

CRDA Venue Committee Meeting
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2022
2:00 p.m.

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

Staff Present via Microsoft Teams: Mike Freimuth, Bob Saint, Anthony Lazzaro, Joe Geremia and Kim Hart

Guests Present via Microsoft Teams: Mike Costelli (Waterford Venue Management), Ben Weiss (Spectra), Ashley Shea (Spectra), Derek Miles (Spectra), Charles Tillem (Spectra) and Pearson Davis (Spectra)

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chairman Bessette and the minutes of the April 18, 2022 meeting were approved on a voice vote with one correction.

I. XL Center – Sports Betting Lounge

Mr. Freimuth reported that the General Assembly has approved a provision allowing for all net revenue from a sports betting lounge at XL to be transferred to CRDA for operation of that venue. A term sheet for an agreement with the Connecticut Lottery Corporation should be ready for the next Venue Committee meeting.

In response to a question posed by Chairman Bessette, Mr. Freimuth noted that this revenue will keep the sports betting lounge from operating at a loss. In response to a question posed by Mr. Robinson, Mr. Freimuth also noted that the staff operating the betting components of the lounge will be employed by the Lottery Corporation. Committee members also noted that rising construction and material costs will likely impact the project budget and work should proceed as soon as possible.

II. OVG Partnership

As noted at the April Committee meeting, OVG has been evaluating XL's potential to host premier concerts, with a focus on seating and load-in capacity. That evaluation has concluded that the seating bowl can be reconfigured to accommodate the 13,500 seats and staging layout required for large concerts. Improving the venue's load-in and load-out capacity will be more problematic, but potential solutions have been identified. The next step will be estimating the cost of the desired improvements.

III. Pratt & Whitney Stadium at Rentschler Field

Mr. Freimuth noted that CRDA staff is currently reviewing the Stadium building assessment prepared by Populous and will present copies to the Committee for the next meeting. This assessment comes at a critical time with the OPM/UConn lease expiring next year, along with the OPM/CRDA Stadium operating agreement and the CRDA/Spectra management agreement.

IV. Connecticut Convention Center

Mr. Freimuth reported that repair work in the building continues, including planning for a new elevator and replacement of a cooling tower. Repairs to the plaza deck between the Convention Center and Marriott are nearing completion

V. Events

Mr. Freimuth gave Committee members a brief overview of upcoming events at the three facilities. The Convention Center is currently hosting an immersive Sistine Chapel event and various group meetings. Pratt & Whitney Stadium is preparing for the NCAA lacrosse championships later this month, while the XL Center hosted a WWE event earlier this week. The Journey concert scheduled for May 10th was postponed due to a band member testing positive for COVID and Spectra is hoping the reschedule in the near future.

VI. Venue Budgets

Convention Center GM Mike Costelli and XL/Stadium GM Ben Weiss walked Committee members through their proposed FY23 operating budgets. The Convention Center and XL will both rely on federal ARPA funds to break even, with additional revenue from the Church Street garage helping to support XL. The Stadium will likewise require a subsidy from OPM to balance its budget.

It was noted that the financial situation of the three venues is improving, but it is not yet up to pre-COVID levels. Both GM's indicated that it will take a year or two before they see pre-COVID numbers.

Mr. Geremia noted that the budgets will next be presented to CRDA's Executive Committee and then put before the full Board for approval in June.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:56 p.m.

The next Venue Committee conference call is scheduled for **June 3, 2022.**