

RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2023

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 May 26, 2023, 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, Oscar Vargas, Tony Mendez, Edward Feldstein, and Stephen Iannazzi.

All Board members were present.

Others participating were Daniel McConaghy, Linda Maroun and Melissa Lasko O’Connor, Convention Center Authority; Dan Schwartz, The VETS; Alan Chile, PFM/The VETS; Lawrence Lepore, Rebecca Ponder, Chris Spolidoro, and Cheryl Cohen, Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo, PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; Michael Crawley, Citrin Cooperman; Major Kevin Lanni, Providence Police Department; and Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

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

New board member, Oscar Vargas, addressed the Authority and stated he was happy to be named a Commissioner of the RI Convention Center Authority. All those present welcomed Mr. Vargas.

Chairman Almonte acknowledged the shooting incident that occurred yesterday afternoon in front of The AMP and asked Ms. Adamo and Major Lanni of the Providence Police Department to update the Authority on the situation. Ms. Adamo provided background on her position as head of the CVB for the newer members of the Authority. She stated that the CVB books meetings and conventions 18 months out and the CVB is the primary conduit to meeting planners and attendees. She reported that the convention in town is attended by people who work for the Department of Motor Vehicles in their respective state. She stated that Mr. McConaghy informed her of the situation that occurred and within one hour a crisis team was in place consisting of her staff, Rebecca Ponder at the Convention Center and staff at the Residence Inn. She reported that she spoke to the meeting planner and the CEO of the victim’s company (Carvana) and offered to cover any costs associated with the CEO coming into town due to the situation. She further stated that she worked with the Mayor’s office and the security staff to make certain that conference staff felt safe leaving the Center and walking to their hotel. She stated that the meeting planner and CEO were happy with the way we handled the media, as well as social media. She stated that all questions would be directed to the Providence Police Department and that a statement was already prepared for social media should it be necessary to get the message out that we are a safe city, and it would be framed as an isolated incident. Ms. Adamo reported that they were proactive and pulled all ads associated with Gaspee Day considering its connection to guns. She mentioned that the Mayor will be sending a letter out to the meeting planner. She stated while this group will probably never return to Providence for their convention, they have nothing bad to say about the building or how we handled this unfortunate incident. **Chairman Almonte** thanked Ms. Adamo and stated that he would like to send a letter as well.

Chairman **Almonte** thanked Major Lanni for coming in to talk to the Authority and update them on the situation. Major Lanni addressed the Authority and stated that at approximately 12:05 p.m. the victim of the shooting, Mr. Hall, left his hotel (The Residence Inn) in an Uber. When the Uber driver pulled away from the hotel and was approximately 100' away, two (2) shots were fired and struck Mr. Hall, who was sitting in the back seat, in the neck. The Uber driver transported Mr. Hall to RI Hospital. Major Lanni stated that there is no reason to believe this shooting has anything to do with the convention, the center, or the hotel. He stated that they do not have any suspects at this time, but they have information about the shooter's vehicle by accessing video from The AMP's security cameras as well as Hasbro's security cameras. He stated they have the make and model of the vehicle and a partial license plate, which was later discovered to have been stolen since it did not match the make and model of the vehicle. Major Lanni stated that even though they currently do not have any suspects, they are putting forth all their resources to solve this crime because it is of the utmost importance that people feel safe in our city. Major Lanni commented that he has always had a great relationship with Mr. Lepore and his team with open lines of communication knowing event and conference dates, as well as hours of operation. Mr. McConaghy questioned their plan of action for tonight's event, and Major Lanni replied that there will be an increased police presence both on foot and possibly mounted patrol. **Mr. Mancini** commented that usually an incident like this is a targeted incident. While Major Lanni agreed with Mr. Mancini he stated that the victim is from Texas, traveling alone, and there is nothing to point to this being a targeted incident. He stated that while they do not know at this point what it is, there was no reason to believe the Uber driver was involved in anything crime related, and sometimes there are just random acts of violence. **Chairman Almonte** asked if there are any other questions or comments for Major Lanni. With there being none, **Chairman Almonte** thanked Major Lanni for his time and stressed the importance for us and the business we do that people feel safe in our city. Major Lanni agreed and stated that he's happy to check in any time and welcomed any suggestions moving forward. **Chairman Almonte** thanked him for giving the Authority a comfort level to know they are working hard to keep everyone safe.

2. Announcement of Next Board Meeting Date

Chairman Almonte stated that next month's meeting will take place on Thursday, June 29th at 9:00 AM.

3. Approval of Minutes – March and April Board Meetings

Upon a motion from **Mr. MacDonald** and seconded by **Mr. Mancini** it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the March and April Board meetings.

4. Marketing – Dale Venturini

(a) Event Booking Discussion

Ms. Venturini reported that the Marketing Committee meeting was very productive with a deep dive into the back of house operation at the Convention Center. **Ms. Venturini** stated that time ran short and there is still more to cover which will be continued at the next meeting. **Mr. Mancini** commented that it was a very interesting meeting, and the dialogue is important. **Mr. Iannazzi** agreed with **Mr. Mancini** and commented that being a new member of the Board there is a lot to learn. **Ms. Venturini** commented that even those members that have been on the Board a long time, we still had "ah ha" moments during the meeting.

(b) PWCVB – Kristen Adamo

Ms. Adamo reviewed the CVB's marketing report (see attached). Ms. Adamo stated that we will work in a combined team effort and include everyone moving forward whenever there is an incident that takes place surrounding any of the venues.

(c) ASM Global – Cheryl Cohen

Ms. Cohen reviewed the marketing report for both the AMP and the RICC (see attached). **Ms. Venturini** commented that she recently saw a quote that the building continues to be a catalyst to the economic impact. **Ms. Venturini** questioned the event coming up for Frank Russo. Ms. Cohen replied that there will be a dedication luncheon honoring Frank Russo next Wednesday and hoped the board members would be able to attend. **Ms. Venturini** then commented that it is noticeable that Amica is really stepping up to the plate in working with us in various capacities. Ms. Cohen agreed and stated that while Dunkin' Donuts was a fabulous partner, Amica has taken it to another level. **Ms. Venturini** agreed and was happy with the Authority's decision to choose Amica from among other very good companies.

(d) PFM – Dan Schwartz

Mr. Schwartz reviewed the marketing report for The Vets (see attached). When Mr. Schwartz mentioned that artist Renee Fleming would be performing with the RI Philharmonic Orchestra for their Gala event next week, **Ms. Venturini** mentioned something she said she would never forget and that was an article she read where Ms. Fleming put her microphone down and said she had never been in a building where the acoustics were so perfect. **Mr. Hirsh** commented that he has seen a lot of ads for this event and questioned how much it costs. Mr. Schwartz replied that The Vets does not pay that bill and advertising is the promoter's expense.

5. Finance/Operations

(a) The Vets – Dan Schwartz

Mr. Schwartz reviewed the financial report for The Vets (see attached). Once complete, **Chairman Almonte** asked if there were any questions and there were none.

(b) Convention Center – Lawrence Lepore

Mr. Lepore reviewed the financial report for the RI Convention Center (see attached). Once complete, **Chairman Almonte** asked if there were any questions and there were none.

(c) The AMP – Lawrence Lepore

Mr. Lepore reviewed the financial report for The AMP (see attached). Once complete, **Mr. Hirsh** commented that it was not that long ago that the Board entertained discussions on whether to close the facility and seeing this facility thriving is remarkable.

(d) Clifford Street Garage – Lawrence Lepore

Mr. Lepore reviewed the financial report for the Clifford Street Garage (see attached). Mr. Lepore commented that it is possible that the revenues may exceed debt service payments in 5 years instead of 7 years.

Mr. Lepore then updated the Authority on a bid for the Atlantic 10 Championships. He stated that we submitted a bid for 2017 and 2018, and we were very close to being awarded a bid, but the Championships went to Pittsburgh. He reported that they reached out again for 2026, 2027, and 2028. He stated that he reached out to the CVB and John Gibbons of the RI Sports Council to submit a proposal for all three (3) years. Mr. Lepore commented that all 15 teams in the Atlantic 10 Conference participate in the Championships. He further commented that even though we do not need Providence College's permission to submit a proposal for the Atlantic 10 Championships, he reached out to Steve Napolillo to let him know our intentions as a courtesy. Mr. Lepore stated that he reached out to Mike Tranghese, who used to work at the Big East and is a big supporter of basketball in Providence, to have him reach out to the Commissioner of the Atlantic 10 and work on our behalf to get at least 1 or possibly 2 Championships for a small fee. **Mr. MacDonald** questioned the bid process and Mr. Lepore replied that we will put a bid package together and usually hear back thank you for submitting. Mr. Lepore stated that we have a better chance of getting awarded a bid this year. Ms. Adamo agreed that she feels good about being awarded a bid because we were so close last time. Mr. McConaghy asked Mr. Lepore what the attendance numbers look like, and Mr. Lepore replied there were approximately 37,000 paid tickets and the drop count was approximately 25,000. He stated that all 15 schools must buy tickets and in a lot of cases they get stuck with tickets.

Mr. Lepore then encouraged the Authority members to attend the dedication luncheon for Frank Russo on Wednesday, 5/31. He commented that the amount of business Frank Russo brought to Providence is amazing and changed the City so much back in the 70's and 80's. **Mr. Hirsh** stated that he would like to work towards getting Frank honored by the RI Heritage Hall of Fame. **Mr. Mendez** commented that the magnitude of the impact Mr. Russo had was not only locally to Providence but also on a national level.

(e) Authority and Consolidated – Dan McConaghy

Mr. McConaghy reviewed the Authority's financials and the consolidated financials (see attached). **Chairman Almonte** thanked everyone for the wise decisions made to get us where we are today.

6. Consultant's Report – Mike Crawley

Mr. Crawley reviewed the financial statements (see attached). He commented that while we have always been in the negative, he is happy to report that we currently own more than we owe. Mr. McConaghy commented that the financial statements before the Board today change daily.

7. Executive Director's Report

(a) Review and Consideration of FY24 Revised Budget

Mr. McConaghy commented that a lot of effort and energy was expended diving into each of the respective venues' budgets. He stated when the budget was first submitted there were a lot of uncertainties and there are things we did not know then that we know now. Mr. Schwartz commented that they will work hard to come in better than the \$57k budgeted loss. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned the food and beverage number, and Mr. Schwartz replied that no additional items were added but that they changed the manner in which food and beverage was being served to patrons. He stated there is no more pouring and prices were increased slightly. He stated that it is all about the number of shows booked at the venue. **Mr. MacDonald** commented on the increased prices and the importance of keeping pace with others. Mr. Schwartz also commented that supplies were budgeted considerably less than the current cost of supplies.

Mr. Lepore reported that the RICC parking number changed. He stated that there are 2 key components that change with this revised budget with the first one being service income. He stated this may change because we do not yet know the effect of changing from Cox Communications to Boingo as our internet provider. He commented that it could be a very positive swing in our favor. He noted the second component as the decrease in parking labor at the Convention Center garages, which will now be reflected correctly at the Clifford Street Garage. Mr. Lepore then commented on The AMP. He stated that every year you never know when it comes to events. He stated that we use historical data and hope for the best. He stated that we are budgeting for a profit rather than a loss, which has a lot to do with the major investments the Authority has made over the years, especially the results we are experiencing as it relates to utility savings. Mr. McConaghy stated that future years' parking income is being adjusted for the Clifford Street Garage and labor is being allocated appropriately. **Chairman Almonte** agreed with the importance of expenses being allocated to the proper venue. Mr. Crawley agreed with Chairman Almonte. **Chairman Almonte** questioned if we are reflecting expenses correctly from an auditor's standpoint, and Mr. Crawley agreed. **Mr. MacDonald** questioned credit card fees. Mr. Lepore replied that the credit card companies charge us a fee for accepting credit cards and with the new parking app, those costs will be passed onto the parker. With a vote being needed **Mr. Mancini** made a motion, which was seconded by **Mr. Feldstein** and unanimously

VOTED: to accept the revised FY24 budget as presented.

(b) Review of The AMP Roof GMP

Mr. McConaghy reported that the current GMP is \$7.7 million, which is \$200k above the budget that was established 2 years ago. He highlighted that mobilization began May 22nd and is expected to be completed by October 20th with ice being made by September 15th. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned if a vote was needed, and Mr. McConaghy replied that a vote was not needed.

(c) Review and Consideration of the CSG Solar Partner

Mr. McConaghy reported that the Clifford Street Garage is designed for solar, and that the Authority has taken steps to engage a third-party expert, Best Practice Energy (BPE), to help fabricate an RFP. He reported that the RFP was issued on March 1st and 2 proposals were received April 28th. He stated that Revity Energy is a local company and provides us with the best value. He further stated that we need support before moving forward with this project and there are some interesting questions that remain. He reported that Revity provided the most responsive proposal and is very well positioned to help us through the local permitting process. Mr. McConaghy is seeking approval to enter into an agreement with Revity in the amount of \$35,000 to help the Authority navigate the complexities of this system and begin solving many issues related to this project. Mr. McConaghy further commented that this project is not fully funded at this time but there are a lot of options. Vice Chairman Nee questioned the funds associated with this project. Mr. McConaghy replied that \$3 million has been put aside for this project but it is expected to cost \$5 million. He stated we need the \$2 million difference and that we would receive money back as a rebate. He commented that he does not see anything to hold us back on this forward-thinking project. Mr. Lepore commented that he just found the \$2 million because PPAC does not have a net metering agreement yet. Mr. Chile stated we can look at it. Mr. Lepore further commented that in 2027 the State of Rhode Island will require a certain percentage of their State fleet to be electric vehicles and since a lot of their vehicles park in the Clifford Street Garage, we will need charging stations anyway. Mr. McConaghy reported that the City's infrastructure only has so much, and we want to be first. Mr. Hirsh questioned Ms. Adamo on renewable energy and how it correlates to meeting and convention bookings, and Ms. Adamo replied that it is a question we always get asked about when submitting proposals for future meetings and conventions.

Chairman Almonte requested a motion. **Mr. MacDonald** made a motion, which was seconded by **Ms. Venturini** and unanimously

VOTED: that the RI Convention Center Authority hereby approves the \$35,000 expenditure to Reivity Energy.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Hirsch stated that he spoke with Eileen Smith who has been ill recently. He encouraged board members to reach out and say hello and that she is happily taking calls at this time.

With there being no further business to be discussed by the Authority, **Chairman Almonte** asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by **Mr. Mendez** and seconded by **Mr. Iannazzi**, it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn the May 26, 2023 meeting at 10:24 AM.