

RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY  
MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024 AT 12:00 PM

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A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority (hereinafter referred to as "Authority" "the CCA" or the "Board" was held on December 17, 2024. The meeting was held in the McCarvill Boardroom, Second Floor, Rhode Island Convention Center, pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center, One Sabin Street, Providence, RI and the Amica Mutual Pavilion, One LaSalle Square, Providence, RI.

Board members in attendance were Dale Venturini, Paul MacDonald, Jeffrey Hirsh, Peter Mancini, and Carol Lombardi

Board members not in attendance: Ernest Almonte, George Nee, Oscar Vargas, Diony Garcia, Esq., and Jennifer Goodrich Coia, Esq.

Others participating were Daniel McConaghy Convention Center Authority; Dan Schwartz, Mike Gravison The VETS; Lawrence Lepore, Cheryl Cohen, Veronica Van Jura, Becca Ponder, Casey Hoover, Hannah Capece, and Christina Montanaro Convention Center and AMP; Kristen Adamo and Tom Riel, PWCVB; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; and Debra Polselli, Recording Secretary.

1. Call to Order

**Ms. Venturini** called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

2. Announcement of Next Meeting Date

**Ms. Venturini** stated that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, January 28, 2025 at 12:00 p.m.

3. Approval of November 2024 Marketing Committee Meeting Minutes

**Ms. Venturini** requested a motion to approve the November 2024 Marketing Meeting Minutes. Upon a motion from **Mr. MacDonald**, which was seconded by **Mr. Hirsh**, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the minutes of the November Marketing Committee meeting.

4. Marketing Updates

a. PWCVB – Kristen Adamo/Tom Riel

Mr. Riel reviewed the PWCVB November report before the Committee (see attached). He stated that they were off to a strong fiscal year with nineteen (19) new bookings, six (6) of which will take place at the Convention Center. He reported that 61% of the definite room nights are associated with Convention Center bookings. He further reported that the TID-funded promotion incentive is working with 28 definite bookings at the Convention Center, which is down from last year, but room nights are 33% higher. He then reviewed 2025/2026 bookings at the Convention Center. Mr. Lepore questioned if they will actually be doing tattoos at the Tattoo Convention next Summer, and Ms. Hoover replied yes. She stated that it took the client awhile to go through the RI Department of Health's processes. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned Mr. Riel about the RI Indian Council event and if it was a government event that would receive a discount, and Mr. Riel replied that they in fact have a \$155 per diem hotel rate that was secured for their event. Mr. Riel then reported that the CVB met with a potential client who came to Providence because Providence hosted the ATLAS Convention. He stated that meeting planners are talking about small cities like Providence to host their annual meetings and conventions. Mr. Riel then discussed future prospects and that new pricing increases for rental rates and food and beverage are currently being reflected in new proposals and contracts, and once confirmed, they will be able to show the overall increase in average spending. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned how food and beverage costs increase, and Ms. Ponder replied that there is a percentage increase every year, and we incentivize them to sign sooner rather than later to lock in food and beverage prices. **Ms. Venturini** questioned if there is a clause in the contract that would protect us if something crazy happens in this area, and Ms. Ponder replied there are high guarantees that need to be met. Mr. Riel commented that food and beverage minimums have doubled in the last five (5) years. Mr. Riel then reviewed the highlights stating that staff is out and about being seen at industry conferences and they have hosted some events as well. He commented that the TID-funded promotion is working.

**Mr. Hirsh** asked Mr. Riel to explain this promotion. Mr. Riel stated that there are minimum thresholds of room nights on peak nights, and an incentive passes onto their "account" at the Convention Center. For example, if \$750k is spent, a \$20k payment will be made on their behalf to the Convention Center to offset their venue expenses. Money is not paid directly to the client. Mr. Lepore asked about hotel room rates during Brown University's graduation weekend and stated that because rates are so high in the City people might think that is always the rate here. Mr. Riel understood but explained that all the hotels get these kinds of rates when something big is going on. Mr. Riel then reported on Threshold360 which is a program that provides a virtual tour of our space that can be sent to potential clients. **Ms. Venturini** asked if we could show this virtual tour at the Board meeting. Mr. McConaghy stated that they are planning to show renovations and Mr. Riel commented that clients are happy about what is coming. Ms. Adamo then reported on Bandwagon, which is a mobile passport platform for meeting and convention groups that are in town. She stated that this is something we have been wanting to do and are finally able to do so. She then reported that the CVB is working on several promotions that they are excited about including Three Nights of Lights, Dinner and Show, as well as a soft launch of the culinary festival they are working on with Johnson & Wales University that will take place in March 2025. She stated that there is local and national coverage for this event.

b. AMP/RICC – Cheryl Cohen/Becca Ponder

Ms. Cohen reviewed the AMP November report before the Committee (see attached). She reported that the next couple of weeks will be busy with hockey, basketball, Disney on Ice, and Harlem Globetrotters. She reported that Sebastian Maniscalco and two (2) NCAA Tournaments will take place in March 2025. Mr. McConaghy questioned the NCAA Wrestling Tournament and how it will do since it is the first time we will be hosting this Tournament. Ms. Cohen replied that we think it will do well but it all depends on what schools are in the Tournament. She stated that there are competitions in Massachusetts that are taking place at the same time, and we are trying to coordinate with them to have their weigh-ins at the AMP. She reported that there will be a LOC kick off meeting tomorrow for NCAA Basketball. She further reported that Kane Brown in April is good business, and Barry Manilow just announced his Farewell tour and that tickets go on sale December 20. She reported that November was pretty impressive with good per caps, and we are looking at more social media analytics with OVG but we need to give it a little time. She further reported that we are working on some new initiatives with the Friar Family Collective and parking app and also providing support during holiday time giving back to those less fortunate. She stated that we worked with Amica on a food drive for Thanksgiving and also worked with Tide Family Services during Christmas, which over 240 gifts were collected for 10 kids and 4 moms/guardians, far exceeding last year's 125 gifts. Mr. McConaghy stated that he would have Ms. Cohen present this at the upcoming Board meeting.

Ms. Ponder then addressed the Committee and everyone welcomed her back. Ms. Ponder thanked Ms. Hoover and Ms. Corcoran for presenting on her behalf during her absence. Ms. Ponder then reviewed the RICC November report before the Committee (see attached). She reported that December is typically a slow month, and they are undergoing renovations. She reviewed contracted business and the yearly recap. She reported that there were 147 different events throughout the year and March was a big month with \$2.2 million in revenue. **Mr. Hirsh** asked if she could choose two (2) segments that are the easiest to produce, what would they be, and Ms. Ponder replied conference and trade shows which bring in good business and has us supporting everyone and public shows, which are easy and make money. She cited the Oddities and Curiosities public show that is an untapped market that did very well and they have already signed for next year. Ms. Ponder then reported on reviews from patrons and clients and the increase in the Convention Center's social media stats.

c. The Vets – Dan Schwartz/Mike Gravison

Mr. Gravison reviewed The Vets November report before the Committee (see attached). He reported on upcoming events and that they are doing well at The Vets with their regular programming. Mr. Schwartz then recognized Mr. Gravison for all his hard work and dedication to the new Lil Rhode Laugh Riot festival that will take place in March 2025. He stated that they have been talking about it for a long time and received a lot of support and that it is exciting to bring this to a reality. He reported that last Thursday was the big reveal that it is happening and there was a feature article in Variety. **Mr. Hirsh** asked how they were able to obtain a feature article in Variety, and Mr. Schwartz replied that the contacts at DKC, which is the firm that was hired by them to get them where they needed to be for this event, arranged for the feature article through their contacts. He reported that the artists are excited about this event and the agents are impressed. He stated that it is a huge deal that a lot of local talent get to open up for these headlining comedians. Mr. Schwartz further stated that he hoped this Comedy Festival would be an annual event. Mr. McConaghy stated that he sees the Comedy Connection club listed and Mr. Schwartz stated that there will be another round of announcements in mid-January. Mr. Schwartz further stated that there will be an element tying in the CVB's culinary festival. Ms. Adamo stated that there will be a schedule announcement on January 27. **Ms. Venturini** asked how much money they received from the Providence Tourism Council to support this event, and Mr. Schwartz replied \$5k. She then asked how much they received from Commerce and Mr. Schwartz replied \$200k. **Ms. Venturini** stated that she is hearing how exciting it is and not why there are two (2) events going on at the same time.

Mr. Gravison stated that DKC has “sold” this festival as a destination, not just an event. **Ms. Venturini** asked about other comedy festivals, and Mr. Schwartz replied that there was one in Montreal and Boston has a small one while New York hosts a comedy fest across all five (5) boroughs. Ms. Adamo stated that the dates were chosen because there was a window that needed to be filled, and they put significant resources behind it. Mr. Schwartz stated that they are happy with the response they have received thus far. **Ms. Venturini** stated the importance of talking about the collaboration and everyone working together. Ms. Adamo stated it has been terrific working with everyone, and Mr. Schwartz stated it is the reason why they created the website – to show everything going on. **Mr. Mancini** asked about support from the City, and Mr. Schwartz replied that the Mayor’s office is very excited and that they are eager to help in any way they could without a financial contribution. Ms. Adamo stated that we need to prove ourselves the first year and then gauge events when requesting financial support in the future. **Mr. Hirsh** questioned hotel occupancy and is there a way to determine what is related to culinary event and comedy festival, and Ms. Adamo stated that they could look to see if there is a way to determine that data.

## 5. Executive Director’s Report

### a. Review & Consideration of Rolling Strategic Plan 2025-2027

Mr. McConaghy reviewed the Authority’s 2025-2027 Rolling Strategic Plan (see attached). He stated that he has received a lot of great feedback, and we will be doing another proof or two and then it will be ready to be distributed with the Authority’s approval. He stated that a full range of people will receive this and that they had waited on post-election results to get a complete list of names and addresses. **Ms. Venturini** asked if this piece will be distributed by mail and Mr. McConaghy replied yes. **Mr. Mancini** asked that his middle initial be added to his name. Mr. McConaghy stated that there is a lot of good information contained in this plan. **Ms. Venturini** asked if it was going to be printed professionally, and Ms. Cohen replied yes. **Mr. Hirsh** asked if our biggest clients would be receiving one, and Ms. Cohen stated that the primary tenants at the AMP as well as Amica Insurance would receive one, among many others. Mr. McConaghy stated that they are working on the list of recipients and that it is not scheduled to go out until sometime in January.

**Ms. Venturini** asked for a motion to approve the proposed 2025-2027 Rolling Strategic Plan as presented with minor changes indicated. Upon a motion duly made by **Mr. Hirsh**, which was seconded by **Mr. Mancini**, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to approve the Authority’s 2025-2027 Rolling Strategic Plan.

## 6. Adjournment

**Ms. Venturini** asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by **Mr. Mancini**, which was seconded by **Ms. Lombardi**, it was unanimously

**VOTED:** to adjourn at 1:14 p.m.