

RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 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 March 3, 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, Dale Venturini, Peter Mancini, Jennifer Goodrich Coia, Esq., and Oscar Vargas

Board members unable to attend were Carol Lombardi, Diony Garcia, Esq., and Sarah Bratko

Others participating were Daniel McConaghy, Linda Maroun, and Melissa O'Connor, Convention Center Authority; Dan Schwartz, PFM/The VETS; Lawrence Lepore, Al Fera, Cheryl Cohen, Chris Spolidoro, Becca Ponder, Tim Sullivan, Casey Dotson, Robert Gemma, Cindy Irizarry, Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; Michael Crawley, Citrin Cooperman; Hank Abate, Oak View Group; John Velez, Delaware North Sportservice; Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

Chairman Almonte called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

2. Announcement of Next Board Meeting Date

Chairman Almonte stated that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

3. Consent Calendar Items

- a. Approval of the February Board Meeting Minutes
- b. Approval of the Marketing Committee Report
- c. Approval of the Finance Committee Report

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

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

4. Marketing Committee Report – Chair Dale Venturini

- a. AMP Food & Beverage Update – Cheryl Cohen and John Velez

Ms. Venturini stated that they had great marketing committee meeting. She stated that today the Board will hear from Ms. Cohen and Mr. Velez who presented great information at the committee meeting on food and beverage and ancillary revenue at the AMP. Ms. Cohen stated that Delaware North operates on a calendar year versus a fiscal year. She reported that they looked at data covering the last three (3) years and found that even though there was a decrease in attendance, it has not impacted the food and beverage ancillary revenue, which increased 12.7% over the last three (3) years. Ms. Cohen stated that Mr. Velez will speak about the changes he has made in technology, in product, in service, and how we were still able to increase revenues with a decrease in attendance. Mr. Velez stated that technology was the one area that they really worked on since some of the systems they had been using were antiquated. He stated that they did an entire upgrade on all of their credit card terminals, which increased the speed of the transaction dramatically. He stated that another area they improved upon was utilizing local vendors for products, which has really changed the perception and branding of the products they offer to patrons. He stated that Sal's Pizza is a local product that they added to two (2) locations and another local product are Saugy hotdogs and hot dog sales have really increased as a result.

Mr. Velez then talked about the differences between a Providence Bruins' customer and a Providence College customer. He stated that a Providence Bruins fan comes to a game and they are here not only to have a drink, but they are also there to eat so they have shifted where they put staff and additional points of sale. He stated that a Providence College customer is here for a very short period of time and they are coming here for their drink. He stated that when he started they only had three (3) kinds of beer and now there are eighteen (18) different varieties available. He said they try to give every guest what they want when they come. He noted that they have gotten very creative during concerts doing "batch" cocktails in mason jars, light up vessels, etc. to mirror what is done in Disney and Bourbon Street, and it has moved the needle considerably. **Ms. Venturini** asked if people kept the glass and Mr. Velez replied sometimes. **Mr. MacDonald** asked with eighteen (18) different beers if any of them were craft beers, and Mr. Velez replied yes. **Chairman Almonte** asked if he runs into any trademark issues with specialty glasses, and Mr. Velez replied that they keep it generic so as not to run into any trademark issues. Ms. Cohen noted that for the Goose concerts, they wanted to do a custom beer can because it is a collectible item for their fans. She stated that we checked to see what other venues did on their per caps and we were told \$40 and we went ahead and contacted Newport Brewing, which Mr. Velez has a relationship with and the artist created the artwork and the session IPA recipe from the band. She stated that the band wanted to not only sell it at the show but also at local stores but it never hit the stores because we sold out of it at the first show. **Chairman Almonte** asked how the pricing is determined, and Mr. Velez stated that he gets his directives from above and there is a percentage that is needed to be reached but he feels it is more about the mix of products versus a particular item and sometimes we are going to hit that percentage and sometimes they need to take a chance on a particular item knowing it is a specialty item for a particular show. He stated that for Goose he did not think they were going to go through all that beer, but they did and he even had to check to make sure that we had everything they had made and we did. **Chairman Almonte** then asked how much of the really good numbers and per caps were due to a rate increase versus volume, and Mr. Velez replied that the report before them spans the last three (3) years and beer sales primarily push the per cap. He stated that they just increased their beer prices at the beginning of this season in September 2025. He stated that they looked at other venues in the area (i.e., Xfinity Center, TD Garden) and there was a significant gap, so they increased their prices. He further stated that the increase is due in large part to adding product mix, and additional points of sale. **Chairman Almonte** commented that it is great that he understands the customer differences between hockey and basketball and questioned him on what he does to try to drive business and how he changes what he does to attract business and make the different crowds buy more. Mr. Velez replied that it is more knowing what they are going to do and then staffing properly. He stated an example of having portable locations and for PC they would staff 5-6 people versus 2-3 for the Providence Bruins. He noted adding additional points of sale, keeping up with demand, and never falling behind is the key to being successful. Ms. Cohen commented that there is such a very limited amount of time during intermissions/periods, and sometimes no intermissions, that they make great decisions with the time constraints they have coupled with limitations in space to continue to be successful. Mr. Velez stated that the Providence Bruins have gotten really creative doing specialty event games (i.e. Marvel, Batman, etc.) getting fans to arrive early which helps them and they struggle with PC fans because it is a different clientele and they go to local bars before coming to a game, which is great, but unfortunately they lose that time and then all of sudden everyone shows up at the same time and they just get inundated with 10k people at the same time. Ms. Cohen then reviewed Page 3 and 4, which shows year over year performance over the past three (3) years for the Providence Bruins and Providence College. She stated that attendance has declined across three (3) Providence Bruins season which was driven by scheduling factors and broader market dynamics but yet revenue and per capita spending remained strong and increased consistently year over year. She stated that with Providence College, what is on the court makes a difference and they cannot control how a team is performing. Mr. Velez stated that game times have a major impact as well. He stated that when he started mostly all games were on a Saturday and now they are playing during the week which is cutting into sales, noting 20-25% portion of the revenue. **Mr. Mancini** asked how game times are determined, and Mr. Lepore replied that TV determines game times. Mr. Velez then talked about the importance of adding a lot of grab n' go locations, which helps to speed up the transaction and get the consumer in and out as quickly as possible. He stated that when Dunkin' was the naming rights sponsor, they contractually had two (2) stands per their contract which was great that you could get a Dunkin' coffee but since they are no longer the naming rights sponsor, they converted those two (2) locations which has significantly helped their numbers grow. **Ms. Venturini** asked about alcohol safety, and Mr. Velez replied that protocol has not changed and it is still two (2) drinks per person and everyone gets carded. In addition, servers undergo an alcohol program, and they need to be certified. He further stated that secret shoppers come to the venue four (4) times per year and they have never had any issues because they take alcohol safety very seriously. **Vice Chairman Nee** asked if there have been any issues with PC students this season, and Mr. Velez replied that they have gotten better. **Vice Chairman Nee** asked if there has been a decrease in fake IDs and Mr. Velez replied yes but noted that some fake IDs are so good they pass their scanners. He stated that if the server is still questioning after an ID passes the scanner, they will ask a detail Providence Police officer to run the license through their system and sometimes the student will back off. **Mr. MacDonald** commented that he has been to a few events and feels his staff is really good, they are nice and go out of their way for customers. **Chairman Almonte** thanked Mr. Velez for coming to the meeting.

Ms. Venturini noted that Mr. Riel presented his report at the committee meeting and he reported that the industry is changing drastically and people are not booking through CVBs, which is making the sales job much harder. She stated that they will present at a later date. **Chairman Almonte** then asked the Chef to have the students present at the meeting sit at the table during the meeting, so they are a part of us and to just leave the seat at the head of the table empty because that is where the speaker has to go.

5. Finance Committee Report – Chair Jeff Hirsh

a. RI Energy – Net Metering Credits

Mr. McConaghy reviewed the Finance Committee Report (see attached). He stated that they accumulated hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of energy credits, and up until a year or two ago they did not know what to do with their energy credits. He reported that legislation was passed in 2024 to provide options. He stated that there are many entities in the same situation. He stated that the credits can be applied to other accounts, which is not applicable to the Authority or cash out. He stated that the Authority has \$825k worth of excess credits as of December 31 on its books and Rhode Island Energy has come back under their own process to say we have \$665k worth of excess credits. He stated that they are trying to work through it and once they cash these credits out, going forward they would have the option to cash out annually. He stated that they have been very difficult to work with. **Chairman Almonte** stated that was great news but questioned why there is such a big gap between the two numbers, and Mr. McConaghy replied that he thinks it is a timing issue. Mr. Crawley stated that the Authority's figure comes directly from the statements that Rhode Island Energy sends to them. **Mr. MacDonald** commented that he is disappointed to hear that they are difficult to work with in light of the recent time they made an investment that did not work out with us and we still paid. He stated that they can debate the amount with us, but they should not be difficult to work with. Mr. McConaghy stated that if anyone knew anyone, and **Ms. Goodrich Coia** stated that he needed to speak with the top guy who is either from Maryland or Delaware, but she could not remember the gentleman's name. She stated that he was the only one who was able to help her when she had a problem with not receiving an energy bill for 18 months and then receiving a bill for a million dollars. **Chairman Almonte** suggested taking this offline and he could help him connect to this gentleman and they can go to that meeting together. **Ms. Goodrich Coia** then asked if we have such a surplus because we somehow overcommitted to how much we were actually going to need, and Mr. McConaghy replied that in 2017-2018 we committed to a certain amount of kilowatts and right after that we went through a whole energy upgrade to help us be more efficient. When we met with green development they still encouraged us to stay where we are which he found interesting. He did mention that the amount of credits is over nine (9) years and moving forward we might find ourselves receiving \$50k a year. **Chairman Almonte** thanked Mr. McConaghy for staying on top this situation.

b. Upcoming Joint Finance and Facilities Meeting Preview

Mr. McConaghy stated that there will be joint facilities and finance meeting on March 17 at 12 noon when they will review upcoming capital projects as well as have a presentation from TVS who will update the committee on the Authority's options for expansion at the Convention Center.

Mr. Fera then introduced the group of students present from the Warwick Career Technical Center who competed in the ProStart competition, which is a food and beverage competition and won for the State of Rhode Island. He stated that Chef Gemma is their coach and they will be going to Baltimore in April to represent Rhode Island against the rest of the country. He further stated that they are here today to spend some time with Chef Gemma and see the operation here. Chef Gemma introduced Chef Niosi who was his instructor back in high school and they have stayed connected over the years. He stated that they have been working on this since last November and they practiced once a week leading up to the competition which was in February. He stated that when she asked for some help there was no question that he would help. He then explained the logistics of preparing for the competition in Baltimore. **Ms. Venturini** stated that this was her program back in the day and Chef Gemma graduated from this program. She then stated that it is very expensive to send all these students to Baltimore and asked how they are raising money to offset the costs, and Chef Gemma replied that they will be hosting a reception on April 14 to help raise money and hoped to attract at least 100 people. **Ms. Venturini** asked him to include the board members. Mr. Lepore commented that he has contacts at the facility in Baltimore and maybe they can help with some of their logistics. **Mr. Hirsh** also commented on checking with local catering companies who might be able to help with logistics as well. **Ms. Venturini** stated that they would need to make sure they do not break any of the rules and regulations associated with the competition. Ms. Adamo offered to send their invitation to the CVB's restaurant list.

6. Employee Highlight – Cindy Irizarry (Cook II - RICC)

Mr. Fera introduced Cindy Irizarry who is a member of their culinary team in the kitchen and has been working here for the past six (6) months. He stated that all the baked goods are made from scratch by Cindy, including the macaroons before each member today. He stated that she has been a tremendous help and great addition to the kitchen. He stated that they had a big cheerleading competition a few weeks ago and we set up “Sweet Street” where they had everything from macaroons to candy apples to chocolate covered rice krispy treats and it was a huge success with everything selling out. **Chairman Almonte** noted that with the employee highlight, we know that we are only as successful as the people working here. Ms. Irizarry addressed the Board and stated that she is a 34 year old mom to a son went to Johnson & Wales and studied abroad in France at a pastry school there for about four (4) months. **Mr. Hirsh** asked how she would compare Johnson & Wales to that school, and Ms. Irizarry replied that France was stricter and she learned more technique. She stated that they definitely had different rules and everything is fresh and there are no processed foods. **Vice Chairman Nee** asked what her favorite dessert is to make, and Ms. Irizarry replied that she does not have a favorite, so **Vice Chairman Nee** asked what the most difficult dessert is to make, and she replied, macaroons. **Mr. Vargas** asked if it was more expensive and she replied that she put herself through college and she was the first one in her family to graduate college and with honors. **Mr. Hirsh** asked if the classes were in both English and French and she replied that they were in English, but she was required to take a French class. **Chairman Almonte** then asked how she defines success for her job and her home, and Ms. Irizarry replied that she defines success at work by challenging herself and proving to herself that she can do something. Being stable and peaceful in my home life is her definition of success. **Ms. Venturini** commented that the macaroons before each of them are based off of Rhode Island themed products: lemon for Del's Lemonade, coffee for coffee milk, and cinnamon sugar for doughboys. **Chairman Almonte** expressed that the Board is grateful to her and the work that she does.

7. Executive Director's Report – Daniel McConaghy

a. Review and Consideration of Security Gate System

Mr. McConaghy reported that a new security gate system was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting. He stated that they are twelve (12) portable units and will be used at both the AMP and the RICC. He stated that they are the type you see at other facilities and instead of normal metal detectors inside the lobby, we can put these at the doors, so people are screened before entering the lobby at the AMP. He reported that they issued an RFP in January and they received six (6) responses. He stated that the Finance Committee recommends awarding the bid to Communications Technologies, which is a company based out of St. Louis, for \$212k. **Vice Chairman Nee** asked how long this system has been in place at The VETS, and Mr. Schwartz replied since 2022. With there being no further discussion,

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to approve the purchase of a new security gate system. Upon a motion from **Mr. Hirsh**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to purchase the new security gate system.

b. Review and Consideration of Ticket Turnstile System

Mr. McConaghy reported that a new ticket turnstile system was discussed at the Finance Committee meeting. reviewed an upgrade to ticket scanning technology at the AMP. He stated that this technology is used at major venues like Gillette Stadium and TD Garden. He further stated that an RFP was issued in January for ten (10) units and they received two (2) responses. He stated that the Finance Committee recommends awarding the bid to Alvarado for \$107,950. Mr. McConaghy stated that this system will really improve getting people in the door, shortening their time to get in and bring us to today's standards. With there being no further discussion,

Chairman Almonte requested a motion to purchase a new Ticket Turnstile System. Upon a motion from **Mr. Hirsh**, which was seconded by **Vice Chairman Nee**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to purchase new Ticket Turnstile System.

Mr. Abate then addressed the Authority. He stated that there has been a change in the Live Nation promoter for Providence, which will hopefully present a bit of a positive for us. He stated that he will be meeting with Live Nation soon to discuss Providence. He further reported that the gentleman who ran the arena at Mohegan Sun was abruptly relieved of his duties last week, which may positively impact Providence. He stated that there are some other things in the works as well that will hopefully bring more shows to Providence. Mr. McConaghy asked if he sees things are changing in the casinos. Mr. Abate stated that in the past casinos would pay whatever they had to pay to get an act and did not matter if they made money on the show because their goal was to get people there and they would make their money on those people gambling, but people are not spending as much. Mr. McConaghy commented that with Draft Kings, people do not need to go to the casino to place bets, and Mr. Abate agreed that the landscape is definitely changing and it will hopefully have a positive impact on us. Mr. Abate then talked about the current situation in the Middle East and when things like this happen, OVG takes security very seriously. He stated that they own a security company called Prevent Advisors, which is headed by Mike Downey who was previously the head of the terrorism task force in LA for many years. He reported that they send out regular security notices, which Mr. Lepore receives, and stated that for something like this they are plugged into Homeland Security and the FBI not only nationally but locally as well. He stated that he wanted to make the Board aware that they are in constant communication and they are monitoring the situation very closely. **Mr. Hirsh** then asked Mr. Abate on the Live Nation/Ticketmaster trial, and Mr. Abate replied that the trial started yesterday and he is unsure where it is going to go and at the end of the day, they may separate. He stated that he personally did not think the problem was with either one of them but rather the secondary ticketing platforms that buy blocks of tickets and drive the high ticket prices. **Mr. MacDonald** asked to go back to security and mentioned that we should be concerned, and we cannot do enough about security. Mr. Lepore stated that they have been on top of it for awhile and they are making it a priority. He stated that they plan to do a threat assessment and also upgrade security systems. Mr. McConaghy stated that it will be a big purchase when upgrading security cameras, which is very important. **Mr. MacDonald** noted that if anything happens we need to know that we did everything we could possibly do. Mr. Abate stated that their security company covers many major facilities and they are meeting to get updated information on how to improve venue systems. **Chairman Almonte** questioned if they are looking at convention centers as well, and Mr. Abate replied that they most definitely are and they are equally important as arenas. **Chairman Almonte** suggested looking at parking garages as well and cited the situation we had when hosting the Army/Navy midshipmen and we could not park people where the midshipmen slept. **Chairman Almonte** stated that moving security to the doorways is a good first step. Mr. Lepore then mentioned sophisticated equipment to avoid drone attacks, which is a major concern. He stated that there is technology out there that will actually monitor it on top of the building and it sends the drone back, so it is like shooting it down really without shooting it down. **Vice Chairman Nee** questioned how many installation there were, and Mr. Lepore replied that all football stadiums are already doing it.

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. MacDonald**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the March 3, 2026 meeting at 10:12 a.m.