

CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
DRAFT Meeting / Conference Call Minutes
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103
October 3, 2019
2:00 PM

Members Present via Phone: Committee Chair Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood, David Jorgensen and David Robinson

Staff: Mike Freimuth and Kim Hart

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m. The minutes of the September 6, 2019 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

1. **XL**

Ms. Hart briefed committee members on CSL's September 30th visit to Hartford as they undertake a new market study of the XL Center. A comprehensive tour of the facility was followed by a conference call with architects from SCI and a meeting with CRDA staff. CSL expects to schedule focus groups and individual interviews with XL users/patrons in late October or early November. A draft report is expected by the end of the year.

Mr. Freimuth also noted that following Northland's rejection of CRDA's latest offer for the XL Center atrium, DECD Commissioner Lehman will be reaching out to the company in hopes of reaching an agreement on acquisition.

Mr. Freimuth discussed the issue of sponsorship at XL and the Stadium and the conflicts that arise annually with UConn's agent, IMG, over inventory. Due to recent acquisitions, Spectra and IMG now share a corporate parent and Mr. Freimuth has asked that the two entities negotiate some type of sponsorship arrangement that avoids duplication of sales efforts and is fair to both facilities and the University.

2. Pratt & Whitney Stadium

Two games into their 2019 season, UConn football attendance is averaging just over 12,000 fans. CRDA staff and Spectra have met with UConn to discuss ways to reduce expenses in anticipation of budget issues related to poor attendance. Parking lot expenses have been reduced and a plan to shut down unused lots next season is being discussed.

In light of concerns about mosquitos and the threat of Eastern Equine Encephalitis, UConn moved the start date of their October 5th game against USF from 7:00 p.m. to noon. As a result, Stadium staff cancelled plans to spray the parking lots prior to the game.

Mr. Freimuth reported that FY19 marked the first year that the Stadium required additional funding from OPM in order to balance its budget. To help justify this funding request (and any future requests), Spectra will report annually on tax revenue generated by the Stadium that is paid into the State's General Fund. Previous reports indicate that these revenues are not insignificant and may balance out any additional appropriations required to keep the facility running.

Committee members asked about the possibility of the New England Revolution playing a game at the Stadium, perhaps in conjunction with the affiliated Hartford Athletic soccer team. Chairman Bessette offered to reach out to a former CRDA Board member for assistance in organizing such an event.

3. CT Convention Center

Mr. Freimuth reported that CRDA is meeting with Waterford Management to implement some of the recommendations contained in Johnson Consulting's recently completed Strategic Plan Study for the Convention Center. An architectural firm will look at minor upgrades to make the building more functional and aesthetically appealing to patrons. A User Advisory Board is being organized, while DECD is providing assistance to attract more international events.

The recommendations regarding creation of a Hartford-centric Convention and Visitors' Bureau and additional hotel rooms are also being discussed on a more global level. The CVB issue may require action by the General Assembly and Mr. Freimuth has initiated conversations with local legislators. Three developers have also approached CRDA in recent weeks to talk about new hotel projects.

4. Dillon Stadium

Some punch list items still remain, but the stadium is in frequent use by both community groups, UConn soccer, as well as Hartford Athletic.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

The next Venue Committee meeting / conference call is scheduled for **November 1, 2019**.