

**THE RHODE ISLAND CONVENTION CENTER AUTHORITY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MARKETING COMMITTEE MEETING**

December 16, 2004

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority Board of Commissioners was held on December 16, 2004 pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center Boardroom, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Board members present were Chairman Dale Venturini, Authority Chairman, Dave Duffy and Commissioner, Jerry Massa.

Also in attendance were Jim McCarvill, RICCA; George Donnelly, Jackie Nowell, Maria Sanchez, PWCVB; Tim Muldoon and John McGinn, RICC; Joanne Sourial, Jennifer Leigh, The Link Agency; Brien Fox, Westin Providence; Larry Brutt; Evan Smith, Newport CVB; David DePetrillo and Richard Soares, Rhode Island Tourism and Eileen Smith, Recording Secretary.

Ms. Venturini, recognizing a quorum, called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

Chairman Venturini sought a motion to approve the minutes of the October meeting.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Duffy and seconded by Mr. Massa it

was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes as distributed.

Ms. Venturini informed the committee that because of a previous commitment, Mr. Donnelly had asked to be first on the agenda. Noting no objections, Mr. Donnelly proceeded to introduce Jackie Nowell and Maria Sanchez of the PWCVB. Mr. Donnelly reported that they have been working on upgrading the web presentation for the destination. Mr. Massa asked how many hits are received on the site. Ms. Nowell said that there were 800,000 hits in November. Mr. Donnelly noted that conversations had taken place between the CVB and the Convention Center about sharing a full time person to maintain the data base and the web site. Mr. Massa asked if you will be able to tell where the hits are coming from. Ms. Nowell said that you can track where the hits are originating from and where they are visiting in the site. Mr. Massa noted that the CVB could be pro-active in contacting meeting planners that had visited the site. Ms. Venturini wanted to know if invitations to visit or hotel reservations could be made through the site. Mr. Donnelly said not at present and that if we are going to use the web we need to do it right and make a financial commitment. Ms. Venturini asked when the new web site would be launched. Mr. Donnelly replied that he is looking at some time in March. Ms. Nowell reported that the CVB had hosted a FAM tour of travel writers who were favorably impressed by the destination.

Ms. Venturini asked Mr. Brien Fox to update the committee on marketing initiatives for the hotel. Mr. Fox reported that the winter promotions are going well. He continued that the New Year's Eve promotion includes a one or two night stay and tickets to Bright Night. Mr. Massa asked if the Private Dining Room is being marketed. Mr. Fox said that Biswas has done a great job of marketing the Agora Private Dining Room and has also increased the average check. Biswas has sold the room for private parties at prices ranging from \$85 to \$90 per person. He also reported that bookings for Holiday parties are going well.

Ms. Venturini then asked Tammy Brunette of the Capital Club to address the committee. Ms. Brunette thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss the fitness center and explained that the Capital Club has seen a reduction in membership and is due for some serious marketing attention. She asked for suggestions and assistance from the marketing committee and the hotel marketing department. Mr. Massa suggested that the rate charged to the hotel guest be increased. Mr. Fox stated that the room rate is high and the guest expects to be able to use the facilities at a reasonable rate. Ms. Venturini asked how many members were lost to the facility at Davol Square. Ms. Brunette estimated a 20% loss in membership due to Davol Square and other fitness centers that have opened or renovated in recent months. Ms. Brunette said that some of the lost membership may return to the Capital Club once their reduced rate at Davol Square expires. Ms. Venturini said perhaps the Capital Club

should be considered a guest amenity and not a revenue stream. Mr. Duffy suggested that Ms. Brunette look at her membership base and concentrate her marketing efforts on downtown businesses. Mr. Massa said that the hotel should attempt to increase guest participation. Mr. Duffy noted that it is obvious that the Club is aiming toward an up-scale membership. Ms. Brunette informed the committee that she now advertises in Lawyer's Weekly and is investigating other means of reaching the Providence business district. Ms. Sourial asked if there was any incentive offered for a yearly membership. Mr. Massa asked if there was any incentive to renewal. Ms. Brunette answered that there were no incentives at the moment but will consider several options. Mr. Duffy asked Ms. Brunette to provide the committee with the demographics on the members. He said that the Club deserves the attention of the committee.

John McGinn reported on marketing programs at the Convention Center. He said that because Ms. Venturini suggested contacting the local military there is a strong possibility that the Military Ball will be held at the Convention Center. Ms. Venturini said that the ball has out grown the space at the Hotel Viking and the Convention Center would be the perfect venue. Mr. McGinn also reported that the Women & Infants event that was held recently in the new ballroom was a great success. Mr. McGinn then presented a television commercial that had been prepared for the wedding market. Ms. Nowell asked if the ballroom would also be used for weddings since

the ad focused on the rotunda room. Mr. McGinn said that the rotunda room and the ballroom are being targeted for weddings.

Ms. Venturini recognized Dave DePetrillo of the Rhode Island Tourism Division. Mr. DePetrillo read his report as follows: the Division's Spring/Summer Marketing campaign will kick off in March with an integrated program of print advertising in 19 publications, we'll be running our TV spots in the New York DMA with targeted cable buys, backed up by online media buys as well with added value custom emails, contests, and banners in email travel newsletters. He continued that Rhode Island had a high profile at the National Tour Association Marketplace last month. He said that as is already known Rhode Island Tourism Division is the sponsor of the badges, so everyone walks around with the RI logo. In addition to scheduled appointments with tour operators Rhode Island coordinated a booth with our tourism regions that served up hot Kenyon's Johnnycakes. It lured the operators in by the hundreds so our Rhode Island delegates got some valuable extra schmooze time with them. It was such a hit that a representative from the ABA asked us to repeat the booth at their Marketplace in February -- so we grabbed that opportunity. Rhode Island has a two page co-op spread in Group Tour Magazine's December issue, which is distributed to 15,000 group travel planners including tour operators, travel agents, group leaders and bank travel groups. In International Marketing since last reported we participated in a very successful sales mission to Scotland and England with Discover New England. Last month we were at World Travel Market

in London where the six New England states have a booth under the DNE banner. As you know the strong Euro is boosting inbound tourism, so we are well positioned to benefit here in NE and RI. We unveiled our latest Rhode Island co-op effort with the back cover of the New England Visitor's Guide, which was inserted into November's Essentially America, a top UK travel magazine. Publications - The 2005 Official Rhode Island Travel Guide has been put to bed and will be going to the printers. We publish this magazine guide with Rhode Island Monthly and produce it with regional and private sector support. We're also finalizing our Spring/Summer Events Guide, and Visitor's Guide, both rack-size brochures. Mr. DePetrillo reported that Our VisitRhodelsland website continues to be our star performer. Just through October we have already far surpassed total unique visits in 2003 and actual leads. With two months not yet counted we already had a 25% increase in leads. Several months I mentioned that we have a very talented staff member rebuilding our web site and helping to take us to another level both for the consumer and the back end. The web site restructuring will also enable us to leverage our lead database and expand this marketing tool to drive new business. Mr. Richard Soares tried to explain the web site infrastructure which allows the operator to gather information on users and track where they are going. After attempting to educate the committee on the web's many advantages Mr. Soares was asked by Ms. Venturini to present a demonstration at a future meeting. Evan Smith of the Newport CVB commented that Newport business follows leisure travel. He asked if there could be a place on the site or a link

or bridge for business travel planning. Mr. DePetrillo said that could be arranged. He said that the principal of this group is sharing. Mr. Smith distributed pamphlets and coupon books for events taking place in Newport during the Holiday Season

Ms. Venturini recognized Joanne Sourial of The Link Agency. Ms. Sourial reported that the agency had distributed over 250 media packets to key press in the medical, hospitality, food & restaurant and meeting & convention industries as well as top daily and weekly newspapers in New England. She continued that the agency has spent a good deal of time calling and building relationships with reporters. Ms. Sourial provided a list of the current leads (attached). Ms. Sourial said that to more accurately monitor for coverage resulting from her outreach, the PWCVB has agreed to continue searching for results from their clipping service for mentions of the Rhode Island Convention Center. Ms. Sourial stated that to more specifically target the Meeting & Convention Trade publications we have developed a trade “hot sheet” that features several story angles: Why Providence is a great place to have a medical meeting or trade show. The RICC as the best Union Labor environment in the Northeast and The RICC as a venue for national shows with a regional draw.

Other PR activities reported by Ms. Sourial included: Contacted Pam Thomas of the Providence Journal to secure coverage of the RICC as a wedding venue in the Sunday, January 16th Projo wedding issue,

continuing to follow-up and Continuing to work with the PWCVB to plan the Food FAM trip tentatively scheduled for early May.

Ms. Sourial reported that The Agency and PWCVB met with the Providence Business News to discuss a potential partnership in featuring highlights and commentary on the hospitality and meeting & convention industries through a combination of paid advertising and editorial support content.

- Calendar Listings, ongoing (with or without financial commitment)**
- Advertorial on Op-Ed pages**
- 2005 Book of Lists**

Ms. Sourial noted that The “Sox Spectacular” collector's event will be at the Convention Center this weekend. The event will feature members of the 2004 World Champion Boston Red Sox including: Johnny Damon, Manny Ramirez, David Ortiz, Terry Francona, Tim Wakefield, Kevin Millar, Doug Mientkiewicz, Dave Roberts, Curt Leskanic, Bronson Arroyo and Mike Myers. She stated that the Agency had developed a press release and distributed it to Sports & Sports Collector trade magazines, as well as local and regional media outlets, received interest from many local media and Sports trade media and arranged to have press passes for key media attending event on Saturday to waive the \$20 admission.

Ms. Sourial reported that the Agency is working on developing a press release for the escalator opening to be distributed in early

January, doing media outreach for coverage on the Providence Boat Show and Northeast International Auto Show and develop a 1st Quarter preview of events at the Convention Center for trade media. The Agency is also working on securing attendance of media at Ballroom/client party in January and continue to work with CVB in planning “food-focused” FAM trip

Ms. Venturini announced that the next meeting would be held on January 14, 2005 at noon. She thanked everyone for their input and entertained a motion to adjourn.

Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Massa and seconded by Mr. Duffy it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn at 2:29 P.M.