

**Capital Region Development Authority**

**100 Columbus Boulevard**

**5<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**Hartford, CT 06103**

**Thursday, April 15, 2021**

**3:00 pm – GoToMeeting**

*(The Board Meeting was held via GoToMeeting with public access)*

**Board Members Present:** Chairwoman Suzanne Hopgood; Andy Bessette; Mayor Luke Bronin; David Jorgensen; Alexandra Daum; Robert Patricelli; Joanne Berger-Sweeney, Mayor Marcia Leclerc, Randal Davis; Andrew Diaz-Matos; Joseph Giulietti; Konstantinos Diamantis; David Robinson

**Board Members Absent:** Seila Mosquero-Bruno

**CRDA Staff Present:** Michael Freimuth; Joseph Geremia; Kim Hart; Robert Saint; Anthony Lazzaro; Jennifer Gaffey

**Minutes**

The minutes of the March 18, 2021 CRDA Board Meeting were moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Bob Patricelli and approved.

**Agenda Change**

Chairwoman Hopgood announced she is seeking a motion to change the agenda and remove the agenda item concerning the parking contract. She indicated that staff has requested time to review legal issues. CRDA Deputy Director and General Counsel Anthony Lazzaro further indicated that Board Members had only received the Board package 24 hours prior to the meeting and requested additional information contained in the submissions.

The motion was moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Marcia Leclerc and approved.

*“The CRDA Board of Directors hereby authorizes the Agenda to reflect the change requested.”*

**Venue Update**

The Venue Committee’s April meeting focused on the question of safely reopening venues in light of the State’s capacity requirements, as well as public expectations of safety and operational considerations.

Andy Bessette gave the following update to fellow Board Members:

**Vaccine Passports**

The issue of whether venues should require proof of vaccination as a condition of admission is being hotly debated around the world. Neither the State nor federal government are expected to mandate the use of “vaccine passports”, leaving the private sector to adopt its own policies. Although State-owned facilities, the CT Convention Center, XL Center and Pratt & Whitney Stadium are three of the largest venues in Connecticut and CRDA staff feel strongly that we would be remiss if we did not at least weigh the pros and cons of implementing such a policy.

Venue managers from both Spectra and Waterford have both indicated that they would implement a vaccine passport program should CRDA request it, but feel strongly that it is not an expectation of venue attendees nor is it a practical move in terms of operations. Concerns have been raised about fraud and the time it would take to work out the logistics of such a system. (This is particularly relevant at the Stadium with UConn graduation and NCAA lacrosse taking place just next month.) Both management companies have noted that none of the promoters or event organizers that they have spoken with have inquired about a vaccine passport program.

While vaccine passports may not be practical or necessary in the short term, Venue Committee members noted that it should become less of an issue in the long-term. The three venues will not be fully operational until late summer or early fall when the vaccine rates should be much higher, COVID restrictions eased and, presumably, people more comfortable with public gatherings.

#### COVID Testing / Vaccination Site Updates

At Pratt & Whitney Stadium, Foodshare to wrap up their distribution efforts shortly. The testing site previously operating on Stadium property has been relocated to the mass vaccination site on the UTC-owned runways adjacent to the Stadium.

The field hospital at the Convention Center should be moving out in June, while the vaccination site will be in place until mid-August. It is unclear when the testing site will be shut down.

#### Global Biorisk Advisory Council's Star Accreditation (GBAC)

The Convention Center has received accreditation under the Global Biorisk Advisory Council's Star Accreditation program. This highly coveted accreditation means that a facility has established and maintained a cleaning, disinfection, and infectious disease prevention program to minimize risks associated with infectious agents, including the COVID-19 virus.

#### *Other updates:*

UConn Lease – As part of the XL Center renovation planning process, CRDA is utilizing the services of Stafford Sports to assist with UConn lease negotiations. With new premium seating and other potential revenue opportunities included in the XL plan, we are looking to change our lease model from a flat rental payment to a revenue-sharing arrangement under which both the building and UConn would benefit. Preliminary discussions, however, indicate that the University is hesitant to change the model and the final lease may represent more of a hybrid arrangement.

Ben Weiss, General Manager - Spectra Venue Management and Len Wolman, Chairman & CEO, Waterford Group provided updates on Rentschler Field; XL Center; CT Convention Center and hotels in relation to COVID restrictions and reopening plans.

Michael Freimuth added that Joseph Geremia, CRDA CFO, testified on April 13, 2021 regarding the pending Deficiency Bill in the Legislature, outlining the reasons there are deficiencies for the venues this year and asking for funding assistance due to those shortages.

The operating cash flow needs for CTCC, Rentschler and XL have previously been discussed in the Venue Committee and OPM has given CRDA bridge funding through enactment of the Deficiency Bill. The Bill is currently pending in committee and we are hopeful that this will help us with the outstanding balance once it is passed.

## **Housing & Neighborhood Committee**

Joanne Berger-Sweeney reported that the occupancy rates for the CRDA properties look quite strong. Two CRDA properties will provide funds back to the CRDA that will be available for redistribution.

Michael Freimuth commented that one CRDA financed housing property will be sold; and another is refinancing with a buy down of CRDA's subordinate mortgage. The funds will come back into the capital reserve account which will be allocated to other projects at the discretion of the Board.

Mr. Freimuth reported that CRDA has several projects pending Bond Commission on Friday, April 19, 2021.

- 99 Pratt Street
- Pratt Street 2
- 55 Elm Street
- Plaza issues on the CTCC

Also pending on Bond Commission is the Martin Luther King Complex along with several smaller projects in the North End.

Andy Bessette inquired about the management agreement for Dillon Stadium. Mr. Freimuth responded that it was a 5-year contract CRDA has with the City with a minimum of two years of CRDA operation with the City's right to change in year three. The season starts in May. Staff has been working with City officials.

## **Regional & Economic Development Projects Committee**

Mayor Leclerc reported on the following Regional and Economic Development Committee Update for April Board Meeting

East Hartford Projects – All projects are progressing and there are no major changes to report.

Regional Agricultural Market – Development Services RFP - As noted at the last Board meeting, the Selection Committee has been struggling with the basic question of what the Market's role should be and how a consultant could assist us in defining that role.

The two short-listed firms were asked to provide new proposals based on a more defined scope and those proposals were received on March 30th. RED Committee members reviewed summaries of those proposals at our last meeting and were in agreement that one of the firms addressed the revised scope much better than the other. Staff will reach out to that preferred firm to confirm fee and schedule and then will present a formal recommendation to the Board.

Albany/Woodland Retail Project - Albany Woodland Redevelopment, Mixed use building on city owned property.

Background: CRDA awarded \$5.5M (approved by State Bond Commission 7/21/20) from the Neighborhood Program to a mixed use \$21M project at the intersection of Albany Ave and Woodland Street on a city parcel resulting from a city RFP process. The project included up to 75 housing units

complimented by 20,000 sf of retail/commercial space with a focus on neighborhood health and wellness needs.

Issue: Two critical problems have resulted in a request by the City to restructure the project. First there was considerable concern and objection to a project with 75 units of housing at the intersection. Secondly, the developer was unable to secure the various (and multiple) funding sources, including conventional financing or various tax credits and grants as envisioned.

Restructure: The City has asked that the funds continue to be available as either equity or loans as incentives in a new project that will continue to focus on the health and wellness goals of the original project with associated retail space. The CRDA funds would be matched by additional public and/or private dollars to build out a redesigned commercial project.

David Jorgensen asked Mayor Bronin if retail is the only thing in consideration for the area in addition to the Health Department or are any other ideas being entertained? Mayor Bronin responded stating the priority for the neighborhood has been for many years sit down restaurant(s) and that remains a priority. They have also had conversations with a bank and other retail uses that we continue to believe will still be interested in the revised form. In terms of office space uses, the Health Department seems to be it but no final answer as of late.

The following motion was moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by David Jorgensen and approved.

*“The CRDA continues to support the redevelopment of the Albany/Woodland property and reserves the \$5.5M initially awarded to be re-allocated for a restructured and redesigned commercial building of approximately 40,000 s.f. subject to 1/the CRDA funds being matched by an equal or greater amount of funds; 2/ the CRDA Board reviewing and approving the specific use and terms of the CRDA funds at a subsequent time; and 3/the State Bond Commission approving such re-allocation and use of the funds.”*

#### Executive Director Report

Infinity Music Hall – Mr. Freimuth thanked DECD Deputy Commissioner Daum for helping Infinity Music Hall restructure the terms of the funding agreement with DECD. Deputy Commissioner Daum indicated that the terms were accepted today, moving from a FT & PT employment requirement to a PT only requirement given that the company shifted their business model.

American Recovery Funds – There have been inquiries, including by the Appropriations Committee, regarding whether these funds can be used for Front Street. Staff is looking into this for Front Street and the other venues as well. This has been discussed with OPM.

Adjourned 3:30pm

*“The minutes of the April 15, 2021 CRDA Board Meeting were moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Bob Patricelli and approved at the May 20, 2021 CRDA Board Meeting.”*