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**CRDA Venue Committee Conference Call  
Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Friday, October 13, 2016  
2:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Venue Committee Chair Andy Bessette (via phone), Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood, David Jorgensen (via phone) and Sean Fitzpatrick (via phone)

**Guests:** Casey Heverling (Spectra), Sarah Layedra (CT Open)(via phone)

**Staff:** Executive Director Mike Freimuth, Joe Geremia, Kim Hart

The meeting was called to order at 10:02 am and the minutes of the September 9, 2016 meeting were approved by voice vote.

## **1. XL Center**

**Capital Improvements** – Mr. Freimuth reported that the capital projects at XL and in the Church Street garage are progressing, with bids for the security and elevator work expected to be released in about two to three weeks. Installation of the new ice floor will begin in the late spring 2017.

**Event Update** – Mr. Freimuth noted that the loss of the Maroon 5 concert and an underperforming Blake Shelton concert dealt serious blows to the XL operating budget. Maroon 5 was expected to net approximately \$200k, while Blake Shelton netted only about half of its projected \$150k in revenue. UConn has begun its hockey season and attendance numbers have been low, but that is to be expected given the teams played and the fact that it is so early in the season. Ms. Hopgood noted that she attended the opening night game and was very impressed with the UConn team's performance.

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

**Capital Improvements** – Mr. Freimuth reported that the capital projects at the Stadium, including concrete repair and waterproofing, are progressing.

**UConn Football** – Attendance to date has been disappointing. Three games remain in the season – Homecoming against UCF (October 22<sup>nd</sup>), Temple (November 4<sup>th</sup>) and Tulane (November 26<sup>th</sup>).

**Game-Day Changes** – CRDA and Global are meeting with David Benedict and the UConn Athletic Department on October 20<sup>th</sup> for a mid-season review of game-day changes made at UConn’s request. Any additional changes could further impact the Stadium budget.

Mr. Jorgensen noted that he thought the game day experience had improved since last season, but he has concerns about parking and the impact the planned outlet mall will have on patrons. He suggested that a high-level meeting between the State, UConn, UTC and Pratt be convened to resolve parking issues at the Stadium. He also noted that parking issues may impact UConn’s potential to move into a better league. Mr. Freimuth noted that such discussions have occurred to some extent and that additional lots had been secured for this season’s larger games.

### 3. Convention Center –

**Budget Update** - The Convention Center has performed ahead of budget projections. The building is expected to do well in the current year, with a significant number of events booked.

**Capital Improvements** – Work on the new box offices and video board should be completed shortly.

### 4. Tennis Center

**Tournament Report** – Mr. Freimuth reminded Committee members of the two-step CRDA approval process for the CT Open: the Venue Committee, and then the larger Board, are to vote this fall on whether to move ahead with next year’s Tournament. A second vote would be taken in the spring to authorize the 2018 event.

Ms. Layedra reported that not all of the 2016 expense numbers have been received and therefore final numbers on the Tournament are not yet available. She believed, however, that the tournament was “coming in around budget” and that significant operational savings were achieved due to capital improvements made in the building. The annual tournament audit is to start next week and should be completed by the end of November. A report will be presented to the Tennis Foundation Board in December and then to the CRDA Board in January.

For the upcoming year, the tournament will retain \$1.5 million in sponsorship revenue from UTC, Yale and Yale-New Haven Hospital, but work is needed to secure additional sponsors. Ms. Layedra reported that because the tournament staff will be able to occupy their office space year round and will not need to relocate for the winter, leasing expenses can be eliminated from the budget. Additional revenue may result from leasing of the tennis facility for non-tournament events. Ms. Layedra also noted that ESPN is expected to cover every match of the tournament and that could increase revenue to the tournament. The tournament is also looking to switch to a Connecticut-based caterer in order to improve food offerings and potentially increase revenue.

Mr. Geremia offered that in the three years CRDA has been involved with the Tennis Center, the Tournament has netted \$400k (2014), lost \$400k (2015) and is likely to break even for 2016.

Committee members questioned how long CRDA's subsidy for the Tournament should continue. Mr. Freimuth noted that for FY17, the CRDA subsidy was \$300k, half of what it was in FY14. He noted that the Tournament is making progress in reducing expenses and increasing revenue, but it was difficult to say when it might be self-sufficient.

Mr. Jorgensen noted their hiring of a new sponsorship director was a positive step and expressed his belief that the tournament could become self-sufficient. He cautioned, however, about CRDA withdrawing its support too soon.

Mr. Freimuth reminded Committee members that UTC sponsorship has been critical to keeping the Tournament running and hard questions will need to be addressed should that sponsorship expire after 2017.

Following this discussion, a resolution recommending the CRDA Board move forward with the 2017 Tournament was moved and approved on a voice vote.

The next meeting / conference call of the Venue Committee is scheduled for November 11, 2016, however it will be changed to November 10<sup>th</sup>.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.