

**CRDA Venue Committee  
Microsoft Teams Meeting**

**Friday, November 1, 2024  
11:30 a.m.**

**Agenda**

- I. Introductions
- II. Approval of Minutes from September 6, 2024 Meeting\*
- III. Infinity Theater Funding Request Discussion
- IV. XL Center
  - a. Event Update
  - b. Construction status - Bob Houlihan
- V. Convention Center
  - a. Event Update
  - b. Construction Updates
- VI. Pratt & Whitney Stadium
  - a. Event Up
  - b. Construction Updates
- VII. U.S.S. Hartford Bell Update
- VIII. Other Business
- IX. Adjournment

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**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting**  
**DRAFT Meeting Minutes**  
**September 6, 2024**  
**3:00 p.m.**

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

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

**Guests Present via Microsoft Teams:** Ben Weiss, OVG

Chairman Robinson called the meeting to order at 3:00 and then recessed the meeting until 3:30. At 3:30, the meeting was reconvened and the minutes of the December 1, 2023 were approved on a voice vote.

**I. XL Center**

- a. Wolfpack Lease – Mr. Lazzaro outlined the Lease for Committee members. The building’s manager, OVG, has asked CRDA to relocate the Wolfpack sales office from the XL Center atrium to space in the adjacent Double Tree hotel. After a brief discussion, the following was approved:

*Lease Agreement – 315 Trumbull Third Unit Owner, LLC  
(the “Wolf Pack Sales Office Lease Agreement”)*

**Background:**

*The Oak View Group has requested that CRDA relocate and fit-out new office space for the Wolf Pack sales office. The new office will be located at 315 Trumbull Street in a portion of the Double Tree by Hilton Hartford Downtown hotel immediately adjacent to the XL Center; the office is currently located in the atrium of the Civic Center in property owned by the Northland Group.*

*CRDA shall execute a sub-lease with OVG for use of such space.*

**Monthly Basic Rent:** Year 1: \$5,000  
Years 2-5: \$5,000 plus CPI adjustments

**Construction Cost:** ~\$30,000

**Term:** Five (5) years, cancellable after Year Two or upon the termination of the affiliated American Hockey League franchise. After Year Two, the Lease Agreement shall be assigned to the then existing manager of the XL Center.

### **MOTION**

*The CRDA Venue Committee recommends the Lease Agreement to the CRDA Board of Directors for approval in accordance with the terms and conditions provided above.*

- b. **Construction Status** – Mr. Houlihan walked Committee members through a diagram of the XL Center’s event level showing the various areas slated for renovation. Most of these areas are in current back-of-house spaces and construction activity should have minimal impact on patrons.
- c. **Naming Rights Update** – Mr. Weiss updated Committee members on OVG’s search for a new naming rights sponsor. As reported in the press, XL has opted not to renew its sponsorship beyond June 30, 2025. Mr. Weiss explained that OVG has a very competent team assigned to the search and they have engaged in conversations with multiple entities about naming rights for the overall facility, as well as for various components of the building such as club spaces. A number of Committee members noted that the timing of the rebranding was fortunate given the physical renovation underway.

## **II. Connecticut Convention Center**

- a. **Event Update** – Ms. Hart noted that the 21<sup>st</sup> annual ConnectiCon Convention returned to the Convention Center on July 18<sup>th</sup> – July 21<sup>st</sup> and that the event was a resounding success. Approximately 52,000 people were in attendance over four days and the building set a new record for concession revenue. Upcoming events include Connecticut Horrorfest, as well as the Connecticut Science Center Gala, the 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Home Show and the Connecticut Association of Land Surveyors’ annual meeting.

In response to a question from Mr. Diaz-Matos, Ms. Hart indicated that an estimate of the ConnectiCon event’s economic impact on the City will be provided at the September 19<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

- b. **Construction Updates** – Ms. Hart reported that the replacement of pavers and repair of waterproofing and drainage on the Convention Center’s riverfront esplanade is expected to begin in about three weeks. The work should take about three months to complete, weather permitting.



In addition, repair work on the building's outside elevators has been held up by difficulties sourcing replacement parts but it should begin within next month. Mr. Lazzaro explained that budget constraints during construction of the Convention Center eliminated the lobbies but used interior-rated components for the elevators. The resultant exposure to the elements has damaged the mechanical systems. The new elevators will be designed for exterior use.

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

- a. Upcoming Season – Mr. Weiss noted that the UConn Huskies will play their first home game on September 7<sup>th</sup> and preparations are underway in the building for the new season.
- b. Construction Updates - Ms. Hart reported that on June 7<sup>th</sup>, the State Bond Commission approved \$5 million in funding for roof repairs, renovation of team facilities and minor projects at the Stadium. An RFP for locker room renovations was issued earlier this summer and responses are currently being evaluated by selection committee including representatives of CRDA, OVG and UConn.

Mr. Houlihan also noted that CRDA and OVG are negotiating with cell companies leasing antenna space at the Stadium to relocate equipment during replacement of the roof membrane, the next big project scheduled at PWS.

The next Venue Committee conference call is scheduled for **October 4, 2024**.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

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News

## Changes coming to Gampel Pavilion, and Hartford XL Center: How season ticket holders will be affected

By Gianni Salsbury October 24, 2024

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*Harry A. Gampel Pavilion on November 28th, 2023. Gampel Pavilion opened on January 21, 1990, and is the largest on-campus arena in New England. File Photo/The Daily Campus.*

The University of Connecticut Athletics Department announced on Oct. 10 that renovations to Gampel Pavilion's lower-level seating and changes to seating in the XL Center will require season ticket holders to participate in a seat selection process. The process will be based on donation amounts going into the 2025-2026 basketball season.

In an email sent to season ticket holders, the athletics department stated that for the 2025-2026 season, the entire lower-level seating structure and the lower bowl of the arena will be replaced, as it has not been updated since the building opened in 1990.

UConn Assistant Athletic Director of Communications William Peterson explained that some of these renovations will include updating the guard rails to provide a safety component, new seat backings and bigger seats in some areas.

"This is just bringing the arena up in line with what we would consider to be a championship facility. If you've noticed around campus, all of the other facilities have gone through major upgrades over the last five-ish years and we want to bring this facility kind of up to that standard," Peterson said.

For the 2025-2026 season, the XL Center will go through a change, with upgrades to selected seating areas and new premium seating options.

Due to these renovations, the physical structure of the seating will be altered. According to the athletics department it "will be necessary to do a seat selection process in the late spring and early summer of 2025, in advance of the 2025-26 season, for the entirety of the lower and upper levels in both Gampel Pavilion and XL Center."

Peterson explained that the athletics department does not have information yet on how specifically the seating space will change or if this will affect the number of seats in the areas being renovated.

"I think obviously it's going to affect the spacing, and it's going to affect how many seats may be in a specific section. There'll be some of those changes, but in terms of specifics, I don't have those yet," Peterson said.

Season ticket holders were informed in the email from the athletics department that they "will be required to participate in the seat selection process to select their desired seats from the available inventory."

This seat selection process will occur before the 2025-2026 season. More information on the seating changes, pricing, priority points rankings and the selection process will be available before the end of the calendar year, according to the email from the athletics department.

According to the athletics department, seat selection time slots will first be given to season ticket holders who are Husky Athletic Fund donors, which are donors who have made lifetime cash (not pledged) gifts of \$1 million or more to UConn Athletics. Then time slots will be given based on priority points.

The priority point system is used to "acknowledge both donor loyalty and generosity," according to the [UConn Athletics page](#). Each donor's priority point total will determine their priority ranking and "play a determining factor in how various benefits are allocated," according to the website. Some of these benefits include season tickets, conference and NCAA tournament tickets, bowl game tickets, parking, special events, away game tickets and other benefits.

For those interested in checking their priority point balance, ticket holders can view their UConn Ticket Account.

UConn Athletics stated that cash gifts made prior to March 31, 2025, will be applied to priority points, the seat selection process, and philanthropic; not seat-related and cash gifts made prior to this date will earn double the points.

*In order for us to keep this building going and keep everything kind of, you know, fresh and new, and keep up with the rest of the facilities on campus this kind of has to happen*



Peterson stated that once given a time slot, ticket holders will then be able to pick tickets through UConn's ticketing process.

Since this announcement, there has been [discourse online](#) over if this decision for the seat-selection process is a good one, especially for those who have "Forever Seats."

In 2019, UConn Athletics announced on their [website](#) a process called Forever Seats in which season ticket holders could pick their seats and keep them "year after year when they renew." This meant that as long as the ticket holder renewed the 2019-2020 season seats every year, the seats could be theirs forever if they paid the associated costs each year.

Due to the renovations, those with "Forever Seats" are not guaranteed their specifically chosen seats anymore.

Andrew Taylor, a UConn alumnus who graduated in 2012, is a current season ticket holder and has been attending UConn basketball games his whole life, he said.

He expressed his frustration as he really likes his current seats and had never planned on changing them.

"My seats are actually in the upper level, in the corner, but I'm right next to the stairway so they're just like really good seats as far as the location and view. I want to take my dad, who is 60, to the games and he doesn't have to walk up a lot of stairs to the current seats we are at. So now I'm worried that I'm going to be put in less desirable seats," Taylor said.

Peterson stated that the Athletic Department understands fans' frustration, but the renovations are a necessity in order to give fans the best possible game experience.

"A person may have had x seat for x number of years, and they don't want to change, or they're upset. We get it, but we want to work with those people as best we can. We want to work with all of our fans to make sure that they're getting where they want to be and that they're going to have the experience that they want to have. In order for us to keep this building going and keep everything kind of, you know, fresh and new, and keep up with the rest of the facilities on campus this kind of has to happen," Peterson added.

Some fans have expressed that they don't think this process is fair, wishing a different solution had been presented.

Taylor expressed that although he understands why UConn Athletics is enacting this process, he wishes that they had gone about it differently.

"I just don't think they're necessarily going about this the right way. I think it's fair in the sense that, the more money you donate, the better seats you get, but I don't think it should be at the expense of fans who are currently in their seats," Taylor said.

Peterson expressed that UConn Athletics is trying to help fans in any way possible and encourages fans to reach out with questions.

"They can reach out to our ticket staff or our development staff with their thoughts or their concerns, or if they have questions about anything," Peterson said.