

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

September 23, 2004

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority Board of Commissioners was held on September 23, 2004 at noon, pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center Boardroom, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Board members present were Committee Chairperson, Dale Venturini, Commissioners Jerry Massa, George Nee and Board Chairman David Duffy.

Also in attendance were Jim McCarvill, RICCA; George Donnelly, PWCVB; Tim Muldoon, RICC; Joanne Sourial, Tracy LeRoux, The Link Agency; Brien Fox, Westin Providence; Evan Smith, Newport CVB; Karen Jedson; Warwick Tourism; Dave DePetrillo; RIEDC; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel; Andrea Stape, Providence Journal and Eileen Smith, Recording Secretary.

Recognizing a quorum, Chairman Venturini called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m. Chairman Venturini announced that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, October 27th at noon.

Chairman Venturini sought a motion to approve the minutes of the

August meeting.

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

VOTED: To approve the minutes as distributed.

Ms. Venturini noted that the main function of the Marketing Committee is to get the stakeholders together and find ways to use our resources wisely. She said that to that end she has invited all members of the state's convention and visitors bureaus and tourism groups to participate in these meetings. She thanked Evan Smith of the Newport CVB for attending.

Brien Fox, the new Director of Sales for the Westin Hotel, addressed the committee stating the sales team is working on their marketing plan and that the plan will be available for the next meeting. He also stated that he would have the tracking results for e-marketing for the next meeting and that the future is looking good.

Ms. Venturini said that she would look forward to receiving the information. She then introduced Karen Jedson of Warwick Tourism to the committee. Ms. Jedson thanked Ms. Venturini for the invitation and stated that she would like to be kept informed of future meetings.

John McGinn updated the committee on the Festival of Trees event

being held in the Convention Center in early December. Mr. Duffy commented on the great preview of the event at the CVB's Annual Meeting. Mr. McGinn reported on an e-mail blitz newsletter that is targeting totally new leads. It was also noted that the Westin Providence is being featured to Starwood Preferred Guests. Mr. McGinn stated that July and August were great months. Mr. Duffy asked if the ballroom renovations have had any impact. Mr. McGinn said that they have scheduled events around the renovations. Ms. Venturini inquired about the results of Take Me 2 Tea. Mr. McGinn said that the customer was satisfied with the numbers and will be back next year. He continued that the numbers were approximately the same as those for the inaugural event in Las Vegas.

George Donnelly reported that Mr. Whiting and Mr. Shriever were unable to attend. He then reported on the CVB's marketing efforts. Mr. Donnelly reminded the committee of the upcoming site visit Hartford and Adriene's Landing. Ms. Venturini said that the Board would be polled to get a count of those making the visit. Mr. Donnelly noted that the new CVB Marketing Committee would be holding their first meeting next week.

Dave DePetrillo presented an update of the Rhode Island Tourism Division's activities and reported that the domestic and leisure marketing Fall print schedule began this month and the Tourism Division is launching their Fall Online Media Campaign the first week of October running four weeks. Mr. DePetrillo reported that The

Division's official web site, VisitRhodeIsland.com, continues to be their most important marketing tool. Year to date, the web site inquiries are up from 40% a year ago to 56% this year. Mr. DePetrillo noted that Rhode Island has a very strong presence at the major trade events for the group tour market and Katrina White is coordinating a Rhode Island two page spread in Group Tour Magazine's December issue that is sold out. Group Tour Magazine is distributed to 15,000 group travel planners including tour operators, travel agents, group leaders and bank travel groups. Mr. DePetrillo stated that RI Tourism has organized a sales mission to Scotland and England with Discover New England. Jayne Panarello will be in London in November for World Travel Market where the six New England states have a booth under the DNE banner. This is the biggest trade event in our biggest overseas market. At the show we'll unveil our latest Rhode Island co-op effort; we will again have the back cover of the New England Visitor's Guide, which will be inserted into November's Essentially America, a top UK travel magazine. We will have an ad designed by George Donnelly on the inside front cover of this month's Essentially America. We've had recent articles in the Boston Globe, NY Daily News, New Haven Register, and we have more coming up. Mr. DePetrillo reported that the Tourism Division is getting media inquiries daily for foliage and fall events. This coming Tuesday the Wall Street Journal will feature Rhode Island as a destination of value for leaf peepers. Mr. DePetrillo noted that a new electronic press kit for the state is being finalized that will include images and press information that we can easily transmit to the media. He continued

that leveraging of the lead database has been a big win. The web site restructuring is going help expand this marketing tool so that we can mine that database to drive new business. Mr. DePetrillo announced that the Fall/Winter Events Guide came out last month and has been produced in cooperation with RI monthly. The Providence/Warwick CVB has taken the back cover, which is a targeted cost-effective buy for them. He reported that the “More smiles per gallon” special promotion we did during the summer in cooperation with all of the regional tourism organizations resulted in \$21,000 in free publicity and nearly 35,000 downloads of discount coupons.

Evan Smith reported that Newport lodging revenue is up approximately 5% but attractions are reporting mixed results. He continued that the fall looks strong and they are working on a winter package. Mr. Smith noted that the Newport CVB is currently using the State logo on more of its collateral materials. He stated that the Convention Center has a link to Newport on their web site and the PWCVB and Convention Center link is available to visitors to the Newport site trying to attract pre and post meetings and conventions attendees to the area. He also noted his frustration that there are no regularly scheduled tour buses to Newport. Ms. Jedson reported that Warwick Tourism is also using the State logo and said that it is important to have that branding link.

Ms. Venturini commented that perhaps the tourism industry should speak with local weathermen and explain to them how the forecast

impacts tourism. She said that a more optimistic report or glass half full approach would be helpful.

Ms. Venturini asked Joanne Sourial to address the committee. Ms. Sourial distributed an outline of the work that has been done since the last meeting and reported on the plans that are being made for to highlight the ballroom renovations at the Convention Center and the press conference for the escalator project completion. Mr. McCarvill reminded Joanne that we need a constant flow of positive information stressing that the destination is a good place to do business.

Ms. Venturini thanked everyone for their participation. She then asked that the agenda be amended to include an Executive Closed Session to discuss responses to the RFP for a broker/advisor according to R.I.G.L §42-46-5(a).

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

VOTED: amend the agenda and convene in executive session in accordance with R.I.G.L §42-46-5(a) at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Massa –yes, Mr. Nee –yes, Mr. Duffy – yes, Ms. Venturini - yes

Open Session resumed at 1:57 P.M.

Discussions ensued regarding the effect of the hotel sale negotiations on hotel personnel. Concerns were voiced over threats to overall employee morale and the potential for problems with employee retention.

Noting that no votes were taken in Closed Session, Ms. Venturini entertained a motion seal the minutes of Executive Closed Session until matters have been resolved and adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Nee and seconded by Mr. Duffy it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn at 2:00 P.M.