

CRDA
Venue
Committee

**The July 5, 2019
CRDA Venue Committee
meeting is Cancelled**

The next
CRDA Venue Committee
meeting is scheduled for
August 2, 2019, 2:00pm

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Meeting / Conference Call Minutes
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103
August 2, 2019
2:30 PM**

Members Present Via Phone: Committee Chair Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood and Commissioner David Lehman

Staff: Mike Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro and Kim Hart

The meeting was called to order at 2:34 p.m. The minutes of the May 3, 2019 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

Mr. Freimuth updated Committee members on the various venues:

1. XL Center

Chris Lawrence, who has served as General Manager of the XL Center and Pratt & Whitney Stadium since 2013, has announced that he is leaving Spectra to take a position at Comerica Park, the home of the MLB's Detroit Tigers.

Mr. Freimuth reported that CRDA submitted an offer last week to Northland to purchase the XL Center atrium. No response has been received as of yet.

Per the recommendations of DECD, CRDA has issued an RFP for a firm to update the market study done for the XL Center in 2015. Bids are due back on August 19th.

Sponsorship issues remain a challenge at XL, with signage locations split between the venue and UConn/IMG. The building is compensating IMG each year for locations that were lost due to renovations at XL and this is a significant drain on the operating budget. Mr. Freimuth explained that IMG is now owned by Spectra and this may facilitate some sort of sales coordination and/or revenue-sharing arrangement moving forward.

2. Pratt & Whitney Stadium

Mr. Freimuth noted that it is still unclear what impact UConn's departure from the AAC will have on its football program. Attendance is expected to be a challenge again this season and Spectra is taking steps to minimize losses, including keeping certain concession stands shuttered until such time as attendance increases and additional points of sale are needed.

All of the new blue chairbacks have been installed and CRDA is now dealing with at least two lawsuits filed by patrons allegedly injured when the old seat hinges failed. Spectra's insurance carrier is currently defending CRDA in these suits.

3. CT Convention Center –

Mr. Freimuth reported that the Convention Center has been very active in recent weeks.

A draft of the Convention Center operations analysis done by Johnson Consulting has been received and is being reviewed by CRDA staff. The analysis looks at how the convention industry has changed since our facility opened in 2005 and offers recommendations – both operational and physical - on making the building more competitive. A summary will be presented at the September Board meeting.

4. Dillon Stadium

Construction of the new stadium is complete, with the exception of field lighting, fiber optic cabling and the sound system. Hartford Athletic has hosted three games at Dillon to date, with attendance totaling 5,500, 1,500 and 4,800 respectively. Upcoming games include a full season of UConn soccer and a “friendly” with the Puerto Rican national team that will raise funds for hurricane relief on the island. The first community event will be hosted by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving on August 21st.

Mr. Freimuth informed members that CRDA was cited by the State Auditors for starting construction work at Dillon prior to the City's signing of a use agreement with Hartford Sports Group. The Auditor's report, which was released publicly today, argues that CRDA failed to comply with the State Bond Commission's resolution on Dillon funding, as well as with the CRDA Board's own funding resolution. Committee members were in agreement that they had been made aware of the risks, but that these were overshadowed by the need to move forward with construction so as not to jeopardize the entire project.

The next Venue Committee meeting / conference call is scheduled for September 6, 2019.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
APPROVED Meeting / Conference Call Minutes
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th 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 29th 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 14th 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.

CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
APPROVED 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**.

CRDA Venue Committee Has Been Cancelled

The CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Scheduled for Friday, November 1, 2019
has been cancelled.

CRDA Venue Committee Has Been Cancelled

The CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Scheduled for Friday, December 6, 2019
has been cancelled.

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Meeting / Conference Call Minutes
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103
February 7, 2020
2:00 PM**

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

Staff: Mike Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro and Kim Hart

Guests Present: Ben Weiss (Spectra Venue Management)

Guests Via Phone: Adam Kerns (CSL), Paige Robinett (CSL), Cole Ernst (CSL)

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. The minutes of the October 3, 2019 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

1. XL

Adams Kerns, Director at CSL International, walked Committee members through a working draft of the Executive Summary of their ongoing Market Demand and Financial Feasibility Study for the XL Center. Committee members expressed satisfaction with the content and format of the draft report and a brief discussion followed the presentation, with questions of CSL staff. CSL representatives will make a formal presentation in person at the February Board meeting.

2. Pratt & Whitney Stadium

Ms. Hart reported that the Stadium is actively pursuing two large soccer events for this summer, which may or may not fall into the current fiscal year. Mr. Freimuth noted that OPM has been made aware of the need for additional funding to cover a \$750k deficit expected at the end of this fiscal year. CRDA and Spectra have been meeting with UConn to look at operational efficiencies, including consolidation of parking lots during the 2020 football season.

3. CT Convention Center

Mr. Freimuth reported that the Convention Center has been performing ahead of budget projections in terms of both number of events and attendees per event.

4. Dillon Stadium

A number of punch list items remain and CRDA staff is working with the City of Hartford and Hartford Athletic to complete those, including certain items required by the City before a certificate of occupancy is issued.

The City is also working with Spectra and Hartford Athletic to update the event-booking process to address issues that arose during the renovated Stadium's inaugural season.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

The next Venue Committee meeting / conference call is scheduled for **March 6, 2020.**

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Conference Call Minutes
Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th Floor
Hartford, CT 06103
March 6, 2020
2:00 PM**

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

Staff: Mike Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro and Kim Hart

Guests Present: Ben Weiss (Spectra Venue Management)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bessette at 2:03 p.m. The minutes of the February 7, 2020 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

1. XL

- a. UConn Season Wrap-up – Members reviewed the current and historical attendance numbers for UConn and the Wolfpack that were included in the agenda packet. Ms. Hart noted that attendance has increased slightly this season in all sports, but overall the numbers fall short of what is necessary to cover building expenses. Per caps, however, remain healthy. Hockey East playoffs begin this evening and Mr. Weiss noted that the building may benefit financially from the extra games.

2. Coronavirus

Members expressed concerns about what impact the coronavirus outbreak will have on attendance at all of the CRDA venues. Mr. Lazzaro noted that attendance at the recent home show at the Convention Center was lower than last year, but it is impossible to tell if this is related to coronavirus fears.

Mr. Freimuth noted that we know of one event cancelled specifically because of the outbreak. Cox Communications has cancelled all of its large corporate meetings, including one scheduled at Pratt & Whitney Stadium. Mr. Weiss noted the revenue loss was less than \$1,000.

Mr. Freimuth noted that Spectra and Waterford Management are closely monitoring the situation in terms of large upcoming events, including a potential U.S. Women's soccer match in June. CRDA staff are working with both management companies to explore insurance reimbursement options should an event be cancelled. Venue managers are also being extra diligent in terms of cleaning and staff hygiene.

Committee Chair Bessette questioned whether Spectra and Waterford were confirming safety procedures of subcontractors, particularly those related to food preparation. Staff will pursue this with both management companies.

3. **Pratt & Whitney Stadium** - No additional issues to report.

4. **CT Convention Center** - No additional issues to report.

5. **Dillon Stadium**

CRDA staff continue to work with the City of Hartford and Hartford Athletic to complete the few remaining construction punch list items. The team will play its first home game of the 2020 season on March 21st.

6. **Legislation**

Mr. Freimuth noted that staff are watching three pieces of legislation in particular this session:

- a. **CVB Authorization** – Legislation authorizing CRDA to establish a Hartford-centric convention and visitors bureau (CVB) has been introduced. CRDA requested the bill, as this was a key recommendation of the Johnson Consulting report on the Convention Center.
- b. **State Properties Review Board** – This legislation subjects all of CRDA's property related purchases, leases and contracts to approval by the State Properties Review Board. CRDA opposes the bill, particularly Section 4.
- c. **XL Center Funding** – The Governor's proposed budget included \$27.5 million in each of the next two fiscal years for renovation of the XL Center, however the State Capital Plan remains uncertain.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

The next Venue Committee meeting / conference call is scheduled for **April 3, 2020**.

CRDA Venue Committee

Has Been Cancelled Until Further Notice

The Venue Committee Meeting
Scheduled for Friday, April 3, 2020
has been cancelled until further notice.

CRDA Venue Committee

The CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
Scheduled for Friday, May 1, 2020
has been cancelled.