

THE RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2026, AT 9:00 AM

---

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 June 2, 2026. 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 02903 and the AMP, One LaSalle Square, Providence, RI 02903.

Board members in attendance were Chairman Ernest Almonte, Vice Chair George Nee, Jeff Hirsh, Paul MacDonald, Peter Mancini, Oscar Vargas, Dale Venturini, Carol Lombardi and Diony Garcia, Esq. Board members unable to attend were Jennifer Goodrich Coia, Esq., and Sarah Bratko, Esq.

Others attending were Daniel McConaghy, Dana Peltier, Melissa O'Connor, Linda Maroun and Patricia Verrecchia, RI Convention Center Authority; Lawrence Lepore, Cheryl Cohen, Chris Spolidoro, Becca Ponder, Casey Hoover, Tim Sullivan, Ashley Alequin, Maggie Giammarco, Al Fera, Bryan Labus and Richard Gras, RI Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo, PWCVB; Alan Chile, Dan Schwartz and Mike Gravison, PFM/The Vets; Hank Abate and Joe Dolan, OVG; Michael Crawley, Citrin Cooperman; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel.

1. Call to Order – Chairman Almonte called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM
2. Next Board Meeting – Tuesday, July 7, 2026, at 9:00 AM
3. Consent Calendar Items
  - a. Approval of the minutes of the May Board Meeting
  - b. Approval of the Marketing Committee Report
  - c. Approval of the Finance Committee Report

Mr. Almonte requested a motion for the Consent Calendar Items. Upon a motion from Mr. Nee, which was seconded by Ms. Venturini, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the consent calendar items

4. Marketing Committee Report – Chair Dale Venturini
  - a. Overview of Committee Meeting

Ms. Venturini mentioned that our last meeting was a combination of RICC (Becca Ponder) and the CVB (Tom Riel) sitting together and reviewing the market trends and daily challenges. Mr. McConaghy acknowledged how well they did with stacking and moving groups in Feb., March and April. March was a very busy month, and it worked. Mr. McConaghy also mentioned how Mr. Lepore brought JLC Live for a tour of the arena to explore potential solutions for creating additional space. They were thrilled with the idea of using the arena.

5. Finance Committee Report – Chair Jeff Hirsh
  - a. Overview of the RICCA Compensation Study

Mr. McConaghy stated that he worked with Mr. Crawley and the Citrin group to work on a compensation package for the Authority which includes himself and the finance team. This type of study has never been done before and was well overdue. Economic Research Institute helped with this study. They use their databases to benchmark pay and determine fair compensation. Mr. Crawley stated the objective was to get the best mix of benchmarking data to match the complex personnel on the team. Mr. Almonte thanked them for doing this study.

## 6. Employee Highlight – Richard Gras (New Executive Chef – RICC)

Mr. Fera introduced the new executive chef at RICC, noting how lucky we are to have him and how the staff already love him. He is a Johnson & Wales graduate and has a long resume. Mr. Gras stated that he opened his first restaurant at age 18, called Empire with two chefs from Al Forno. After receiving his degree, he worked for Ritz Carlton for 16 years, working across the country. Moved to California while working with the Ritz and eventually left to work with Jean-Georges for 3 years. He learned how to be consistent with all the recipes while working there. Such a great experience working with the best of everything. He left there to work at an independent restaurant but did not like it. He moved to New York and worked at Pier A Harbour and eventually got back into the hotel industry working with Omni. This is where he developed his management style. He worked as an executive chef at Omni Grove Park Inn where there were 10 restaurants. He had a great crew with 240 employees. There were 4-5 Weddings a weekend. Once Covid hit, things changed. He and his wife had a son and decided to move back up north where he worked at The Vanderbilt Hotel in Newport. Eventually he ended up working as a sous chef here at the Convention Center and moved up to executive chef in no time. He believes all will work if you have a happy kitchen. Mr. Nee asked him what he sees as the biggest challenge at the Convention Center. Mr. Gras noted getting what we need to be successful, such as equipment, set-ups, cohesive banquet menus, recipes and consistency, etc. Mr. McConaghy asked him what his favorite meal is to cook and eat. Mr. Gras noted Schnitzel is one of his favorites and it brings back memories of cooking with his dad. Mr. Almonte asked how he defines success in work and personal life. At work he is always on the move and doesn't like to stop and smell the roses. Success is creating a memorable experience for the guests and maximizing the talent of the staff. He likes to mentor and teach his team how to grow and learn skills by giving them the platform to do so. He wants their feedback so they can all grow together. In his personal life it's having a happy balance, raising great kids (son Gabriel is 5 yrs old and daughter Emma is 1), spending time with them and his wife. Mr. Gras also likes to teach his kids how to cook and grow their own food.

## 7. Executive Director's Report – Daniel McConaghy

### a. Re-appointment of RICCA members on the PWCVB Board – Kristen Adamo

Ms. Adamo listed the 3 re-appointments on the PWCVB Board. Mr. Hirsh is the Board Chair and owner of The Lobster Pot in Bristol, RI. Chris Marsella is the Treasurer and head of The Providence Foundations Board of Directors. Angela Lehmann is the Secretary and Director of Sales at Hilton Garden Inn.

Mr. Almonte requested a motion to renew the 3 members, 2-year re-appointment on the PWCVB board. Upon a motion from Ms. Venturini, which was seconded by Mr. MacDonald, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to renew 3 members, 2-year re-appointment on the PWCVB board

### b. OVG Update – Hank Abate

Joe Dolan was introduced by Mr. Abate. Mr. Dolan noted that he has been in the arena business for 17 years, starting in Philadelphia at Xfinity Mobile Arena. After Philadelphia he moved to Roanoke, Virginia, working for a 40-year-old Arena/Expo/Theatre as an assistant GM for 3 years before advancing within the company to the Mullins Center at the University of MA. He left there after 3 years and went to Bon Secours Wellness Arena, a 15,000-seat arena. A highlight for Mr. Dolan while working there was that the arena attracted some of the largest events, including Garth Brooks, Paul McCartney and NCAA men's vs second rounds etc. Revenue was the primary focus at the arena on a day-to-day basis. After having his son, he and his wife decided to move back to the Northeast. This is where he transitioned to a role at Oak View Group working with some of the same people from years ago. He ran Total Mortgage Arena in Bridgeport, CT for 4 years and the last 2 years he was the senior vice president of business operations for the AHL team The Bridgeport Islanders. He has a strong focus on

bookings, revenue generation, efficiencies and how to work as a team to be successful. Mr. Dolan will be here to help us build relationships with promoters, increase bookings, and assist with a variety of other initiatives.

Mr. Almonte took a moment to thank Ms. Venturini for all her years of hard work on the marketing committee and for helping them to be successful. Unfortunately, this is her last meeting.

#### 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 Mr. Mancini, which was seconded by Mr. Nee, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 AM.