme A of the Convention Center expansion plans. Upon a motion from **Vice Chairman Nee**, which was seconded by **Mr. Rajab**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to proceed further with Scheme A of the Convention Center expansion plans.

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to authorize the Chairman to enter into a contract with the Executive Director/CEO. Upon a motion from **Mr. MacDonald**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to authorize the Chairman to enter into a contract with the Executive Director/CEO.

8. Adjournment

With there being no further business to be discussed by the Board of Commissioners, **Chairman Almonte** asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Upon a motion duly made by **Vice Chairman Nee,** which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the July 7, 2026 meeting at 10:53 a.m.