

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting  
APPROVED Meeting / Conference Call Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
September 6, 2019  
2:30 PM**

**Members Present:** Committee Chair Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood and David Robinson

**Members Present Via Phone:** Commissioner David Lehman and David Jorgensen

**Staff:** Mike Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro, Joe Geremia and Kim Hart

**Guests:** Johnson Consulting staff (via phone)

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. The minutes of the August 2, 2019 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

**1. CTCC**

Charlie Johnson from Johnson Consulting reviewed the executive summary of their draft Connecticut Convention Center Strategic Plan Study, outlining what they believed to be strengths and weaknesses of the facility. Strengths include (a) a large economic and population base, (b) a location in an urban historic downtown with riverfront access and (c) an efficient staff. Weaknesses highlighted include (a) the absence of a Hartford-focused convention bureau, (b) no dedicated hotel tax and (c) a neighborhood raised plaza system that impedes access to the building.

Mr. Johnson also highlighted a number of the recommendations presented in the report, including:

- Construction of additional hotel rooms in the City;
- Expansion of the existing pedestrian plaza linking the Convention Center and the Science Center to improve access to the riverfront and other areas of the City;
- Programming additional outdoor space for use by Convention Center events;
- Additional focus on booking international events;

- Minor interior modifications, including creation of more informal gathering spaces;
- Installation of additional electronic signage, and
- Inclusion of artwork in the building (e.g., curated art walk through building telling the story of Hartford).

Mr. Freimuth invited Mr. Johnson to make a similar presentation to the full CRDA Board at its September meeting. Venue Committee members asked that that presentation include additional information on (a) how the Convention Center's performance has compared to original expectations and (b) future industry trends.

## 2. XL Center

Mr. Freimuth reported that eight proposals were received in response to CRDA's RFP for a new market study on the XL Center. A selection will be made in the next few weeks.

CRDA has yet to receive a response from Northland in response to the Authority's latest offer to purchase the XL Center atrium.

The General Assembly has yet to act on a FY20-21 bond package, so it is unclear how much funding, if any, will be made available for transformation of the XL Center. Funds for the purchase of the atrium would come out of an existing allocation.

## 3. Pratt & Whitney Stadium

Mr. Freimuth noted that the Stadium was forced to seek additional funding from the Office of Policy and Management to cover a shortfall at the end of FY19. The first UConn football game of the season was held on August 29<sup>th</sup> and attendance totaled 10,700.

Some minor capital repairs are currently underway, including roof repairs and grease trap replacement in the concession stands.

## 4. Connecticut Convention Center

Another MMA event is scheduled for tomorrow evening, kicking off a busy convention

## 5. Dillon Stadium

Construction of the new stadium is complete, with the exception of field lighting, which will be ready in time for Hartford Athletics' September 14<sup>th</sup> game.

## 6. Executive Session

The Committee voted to go into Executive Session to discuss the XL Center Market Study RFP. It came out of Executive Session and, there being no further business, members voted to adjourn at 3:02 p.m.

The next Venue Committee meeting / conference call is scheduled for October 3, 2019.