

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

February 24, 2009

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority Board of Commissioners was held on February 24, 2009 pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center Boardroom, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Board members present were Committee Chairman, Dale Venturini, Commissioners Jeff Hirsh, Paul MacDonald and Dave Duffy.

Also in attendance were Jim McCarvill, Kim Keough and Betty Sullivan, RICCA; Tim Muldoon, John McGinn, Arlene Oliva, Debbie Tuton, Amanda Marzullo and Nancy Beauchamp, RICC; Larry Lepore, Cheryl Cohen, Lisa Coelho, Jodi Duclos and Eleanor SanAntonio, Dunkin' Donuts Center; Hank Abate, SMG Corporate; Evan Smith, Tim Walsh and Ellen Crawley, Newport CVB; Laurie Stroll, Newport Hospitality; Steve Habl, VMA; Tom Crocker, Sportservice; Bruce Leach, Legal Counsel and Eileen Smith, recording secretary.

Ms. Venturini called the meeting to order at 12:35 pm. Noting that the minutes of the January meeting had been distributed Ms. Venturini asked for a motion to approve. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. MacDonald and seconded by Mr. Hirsh it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the January meeting.

PROVIDENCE/WARWICK CVB

Ms. Sheridan and Mr. Schriever were unable to attend.

CONVENTION CENTER

Ms. Venturini recognized Mr. McGinn and asked that he address the Committee. Mr. McGinn presented the Convention Center's progress in meeting the goals of the 2009 Marketing Plan. Mr. McGinn stated that the public shows, trade shows and meetings goal is \$7.2 million. Mr. McGinn said that the Convention Center has on its books \$6.6 million as of January 31st. Mr. McGinn noted that the stand alone catering goal of \$1.3 may not be reached. Mr. McGinn said that the staff is working very hard to reach the total revenue goal of \$8.5 million. Mr. Duffy asked the likelihood of reaching their goals. Mr. McGinn said that reaching the goal is not likely but everyone is working hard. Mr. McGinn reported on new prospects for trade shows and conventions. Ms. Oliva noted that the Convention Center staff has developed great relationships with the general service contractors who are referring groups to the building. Mr. McGinn said that C&S Wholesale Grocers and Bozzuto's Tradeshow are interested in shows in 2010. Mr. McGinn noted that both are wholesale grocery businesses that currently hold shows at Foxwoods. Mr. MacDonald stated that United Natural Foods of N.E.

may be able to assist with the wholesale grocers and that he will help in any way needed. Mr. McGinn stated that they are working with United Natural Foods of N.E. now on a tentative event for May 2010. Mr. McGinn reported that the sales team is going through the proposal process for the Northeast Canvas Products Association Tradeshow and a site tour will take place with the planners of the Agway Tradeshow. Mr. Duffy asked if there was anything in the building for the Mayor's conference. Mr. Muldoon said that there will be many meetings held here. He said that there should be some good food & beverage events. Mr. Hahl noted that he has been contacted by the planners to hold the final evening's event at the theater. Ms. Cohen said that the Dunk event will have a circus theme. Ms. Venturini stated that it is great that the entire complex is being utilized. Mr. McGinn reported on meeting accounts that were targeted in the Marketing Plan. He said that Adidas – Reebok Group is in the proposal stage, the Citizens Bank business meeting we are working on dates, a contract is being sent for the Verizon Wireless Sales Kickoff and the New England Cheerleaders Association is also in the proposal stage. New tentative banquets include the PC Men's Basketball Dinner, Walk MS, Volunteers of Providence Schools, IBEW Graduation and a June wedding. Mr. McGinn said that he is excited about a new tentative show. He said that the Celebrity Custom Car and Bike Show is looking at August dates. Mr. McGinn reported that Rock the Ink will return in November and use only the Convention Center this year. Mr. McGinn reported that contract events include New England Christian Conference, NECSA Annual Meeting and

Tradeshow and the American Society of Civil Engineers. Mr. McGinn noted that Spirit of America would be making a site visit this week. Mr. MacDonald asked what kind of an event is Spirit of America. Ms. Cohen explained that is a U.S. military group that performs re-enactments, has marching bands, drill corps and many other military exercises. Ms. Cohen said that the Dunk team went to Worcester to view the event and everyone was very impressed. Ms. Cohen noted that the event is free to the public.

DUNKIN' DONUTS CENTER

Ms. Venturini asked Mrs. Cohen to begin her presentation. Mrs. Cohen stated that one objective of the 2009 Marketing Plan was to increase the sales of sponsorships and signage at the Dunk. Ms. Cohen noted that fiscal 09 sponsorships year to date are \$466,020 compared to \$379,818 for fiscal 08. Ms. Cohen noted new sponsorships. She said that Dunkin' Donuts is sponsoring Monster Jam and the Harlem Globetrotters, Castle Construction, SSC East Go Karts and Monster Mini Golf will sponsor Indoor Car Racing. Ms. Cohen stated that the staff is working on new proposals with Hess, Jordan's Furniture, Waste Management, New England Tech, Monster.com and Dippin' Dots. Ms. Cohen said that she is aggressively looking for sponsorship of the scoreboard. She reminded the Committee that due to the economy Twin River was no longer sponsoring the board. Mr. Duffy asked if the safety announcement is made prior to each event. He also noted that there

were two tragic instances recently at Monster Trucks events. Ms Cohen said that announcements are made at every event and that the promoter of Monster Trucks, Feld Entertainment, is addressing all safety concerns. Mr. Hirsh asked if the restaurant would be closed during Monster Trucks. Ms. Cohen stated that the restaurant will be curtained off because it is a very dirty event. Mr. Hirsh asked if the suite holders have communicated their opinion regarding food quality and service. Ms. Duclos stated that she has developed a great relationship with the suite holders and that Sportservice has done a wonderful job. Mr. Crocker said that 90% of the suite holders pre-order their food. He stated that he has received great feedback and that past problems have been addressed. Ms. Cohen noted that Sportservice is considering opening up the conference room next to the Providence Players Club for overflow during times of high demand. Ms. Duclos noted that she and Mr. Crocker take the time to get to know the suite holders on a personal level and work to keep the clients happy. Ms. Cohen reported on new media marketing objectives saying that the team is expanding their marketing efforts and utilizing state-of-the-art technology. Ms. Cohen stated that the use of e-blast campaigns has been very successful in advertising family shows. Ms. Cohen provided statistics on web-site hits to highlight the importance of using today's technology. Mr. McCarvill asked Mr. Crocker to prepare a six month review of the restaurant and concessions.

VMA

Steve Habl reported that framing is being done on some collateral material to be hung in the building. He stated that the only things in the theater now are related to the history of the facility. Mr. Habl noted that posters and placards of upcoming events and regular performances of the Philharmonic and Festival Ballet should have prominent places in the theater. Mr. Habl noted that advertising materials have been delivered to music and dance schools throughout the state. He said that a kiosk in the Mall is being considered and would like to put up a banner at the Dunk. Mr. Hirsh suggested that representatives of the Ballet and the Philharmonic be invited to a Marketing Committee meeting to express their ideas on increasing ticket sales and also to understand that we are willing to help. Mr. Habl reported that the theater will be the site for many high school graduations. Ms. Venturini said that we should host something. Mr. Duffy said that he would like to host the legislature.

NEWPORT CVB

Ms. Venturini welcomed Laurie Stroll of the Newport Hospitality Association. Ms. Stroll noted that her association has suggested the use of the theater to groups that might be a good fit for the venue. Mr. Walsh stated that Newport is holding its own during this economic downturn. He said that the Winter Festival drew large crowds and the event was a success.

Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Keough to address the Committee. Ms. Keough reported that 16 responses to the RFP for web-design had been received. She said that of the 16 respondents 9 were Rhode Island based firms. Ms. Keough stated that the group would meet on Thursday to narrow the field to 5 candidates. Ms. Keough informed the Committee that a meeting would be convened to give the participants an opportunity to promote their firm. Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Keough to prepare a ratings sheet for the Committee's use. Ms. Cohen said that a score card will be developed. She noted that content management is an important piece for the design. Ms. Venturini commented that we have to do this right the first time.

Ms. Keough noted that she has also been working hard to get people into the VMA and making people aware of the building. Mr. MacDonald noted that it was reported earlier that visits had been made to local music and dance schools and suggested that the area be expanded to include border communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Ms. Keough reported that we have received some very good media coverage. Mr. McGinn stated that the Golf Show got some good press. Mr. Duffy asked if they re-booked. Mr. McGinn answered that they did and they are looking at dates for next year. Ms. Keough noted that Midget Car Racing is getting a great deal of attention. Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Keough to send the media links to her via e-mail. Mr. Hirsh said that he would like to be notified as well.

Mr. Duffy complimented Kathy Masino and the Convention Center on the quality of food being served. He said that the Convention Center food is great. Mr. Hirsh noted that Kathy Masino would be doing the Convention Center's presentation on Thursday. Mr. MacDonald noted that Mr. Muldoon had recently hosted a building trades meeting for some key decision makers who in the past were critical about the food. He said that this time they were very impressed.

Ms. Venturini asked for a motion to adjourn. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Duffy and seconded by Mr. Hirsh it was unanimously

VOTED: to adjourn at 1:55 pm