

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting**  
**APPROVED Meeting Minutes**  
**April 18, 2022**  
**2:00 p.m.**

**Members Present via Microsoft Teams:** Committee Chair Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood, David Jorgensen and Andrew Diaz-Matos

**Staff Present via Microsoft Teams:** Mike Freimuth, Bob Saint and Kim Hart

**Guests Present via Microsoft Teams:** Paul Robertson (DECD), Ben Weiss (Spectra)

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. by Chairman Bessette and the minutes of the March 4, 2022 meeting were approved on a voice vote.

**I. XL Center – Sports Betting Lounge (Part 1)**

Mr. Freimuth reported that CRDA continues to work with the Connecticut Lottery Corporation on a shared revenue arrangement for a sports betting lounge at XL. Legislative action may be required. Mr. Freimuth noted that CRDA continues moving forward with the construction of a new sports bar area that will eventually house a betting facility. A construction manager has been selected and the initial bid packages have been released. The sports betting facility could be operational this fall, however, supply chain issues will likely impact the construction schedule.

**II. OVG Partnership**

Mr. Freimuth also reported that CRDA and DECD recently met with OVG, the new parent company of Spectra Venue Management, about their potential investment in the arena. OVG continues evaluating XL's potential to host premier concerts, with a focus on seating and load-in capacity. Mr. Freimuth expects a proposal from the company by the end of April.

**III. Events**

Mr. Weiss noted that while the event schedule is improving post-Covid, attendance numbers are still struggling. The arena will host Stars on Ice later this week and the Wolfpack will also play their last regular season home games. The team is currently ranked seventh in their division and may secure a playoff spot if it breaks into the top six teams. Upcoming events include a Journey concert, WWE and a number of graduation ceremonies.

Mr. Freimuth alerted Committee members that next month's Venue Committee meeting will include a review of draft budgets for the three CRDA venues.

#### **IV. Pratt & Whitney Stadium at Rentschler Field**

Mr. Freimuth noted that the agenda packet included summaries of the three major Stadium agreements expiring next year: the OPM / UConn lease, the OPM / CRDA operating MOU and the CRDA / Spectra management agreement. The lease will be the most critical, as negotiations between the State and the University will decide the future ownership structure of the venue. While the Stadium could remain under OPM control, the parties could also decide to transfer management to UConn.

Mr. Diaz-Matos raised a question as to whether UConn rent at the Stadium will need to be increased. Mr. Freimuth noted that an increase in attendance is more critical, explaining that with less than 20,000 people in the stands, food/beverage and parking revenue retained by the Stadium cannot support operations. In recent years, the venue has had to rely on revenue from non-UConn events and a mandated UConn subsidy in order to balance its budget.

Mr. Weiss noted that the Stadium has had a remarkable year in terms of non-UConn revenue, highlighted by the NCAA lacrosse championships and two international soccer matches. Next year's calendar is expected to be lighter and UConn football will need to better support itself.

#### **V. XL Center – Sports Betting Lounge (Part 2)**

Mr. Saint entered the meeting and Committee members continued their discussion of renovation work planned for the XL Center. Mr. Saint reported that Dimeo Construction, who is overseeing the renovation work, has issued the first early release bid package covering demolition, food service, elevators and curtainwall. The next package to be released will be structural and work is expected to start in early May. Mr. Saint noted that supply chain delays are expected to impact the project, with the longest lead times related to the curtainwall and the video wall required for sports betting operations. Such delays could impact a projected fall opening.

#### **VI. Connecticut Convention Center**

Mr. Freimuth reported that repair work on the plaza between the Convention Center and Marriott is near completion, while work continues on the chiller replacement project. He also noted that the venue has secured the popular Van Gogh Experience show, which will run from August to October this year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

The next Venue Committee conference call is scheduled for **May 6, 2022.**