

CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
APPROVED Meeting Minutes
March 5, 2021
2:00 PM

Members Present via GoToMeeting: Committee Chair Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood, DECD Commissioner David Lehman, DECD Deputy Commissioner Alexandra Daum, David Jorgensen, David Robinson and Andrew Diaz-Matos

Staff Present via GoToMeeting: Mike Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro and Kim Hart

Guests Present via GoToMeeting: Carl Hirsh (Stafford Sports)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bessette at 2:08 p.m. The minutes of the January 5, 2021 meeting were approved on a voice vote, with Mr. Diaz-Matos abstaining, as he did not attend the January meeting.

1. Venue Reopening Plans -- Mr. Freimuth and Commissioner Lehman explained the new capacity limits on CRDA venues per Governor Lamont’s recent directive.
 - a) Pratt & Whitney Stadium – Effective April 2nd, the Stadium may open with 50% capacity, capped at 10,000 people. Social distancing and mask mandates remain in place. The next large scheduled event is the NCAA Lacrosse Championships to be held Memorial Day weekend. Commissioner Lehman noted that he expects venue capacity restrictions to be lowered or eliminated by that time.
 - b) XL Center and CT Convention Center – With allowable capacity at only 10%, both of these venues will need to weigh whether it makes financial sense to move forward with events. The Convention Center’s first post-COVID event will likely be the annual ConnectiCon event scheduled for July.
 - c) Dillon Stadium – Like Pratt & Whitney Stadium, Dillon will be allowed 50% capacity starting April 2nd.
2. XL Center
 - a. Marquee Sign – Mr. Freimuth noted that Committee members may have seen that the “XL Center” sign on the Trumbull Street side of the building was damaged by winds earlier this week. Estimates indicate that it may cost more than \$80,000 to repair the sign.

- b. UConn Lease– Mr. Freimuth introduced Carl Hirsch, Managing Partner of Stafford Sports, who is assisting CRDA with UConn lease negotiations. Mr. Hirsh noted that the current agreement, which governs men’s and women’s basketball and men’s hockey games at XL, provides for a straight rental payment by the University. All game-day expenses are covered by UConn and concessions revenue is retained by the building. With extensive renovation work being planned, including new premium seating and other potential revenue opportunities, CRDA has charged Stafford with developing a revenue sharing arrangement under which both the building and UConn would benefit.

Mr. Hirsh reported that following preliminary discussions with UConn, the University’s preference is to maintain a lease arrangement, with new premium seating revenue flowing to them. Mr. Hirsh noted that the final agreement, therefore, may be something of a hybrid model. Sponsorship revenue will likely be a sticking point in negotiations, particularly as UConn’s contract with its media rights partner, IMG, is set to expire shortly.

Mr. Freimuth noted that further complicating negotiations is UConn’s lease at Pratt & Whitney Stadium. The University sees the two buildings as linked, although the Stadium lease is held by the Office of Policy and Management and not CRDA.

- c. Northland Discussions – Mr. Freimuth reported that CRDA is still engaged in discussions with Northland regarding the XL atrium and first floor retail space. Mr. Freimuth walked Committee members through the map of the first floor, noting retail spaces that would remain and which would be incorporated into the arena. Although CRDA and Northland have yet to agree on the square foot value of the space, Mr. Freimuth hopes to circulate a draft term sheet in the next few weeks. Once the parties agree on a final version, Mr. Freimuth will present it to the Venue Committee and full CRDA Board for approval.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:03 p.m.

The next Venue Committee conference call is scheduled for **April 9, 2021.**