

Capital Region Development Authority

100 Columbus Boulevard, 5th Floor

Hartford, CT 06103

Thursday, September 19, 2024

6:00pm –In-person meeting with virtual option

(The Board Meeting was held via Microsoft Teams with in-person availability)

Board Members Present: Chairman David Robinson; Vice Chairman Andy Bessette; Paul Hinsch; Matthew Pugliese; Pam Sucato; Andrew Diaz-Matos; Olusegun Ajayi; Joanne Berger-Sweeney; Mayor Connor Martin

Board Members Absent: Seila Mosquera-Bruno; David Jorgensen; Bob Patricelli; Mayor Arunan Arulampalam

CRDA Staff Present: Michael Freimuth; Joseph Geremia; Anthony Lazzaro; Robert Houlihan; Jennifer Gaffey; Terryl Mitchell Smith; Kim Hart; Mark O’Connell; Derek Peterson

Guests: SINA- Melvyn Colón, Executive Director; Logan Singerman, Director of Community Partnerships & Policy Analyst

Minutes

The minutes from July 30, 2024, were moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Paul Hinsch and approved.

SINA Presentation

Executive Director of SINA, Melvyn Colón and Logan Singerman, Director of Community Partnerships & Policy Analyst gave a brief presentation regarding Transforming Washington Street through a Development Plan including the Planning Efforts; timing; scope; budget and impact.

Board Officer Elections & Committee Assignments

Chairman Robinson presented the Board Officer and Committee Assignments. Michael Freimuth noted that there is a Governor appointed vacancy on the Board that the Governor would like to fill and candidates are being discussed. Mr. Freimuth stated that Olusegun Ajayi has been assigned to the Housing and Neighborhood Committee. Mr. Ajayi confirmed that he was aware of the assignment.

REVISED 9/19/24

DATE: September 19, 2024
TO: CRDA Board Members
FROM: Michael W. Freimuth
RE: CRDA Committee Structure & Meeting Dates

The CRDA Committees will meet as indicated below:

Executive & Finance Committees (as needed)

Board Chair David Robinson Jeff Beckham/Paul Hinsch – OPM
Vice Chair Andy Bessette Mayor Arunan Arulampalam - Hartford

Housing & Neighborhood (First Friday of the month @ 9:00am)

Downtown projects within initial CRDA mission/scope
Neighborhood projects
Bushnell South project
DoNo efforts
Non-housing commercial projects, infrastructure, community dev projects, demo/site

Joanne Berger Sweeney (Committee Chair) Paul Canning *
Mayor Arunan Arulampalam
Commissioner Seila Mosquera-Bruno
Robert Patricelli
Olusegun Ajayi (Shay)
Board Chair David Robinson

Regional and Econ Dev Projects (Second Thursday of the month @ 3:00pm)

E. Hartford projects (Goodwin, Rentschler development, Silver Lane, Riverfront)
Newington (Nat’l Welding site)
Wethersfield (the Borden, Silas Deane)
Hartford Regional Market
Front Street District
TOD initiatives
Garage operations

Mayor Connor Martin (Committee Chair)
Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto/Pam Sucato
Commissioner Daniel O’Keefe
Board Chair David Robinson

Venue (First Friday of the month @ 2:00pm)

XL Center
Pratt & Whitney Stadium (Rentschler)
Convention Center
Dillon Stadium

Vice Chair Andy Bessette (Committee Chair)
Board Chair David Robinson
Andrew Diaz-Matos
David Jorgensen

* non-voting

The following motion was moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Connor Martin and approved.

“The Board Officer Elections & Committee Assignments are authorized as presented.”

Executive Session

A motion to move into Executive Session was moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Matthew Pugliese at 6:20pm.

The Board ended Executive Session and resumed the Board Meeting at 6:35pm

Finance Report

CRDA CFO Joseph Geremia introduced Vanessa Rossitto, Principal at CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP (CLA) who presented a PowerPoint with the FY24 Audit Report and the Governance letter to the Board in accordance with the AICPA, Auditing Standards, and Government Accountability Board.

Ms. Rossitto expressed thanks to the CRDA and venue staffs for their cooperation. She discussed the Special Purpose Statements for the XL Center; CT Convention Center and CRDA Parking facilities. The Renschler Field Audit was also presented.

Audits will be issued with unmodified opinions, which is considered a clean opinion. Ms. Rossitto noted that the amount attributable to the Authority for the State Net Pension and Net OPEB Liability was disclosed in previous years. It is now recorded in the financial statements as Net Pension Liability, Net OPEB Liability, and related deferred inflows and outflows of resources. Ms. Rossitto also expressed the Auditor's Responsibility under U.S. general accepted auditing standard that are required to be communicated to the Board as part of the audit. Chairman Robinson thanked the auditors for their work.

The FY23-24 Annual Report was presented by Mr. Freimuth noting a few of the highlights from the Fiscal Year. The CRDA Organization & Partnership chart was displayed to show the many relationships that CRDA relies on to keep the Authority functioning and effective.

The following resolution was moved by Andy Bessette, seconded by Joanne Berger Sweeney and approved.

"The CRDA Board of Directors hereby approves the CRDA Annual Report/Audit for FY2023-2024 and the Stadium at Rentschler Field Audit for FY2023-2024 as presented or in substantially similar form and authorizes the Executive Director to forward to the Governor, General Assembly and Auditors of Public Accounts."

Mayor Reports

Hartford

Olusegun Ajayi (Shay) gave a city update in Mayor Arunan Arulampalam's absence. He reported on various City projects that are under construction.

East Hartford

Mayor Connor Martin reported on various Town projects that are under construction.

Housing & Neighborhood Committee

Derek Peterson, CRDA Senior Underwriter, gave an overview of CRDA Housing projects that are in various stages of development.

Regional & Economic Development Projects Committee (RED)

Mr. Freimuth indicated that Mayor Martin reported on most RED projects in his mayor's report. However, the only other project update is Carbone's Restaurant lease is near final stages and planning to open Summer 2025. Also, CRDA is working with the city on a housing proposal and DECD Brownfield funds for the vacated Carbone's restaurant on Franklin Avenue. although this project is still in the very early stages.

An update on the Riverfront Project was requested. A discussion ensued regarding the need for the involvement of the Army Corp. of Engineers and a way to get them engaged with projects on both sides of the Connecticut River.

Venue Committee

Andy Bessette reported on the various venues and events.

XL Center

The AHL held their annual league meetings in June and the Wolfpack was recognized for a number of accomplishments during the 2023-2024 season. The team's corporate sales department was recognized for a greater than 90% renewal rate in sponsorship and 20% growth in sponsorship during the season.

As noted at the last Board meeting, the Wolfpack averaged nearly 5,500 fans for its home games – the team's highest average attendance in over 20 years. The team was recognized by the league for a 90% renewal rate among full-season ticket holders and a 20% growth in group ticket revenue.

The Wolf Pack will play their first home game of the 2024-25 season on Friday, October 18th against the Springfield Thunderbirds. UConn Hockey will play its first game at XL on October 12, while the schedule of Men's and Women's basketball games will be finalized this week. Other upcoming events include a sold-out Sabrina Carpenter concert on October 2nd.

Pratt & Whitney Stadium

On June 7th, the State Bond Commission approved \$5 million in funding for roof repairs, renovation of team facilities and smaller projects around the building. An RFP for locker room renovations was issued earlier this summer and responses are currently being evaluated.

UConn played their first home game of the 2024 season on September 7th with a 63-17 win against Merrimack. Approximately 15,200 fans were in attendance.

Connecticut Convention Center

The 21st annual ConnectiCon Convention returned to the CTCC on July 18th – July 21st and 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.

It is estimated the event brought over \$3.6 million in revenue to businesses in the Capital region and the State's tax coffers. Over 1,600 hotel rooms were utilized, resulting in net room revenue of \$260,500. While some meals were purchased at the Convention Center during the event, it's estimated that some 48,000 meals were eaten at local restaurants, bringing in \$729,000 in revenue. State taxes generated by the event totaled \$125,000, including sales taxes on food and beverages, parking and hotel rooms.

Upcoming events include Connecticut Horrorfest this weekend, as well as the Connecticut Science Center Gala, the 45th Annual Home Show and the Connecticut Association of Land Surveyors' annual meeting.

The Bond Commission has approved \$2 million for replacement of pavers and repair of waterproofing and drainage on the Convention Center's riverfront esplanade. Work on that project will begin in about three weeks and should take about three months to complete, weather permitting. Repair of the buildings outside

elevators has been held up by difficulties sourcing replacement parts but work should begin within the next month.

Mr. Freimuth presented the Lease Agreement for the Wolf Pack Sales Office Lease Agreement

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

Background: For ongoing construction reasons and in consideration of the current limits within the Wolfpack sales office, 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 on 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.

The CRDA Venue Committee voted to recommend that the full board of directors approve the lease at its September 6, 2024, meeting.

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

The CRDA Board of Directors approves the Lease Agreement in accordance with the terms and conditions provided above and authorizes the Executive Director to take such actions as necessary to initiate and secure such lease.

Convention Services

Mr. Freimuth reported that the Connecticut Convention Center Convention Services program completed its first full fiscal year of operations in June 2024. The goal is to keep businesses busy and give an incentive to visitors to frequent those participating in the program.

Executive Director

Mr. Freimuth shared a Construction Project update presentation of various projects before/after photos to showcase the many projects that are currently in construction.

Mr. Freimuth presented the following contract for selection.

Bushnell South Parking and Traffic Consultant – Approval of Selection

Project - Bushnell South Parking and Traffic Consultant – Approval of Selection

Background - On May 16, 2024, CRDA issued an RFP seeking proposals from qualified and experienced firms interested in providing parking and traffic consultant services for the Bushnell South Development.

As discussed at length in previous Board meetings, addressing the diverse parking demands of new housing and commercial spaces, as well as those of existing entities - such as the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts - will be critical to the success of this development. CRDA, the Bushnell theater and various development partners all have an idea as to parking demand. The task now is how to implement a program to meet this demand.

CRDA is therefore seeking a firm to develop a parking and traffic management, and development implementation plan consistent with the Goody Clancy Master Plan. Such a plan would address the parking needs of residents, employees and visitors, as well as traffic issues within the area. The selected firm would also be expected to consider ways to improve access to and egress from the Capital Avenue and Buckingham Street garages, as well as ways to improve the flow of traffic, particularly during peak use periods.

On June 7th, proposals were received from BFJ Planning, SLR Consulting and Walker Consultants. A Selection Committee comprised of Bob Patricelli, Mike Freimuth and Kim Hart reviewed the proposals and concluded that all three were responsive. Given the small number of proposals, the Committee felt it was appropriate to interview all three firms.

Interviews were held on July 16th and scoring sheets were completed shortly thereafter. Committee members agreed that Walker Consultants - while the more expensive - had the most experience relative to parking planning for mixed-use developments and the best understanding of what CRDA was trying to accomplish.

The Selection Committee is, therefore, requesting Board approval to move forward with a contract with Walker Consultants.

The following motion was moved by Joanne Berger Sweeney, seconded by Matthew Pugliese and approved.

“The Executive Director is authorized to enter into a contract with Walker Consultants for parking and traffic implementation planning for the Bushnell South Development project not to exceed \$126,000.”

U.S.S. Hartford Bell

Project - U.S.S. Hartford Bell – Contract for Concept Design

Background - In 1959, the U.S. Navy permanently loaned to the city a bell from the U.S.S Hartford, a Civil War sloop-of-war steamer once under the command of Admiral David Farragut. The ship was key to the Union’s 1864 victory at the Battle of Mobile Bay - a turning point in the war in which Farragut urged his men to fight on with the infamous cry of “Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.”

The roughly 400-pound bell was displayed at various locations around the city until 1964, when it was loaned to the Travelers affiliate that owned the newly completed Constitution Plaza. From 1964 until August of last year, the bell was displayed in a corner of the Plaza.

Lamenting the bell’s forlorn location and noting that, among other provisions, CRDA’s statutory mission charges it “to stimulate family-oriented tourism, art, culture, history, education and entertainment through cooperation and coordination with city and regional organizations”, CRDA offered its assistance in relocating the bell.

Before the bell could be relocated, however, its granite stand was damaged by vandals and Travelers placed the bell in storage for safekeeping in August 2023. Two months later, the Hartford City Council approved the transfer of the bell to CRDA and the Board accepted the transfer at its October 26, 2023 meeting.

CRDA staff has researched various location options, weighing the need to keep the bell safe and keeping it accessible to the general public as much as possible. Riverfront Recapture has offered the use of a vacant ticket office at Mortenson Plaza where Phoenix bridge crosses Columbus Boulevard to the Science Center. The location sees significant foot traffic and the interior space would allow the bell to be safely displayed behind glass, yet accessible to the public. A museum-type display would provide background information and highlight the story of Admiral Farragut's ship.

The use of the ticket office will need to be approved by the city, who own the Plaza and lease it to Riverfront. A concept plan will need to be developed, and Riverfront has reached out to one of their on-call architects who is familiar with the ticket office layout and utility connections. CRDA staff recommends engaging their architect to develop a concept plan for the bell display that can be used for the City approval process and to price and bid out the renovation work.

The following motion was moved by Joanne Berger Sweeney, seconded by Paul Hinsch and approved with Andy Bessette recusing himself.

"The Executive Director is authorized to enter into a contract with Riverfront Recapture's recommended architect to develop a concept plan for display of the U.S.S. Hartford Bell on Mortensen Plaza for an amount not to exceed \$10,000."

Mr. Freimuth gave an update on:

- 89 Arch Street - update
- MRDA MOU - an MOU for Municipal Regional Development Authority (MRDA) and CRDA. CRDA will assist, for a short time, providing staff time is available while MRDA gets up and running. Board members expressed concern that although they understand MRDA's needs, they are concerned about long term assistance due to CRDA's own band width for projects.
- MDC-Storm-Drain – Bushnell South – update

A motion to move into Executive Session was moved by Connor Martin, seconded by Matthew Pugliese at 8:10pm.

The Board ended Executive Session and resumed the Board Meeting at 8:35pm.

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

"The Board of Directors approved an extension of the Executive Director's contract through June 30, 2025."

The Board adjourned at 8:40pm. The next meeting will be October 17, 2024, 3:00pm.