

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Wednesday, October 23, 2013  
2:30 PM**

**PRESENT:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood (via telephone), David Jorgensen, and Floyd Green.

**Staff:** Michael Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro, Kim Hart, and Joseph Geremia

**Guests:** Antonio Roberto (Connecticut Innovations) and Chris Lawrence (Global Spectrum).

The meeting was called to order at 2:53 PM by Committee Chairman Bessette

1. Minutes from the April 23, 2013 and June 11, 2013 Venue Committee Meetings were approved (Moved by Mr. Jorgensen, seconded by Mr. Green – approved unanimously).
2. XL Center Operations Budget

Mr. Bessette requested an overview of the committee's role in relation to the XL Center's operations budget. Mr. Freimuth informed the committee of a meeting he attended in which a partnership between CRDA and UCONN was discussed. Items such as ticketing, event types, number of events, capital improvements to the XL Center and Rentschler Field and a commitment to Hartford were raised.

Mr. Freimuth presented the XL Center revised budget for FY 2014. Mr. Bessette, Mr. Jorgensen and Mr. Green asked numerous questions concerning specific line items. In response, Mr. Lawrence reviewed details relating to the building's service charges and event expenses including the cost of police, fire and EMT services. Mr. Freimuth indicated that Global Spectrum had compared the event expenses to other facilities that they manage and described some variances. Mr. Roberto indicated that the budget presented was in-line with his prior experience with the facility.

Mr. Bessette outlined the three major areas discussed: building operations, concession operations and sponsorships, both for advertising and premium seating. He asked for a discussion on operating the center going forward. Mr. Green suggested a focus on tapping

new markets. Mr. Bessette agreed and indicated that positive financial results would be driven in all three areas by focusing on the need for increased attendance numbers. Mr. Lawrence stated that he would reach out to UCONN to discuss how Global Spectrum can help market and sell group tickets. Mr. Freimuth expressed his concern for locking in an agreement with UCONN for future event years soon. The committee asked Mr. Lawrence to review the proposed capital improvement plans with UCONN as well.

3. Adjourned at 3:54 PM

**APPROVED 02-07-14**



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**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Wednesday, January 16, 2013**

**PRESENT VIA TELEPHONE:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, David Jorgenson, Michael Matteo, and Floyd Green.

**Staff:** Michael Freimuth, Anthony Lazzaro, and Kim Hart

**Volunteers:** John Shemo (Hartford Metro Alliance), Antonio Roberto ("CT Innovations") and Jared Kupiac ("City of Hartford")

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by Committee Chairman Bessette

1. Executive Session – Committee Chairman Bessette requested a motion for the Venue Committee to enter Executive Session for the reasons outlined in the Agenda item #1. The motion was moved by Mr. Jorgensen, seconded by Mr. Matteo, and unanimously approved by the Committee. Present staff and volunteers were invited to provide testimony and opinion.
2. Adjourned at 10:35 AM

***Unanimously approved February 6, 2013***



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**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Friday, February 7, 2014  
1:00 PM**

**PRESENT VIA TELEPHONE:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, David Jorgensen, Mike Matteo, and Floyd Green.

**Staff:** Anthony Lazzaro (**Boardroom**) and Kim Hart

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM by Committee Chairman Bessette

1. Minutes from the October 23, 2013 Venue Committee Meeting were approved (Moved by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Matteo – approved unanimously).

2. Venue Updates

Ms. Hart provided a brief overview of the events under consideration at the XL Center and Rentschler Field. The Committee emphasized its desire to assist Global Spectrum in their efforts to attract major events to the venues, in particular, international soccer. Mr. Matteo requested that a pipeline report be provided to the Committee at future meetings.

Mr. Lazzaro provided an update as to the progress of the various capital improvements projects occurring at the Convention Center as well as the status of the funding agreement for the Tennis Foundation of Connecticut.

3. Next meeting – Friday March 7th at 1:00 PM
4. Adjourned at 1:35 PM

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Friday, March 7, 2014  
1:00 PM**

**PRESENT VIA TELEPHONE:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, David Jorgensen, Mike Matteo, Floyd Green and Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood

**Staff:** Executive Director Mike Freimuth, Joe Geremia, Lauren Vaz, Anthony Lazzaro, Bob Saint and Kim Hart

**Others:** Chris Lawrence, General Manager, Global Spectrum

The meeting was called to order at 1:10 pm by Committee Chairman Bessette.

1. XL Center
  - a. Mr. Saint provided an update on capital improvements in the building. Construction drawings are expected to be completed in late April and, with the exception of some early release packages, construction work will begin May or June. Dimeo Construction is now under contract as construction manager for the project. They believe that all of the work can be completed by October 2014, but staff expect that certain components will not be completed until after that date.
  - b. Mr. Freimuth reported that lease negotiations are ongoing with UConn for hockey and basketball games at XL next year. There is a general agreement on the lease terms related to number of games, premium dates/teams and Global assistance with ticket sales. The details of such still need to be worked out.
2. Minutes from the February 7, 2014 Venue Committee Meeting were approved (Moved by Mr. Jorgensen, seconded by Mr. Green – approved unanimously).
3. XL Center, continued

- a. Mr. Geremia reported on recent attendance numbers for Wolfpack Hockey, as well as UConn Men's and Women's Basketball. Numbers have improved from earlier in the season.
- b. Mr. Lawrence reported on events currently being pursued by Global for the building. A bid to host the AAC Men's Basketball tournament during the next four years has been submitted. While Mr. Lawrence believes that Memphis, the 2014 host, will be selected again in 2015, there may be opportunities in the out years.

#### 4. Rentschler Field

- a. Ms. Hart reported the Stadium is operating on budget and Global continues to look for additional events to put into the building.
- b. Mr. Lawrence reported on events being pursued by Global for the Stadium, including an international soccer game this summer. We have received inquiries about a spring professional football league, as well as a NASL soccer team. Mr. Matteo inquired whether Global has approached any MSL teams about using the Stadium. Both he and Mr. Bessette offered to assist Global with league contacts.

#### 5. Convention Center

- a. Mr. Freimuth reported that the building is performing at expected levels and that parking revenue was strong this month.

#### 6. Tennis Center

- a. Mr. Freimuth reported that a group of staff were meeting with Tennis Center staff, as well as representatives of Global and Ovations, on Monday March 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss how we can assist the Center, particularly with food service.

#### 7. Long Term Planning for Possible New Arena

- a. Mr. Freimuth informed Committee members that staff would be compiling a draft work plan to be presented at the next Venue Committee meeting. He asked Committee members to start thinking about what they feel the key issues are and who from outside of CRDA should be involved in the process.
- b. Committee members discussed the importance of understanding our options with regard to securing a professional team (NHL or NBA) before we commit to building a new facility. Staff will look into potential consultants to assist with this process and identify other cities that may have gone through the process of securing a new team and/or dealt with the "refurbish vs new construction" question.
- c. Committee members agreed that community involvement in both securing a team and siting/designing a new facility was critical.

d. Members also agreed that the next scheduled Venue Committee Meeting (April 4<sup>th</sup>) would be devoted to a discussion of this process. Members were encouraged to attend in person.

8. The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.

**CRDA Venue Committee Meeting Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Friday, April 4, 2014  
1:00 PM**

**PRESENT:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, David Jorgensen and Commissioner Catherine Smith, CRDA Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood (via telephone)

**Staff:** Executive Director Mike Freimuth, Joe Geremia, Lauren Vaz, Anthony Lazzaro, Bob Saint and Kim Hart

**Others:** Frank Russo

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 pm by Committee Chairman Bessette.

**1. New Arena Discussion**

- a. The Committee discussed the various studies that had been done on the existing Hartford arena and the feasibility of constructing a new arena.
- b. Mr. Freimuth noted that a new study is not needed, but rather a “refreshment” of one or more of the existing studies. He suggested that the Board focus on determining *what* we want to building and *where*, and then determine *how* (i.e., with what financing).
- c. Mr. Jorgensen suggested that a new arena needs to be large enough to accommodate an NHL team. He also raised concerns about building too small a facility that might stand in direct competition with Mohegan Sun for shows.
- d. Board members discussed the importance of determining whether the existing building can be salvaged. Mr. Saint noted that the existing building is too small and we are unable to add the requisite number of rest rooms and other amenities within the building footprint. He noted that the cast-in-place concrete structure cannot be salvaged and would require demolition. Mr. Saint also advised the Committee that it was critical to get an architect on board “sooner rather than later” to address such questions.



- e. Mr. Russo suggested that in terms of general guidelines, a new arena should be teardrop-shaped with 10,000 seats in the lower bowl and premium seating located close to the arena floor. He also noted that locating the new arena within a larger entertainment district would be key.
- f. Mr. Jorgensen raised concerns about locating a new arena too close to the highway system, as it would discourage arena patrons from visiting other restaurants and businesses in the City.
- g. Mr. Freimuth raised concerns about building on the existing site and the potential economic impact of closing the arena for two to three years for construction.
- h. Committee members agreed that UConn's involvement would be critical to the success of a new arena and that the University needs to be at the table during the planning process.
- i. Action item: Committee members directed staff to interview arena/venue firms, including Populous and BBB (as suggested by Mr. Russo), and see what they can offer. An update of the existing arena studies should be included in their scope.
- j. In terms of economic analysis of an arena, it was suggested that Global and DECD could be of assistance when the time came.
- k. Chairman Bessette suggested that representatives of the CRDA Board meet with both NHL and NBA commissioners to express Hartford's interest in acquiring a team and to gauge their leagues' interest in Hartford. Mr. Russo offered to help set up such meetings and Committee members agreed that the Governor's office needed to be kept in the loop.
- l. Committee members engaged in a brief discussion about who else should be at the table during the planning process and the City, UConn and the local business community were thought to be key players.
- m. Mr. Freimuth advised the Committee members that the planning schedule would be tight and that the Board should come to some decision on the new arena by January of 2015 if there was a desire to seek legislative action.

## **2. Other Venues**

- a. Mr. Freimuth closed the meeting with brief updates on XL operations, Rentschler Field, the Convention Center and the Tennis Center.

## **3. Next Meeting – Conference Call on May 2, 2014 at 1:00**

A motion was made to adjourn by Mr. Jorgensen and seconded by Commissioner Smith. The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 p.m.

**CRDA Venue Committee Conference Call Minutes**  
**Connecticut Convention Center**  
**100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor**  
**Hartford, CT 06103**  
**Friday, May 2, 2014**  
**1:00 PM**

**PRESENT ON CALL:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, David Jorgensen and CRDA Board Chair Suzanne Hopgood

**Staff:** Executive Director Mike Freimuth, Bob Saint and Kim Hart

**Others:** Chris Lawrence and Frank Russo (Global Spectrum)

The meeting was called to order at 1:07 pm by Committee Chairman Bessette and the minutes of the April 4th meeting were approved by voice vote.

**1. Venue Updates** – Mr. Freimuth gave a brief report on each of the venues:

- a. XL Center Capital Improvements – Bid packages are on the street and we expect to award contracts by the end of the month.
- b. XL Center Operations - A meeting has been scheduled with Northland to discuss issues related to common areas.
- c. Rentschler Field – A game between the U.S. women’s national soccer team and France has been scheduled for June 19<sup>th</sup>.
- d. Tennis Center – The Governor will be making an announcement next week regarding a major new sponsor for the Tournament.

**2. General Business**

- a. Mr. Jorgensen suggested that Venue Committee meetings be moved to 2:00 p.m. Committee members will be polled to see if the time change is acceptable.
- b. Members agreed that Ms. Hopgood will be added as a formal member of the Venue Committee.

### **3. New Arena Discussion**

- a. Mr. Freimuth updated the Committee on meetings held with three architectural firms (AECOM, BBB and Populous) earlier this week. The firms were asked to present their thoughts as to what was happening in the arena industry and highlight any experience they had renovating buildings of similar age and condition as the XL Center. Each of the firms toured the facility and offered their informal assessment of the building and current footprint.
- b. At least two of the firms believe we can “reboot” the existing facility and don’t necessarily need to start from scratch with a new building. Providence was cited as an example of a facility where major renovations were done within a confined footprint – Mr. Freimuth suggested a site visit would be helpful.
- c. Mr. Russo, who also participated in the meetings, suggested that all three firms were capable and have the appropriate experience with these types of facilities. He’s worked with BBB in the past, however, and felt they stood out amongst the others.
- d. The Committee agreed that an RFP seeking more concrete proposals from these firms was the logical next step. In order to meet the 2016 deadline for discussions on the future of the XL Center, the RFP would need to be issued this summer and feasibility work by the selected firm completed by the end of the 2014.

### **4. Next Meeting – Conference Call on June 6, 2014**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:48 p.m.

**CRDA Venue Committee Conference Call Minutes  
Connecticut Convention Center  
100 Columbus Boulevard, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Hartford, CT 06103  
Friday, June 6, 2014  
1:00 PM**

**PRESENT ON CALL:**

**Directors:** Committee Chairman Andy Bessette, Suzanne Hopgood, Floyd Green, Darrell Hill, David Jorgensen and Mike Matteo.

**Staff:** Executive Director Mike Freimuth, Tony Lazzaro and Kim Hart

The meeting was called to order at 1:14 pm by Committee Chairman Bessette and the minutes of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting were approved by voice vote.

**1. New Arena RFP –**

- a. Mr. Freimuth asked Committee members for feedback on the draft Arena Programming and Construction Feasibility RFP that had been distributed prior to the meeting. Members reported that they had no substantive questions or comments.
- b. Mr. Freimuth indicated that his preference was a re-boot of the current XL Center based on new industry requirements. He believes that the best approach is to design and price a re-boot and then compare costs with that of a new building incorporated the same features. A site for a new building would not be need to be selected for the sake of this comparison.
- c. Mr. Freimuth reported that the goal is to have a report from the selected firm by the end of the calendar year and a preliminary plan in place for the start of the 2015 Legislative session.

2. **Tennis Center** - Mr. Freimuth reported that a new major sponsor for the New Haven Open will be announced next week. The sponsorship deal will provide \$1.5 million to the tournament over the next two years.

3. **XL Center Murals** – Mr. Freimuth reported that a loan agreement providing for the relocation of the Bearden murals to the Hartford Public Library will be presented to the CRDA Board for approval at the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting.
4. **UConn** – Mr. Freimuth reported that negotiations continue with UConn on lease agreements for the XL Center and Rentschler Field. The number of basketball games to be played at XL and the funding of deficits at the Stadium remain issues. UConn Athletic Director Warde Manuel will be meeting with the Metro-Hartford Alliance next week and Alliance members are expected to lobby for a larger UConn presence at XL.
5. **Next Meeting** – Conference Call on July 11, 2014

The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.