

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

May 20, 2009

A meeting of the Marketing Committee of the Rhode Island Convention Center Authority Board of Commissioners was held on May 20, 2009 pursuant to notice at the Rhode Island Convention Center Boardroom, One Sabin Street, Providence, Rhode Island. The meeting was held at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, RI at the invitation of Evan Smith and the Newport Convention & Visitor's Bureau.

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

Also in attendance were Jim McCarvill, RICCA; Tim Muldoon, John McGinn, Amanda Marzullo and Debbie Tuton, RICC; Martha Sheridan, Neil Schriever and Kristen Adamo, PWCVB; Steve Habl and Patti Neves, VMA; Jeanne-Marie Napolitano, Mayor of Newport; Lauri Stroll, Newport Hospitality; Evan Smith, Tim Walsh and Len Penagio, Newport CVB; Patti Goldstein, RI Airport Corporation and Eileen Smith, recording secretary.

Ms. Venturini called the meeting to order at 12:45 PM. Ms. Venturini noted that it was an honor to have Mayor Napolitano, Patti Goldstein, of the Airport Corporation, Lauri Stroll of Newport Hospitality at the

meeting. Ms. Venturini thanked Evan Smith and the Newport CVB for inviting us to the beautiful City of Newport and the historic and lovely International Tennis Hall of Fame. Ms. Venturini asked everyone to introduce themselves.

PROVIDENCE/WARWICK CVB

Mr. Schriever reported that the CVB will host a Customer Forum on June 17th and 18th. Mr. Schriever noted that customer feedback is a very important tool for the destination. He said that we will find out what the customer thinks that we are lacking and what they feel we do well. Some of the organizations that have agreed to participate are United Natural Foods, Experient, Athletic Championships, Hanley Wood and Conference & Logistics Association. Ms. Sheridan invited everyone to attend. She said that we will learn what the customer experiences from their arrival at the airport until they leave. Ms. Sheridan noted that customer service is a priority for us. She also noted that the Rhode Island Convention Center ranks in the top five convention centers in customer service. Ms. Venturini suggested that the VMA be included when potential guests are given a tour. Ms. Sheridan stated that feedback is a gift. She said that the results of the Customer Forum will be reported at a future committee meeting. Mr. Schriever reported on the results of the recent very successful phone blitz. He noted that the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses would like to come for a site visit, the Future Business

Leaders of America – Phi Beta Lambda have sent an RFP, the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions is looking for a venue for their 2010 meeting and several other potential pieces of business. Ms. Venturini stated that the results reinforce the fact that we need to invite meeting planners to see what we have to offer. Ms. Venturini asked how difficult it is to set up the phone bank. Mr. Muldoon said that it is not very difficult. Ms. Venturini said that maybe we should market the fact that we have the ability to do that. Kristen Adamo addressed the committee and reported on media visits, media placements, advertising and on-line marketing. Mr. Duffy asked you track results on Twitter or other on-line sites. Ms. Adamo said that you track by the number of friends that visit the sites. She stated that we have 800 followers on Twitter. Ms. Adamo distributed several articles that have appeared this month (copies attached). Ms. Sheridan reported on the Positively Providence training program. She said that knowledge of the City by wait staff, hotel staff and taxi drivers is very helpful to our visitors. Mr. Duffy noted that he had recently taken a cab from the airport and the driver argued against the airport expansion. Mr. Schriever discussed room night production for April and was pleased to report that Amerprise Financial had committed to dates in September.

DUNKIN' DONUTS CENTER

Ms. Venturini explained that Ms. Cohen was unable to attend due to a family matter. She said that Jim McCarvill would present highlights

from the Dunk. Mr. McCarvill reported that Picerne had upgraded their investment to the scoreboard and the sales staff is in negotiations with Newport Storm. Mr. McCarvill discussed a new concept to increase our advertising opportunities. He said that banner signage will be hung in the lobby advertising local restaurants. Mr. McCarvill said that Shula's has confirmed and that over 65 proposals have been sent to area restaurants. Mr. McCarvill said that there will be a total of 12 banners on Restaurant Row and the cost to advertise will be \$2,300 annually. Mr. McCarvill noted that the pres box is available for rent for Cirque du Soleil and party suites for Demi Lovato and the Boston Pops Holiday Concert. Mr. McCarvill also noted that there are tables available for the Boston Pops Concert. Mr. McCarvill reported that you can follow the Dunkin' Donuts Center news and events on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Mr. McCarvill stated that he and Mr. Duffy had spoken about ways to generate events. He said that only a few events have been booked for the Summer. Mr. Duffy encouraged everyone to do whatever they can to attract things to the facility. Mr. Hirsh asked if we get full rent for graduations at the Dunk. Mr. McCarvill said that we do but that we only have two.

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 Convention Center will most likely not make their goals for this fiscal year although the sales team is working very hard to bring in many short term events. Mr. McGinn reported on some prospects that have not utilized the building in the past but are seriously considering moving their show or convention to the Convention Center. He said that C&S Wholesale Grocers Tradeshow and the United Natural Foods Northeast Show will be making a decision in early June. Mr. McGinn reported that new meeting prospects include Hollywood Connections, Inc., a dance company that holds events nationwide, NanoTechnology for Defense Conference, a Government/Military Symposium and the RI Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals. Mr. McGinn noted that Pilgrim High School has already booked their 2010 Junior Prom. Mr. McGinn said that Proms are very good filler business. Mr. McGinn reported that tentative events include Adidas Group Customer Summit and Jamfest, a cheerleading competition for 2010. Events that have signed contracts are the Literacy for All Conference, the ISPE Annual Conference and IAAM 2009 Arena Management Conference.

Conversations ensued regarding our competition. Mr. Schriever wanted everyone to be aware that we are competition is Boston and Philadelphia. He said that these cities are now playing in our sandbox. Ms. Venturini stated that our competitive set has changed. Mr. Schriever reported that the local hoteliers are working with the CVB on packages and perks but we do not want rates to erode. Mr. Smith said that we need to enhance the value for the rate rather than

reduce the rate. He noted that in the past Newport rates were inflated and now we are working to find a reasonable and logical ground.

VMA

Ms. Venturini recognized Steve Hahl and asked that he update the committee on what's going on at the VMA. Mr. Hahl reminded the committee that the VMA has little to no marketing budget. He said that Patti Neves has been doing whatever she can with no budget. Mr. Hahl turned the floor over to Patti. She said that she is attempting to increase the visibility of the theater. Ms. Neves said that everyone remembers a school trip to the VMA but they haven't been there since. She said that we have to make people aware that there will be some great things going on at the VMA. Ms. Neves noted that Business After Hours has been booked at the venue and that she is looking for food station donations. Ms. Neves noted that she has reached out to local theaters in an attempt to collaborate marketing efforts. Mr. Hahl announced that a small grant has come through to cover the expenses of the Air Corps Band performance. Ms. Venturini assured Mr. Hahl that we will do whatever we can to assist the theater. She said that we are all in this together. Mr. Hahl noted that Hal Holbrook will be performing his Mark Twain show. Other booked performances included Celtic Sojourn, a Christmas show and Aba the Music in January. Mr. Hahl said that the paint brushes are out for some Summer projects.

Mr. McCarvill noted that Ms. Keough was unable to attend this meeting. He reported that the Annual Report would be going to the printer this week. Mr. McCarvill stated that Ms. Keough has had a good deal of success in getting events noticed by the Rhode Show. He said that several shows have been featured on the daily morning show. Ms. Venturini reported that Jeremy Crisp from Nail Communications has been interviewing all of our partners prior to developing the branding of the Complex and the web design.

Patti Goldstein of the Airport Corporation addressed the committee. Ms. Goldstein reported that airport expansion is critical to the financial well being of the tourism industry as well as the business community and the airport itself. Ms. Goldstein noted that expansion will mean that larger carriers will use our facilities and that Providence will be capable of handling international flights. Ms. Goldstein said that she was optimistic that an agreement will be reached. Ms. Goldstein noted that Southwest is now flying out of Logan and therefore we are competing with Boston for the low fare traffic. Ms. Venturini asked Ms. Goldstein what Mayor Avedisian's stand is on expansion. Ms. Goldstein said that she has spoken with the Mayor and that he is trying to balance the concerns of his constituents with the growth of the airport. Ms. Venturini said that the Mayor needs to hear from hoteliers and business people not just those that have objections to the expansion. Ms. Goldstein reported that the FAA will be coming up with their plan and the preferred alternatives. She said that a decision won't be made until next year.

Mr. Fowler asked if the size of the aircraft contributed to the lack of direct flights. Ms. Goldstein said that prevailing winds have more of an impact, therefore there are no direct flights going west.

Due to a change in the agenda Ms. Venturini now asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the April meeting. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Hirsh and seconded by Mr. Fowler it was unanimously

VOTED: to approve the minutes of the April meeting.

Ms. Venturini noted that the Authority's agreement with the CVB was about to expire and asked that the committee consider renewing the contract for two years. Mr. McCarvill stated that the CVB does a great job. He said that the agreement distributed today is the same as the one agreed to in the past. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Fowler and seconded by Mr. Hirsh it was unanimously

VOTED: to renew the Authority's contract with the PWCVB for a two year period ending June 30, 2011.

Ms. Venturini also reported that two of the Authority's appointments to the CVB Board are about to expire. Mr. McCarvill stated that Joe Judge's term will expire on June 30th and that we would like to recommend Jason Fowler, a current commissioner, to fill Mr. Judge's seat on the PWCVB Board. Mr. McCarvill noted that Jeff Hirsh's term will also expire on June 30th and would like the committee to

recommend the reappointment of Mr. Hirsh. Upon a motion duly made by Mr. Duffy and seconded by Ms. Venturini it was unanimously

VOTED: to reappoint Mr. Hirsh and appoint Mr. Fowler to the PWCVB Board of Directors.

NEWPORT CVB

Evan Smith thanked everyone for allowing the Newport CVB to host the meeting. Mr. Duffy said that perhaps we should travel to Newport annually. He said that by working together we can get the word out that Rhode Island has much to offer. Mr. Smith gave a brief history of the International Tennis Hall of Fame. He said that in 1880 James Gordon Bennett had a Summer mansion across the street. Mr. Smith said that following a disagreement with the Governor's of Newport's most exclusive men's club, Mr. Bennett created his own retreat, now the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Mr. Smith noted that the Hall of Fame is the only place that visitors can play on the grass courts for a fee.

Mr. Duffy said that it was an honor that Mayor Napolitano attended the meeting and invited her to visit the Complex in Providence.

Ms. Venturini reported that she has had conversations with local weathermen and tried to convince them that their forecasts have a

direct impact on tourism. She asked if they could be more optimistic such as instead of partly cloudy they report that it will be mostly sunny, etc.

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

VOTED: to adjourn at 2:27 pm

Following the meeting it was announced that Providence finished in the top 30 cities in Travel & Leisure's pole. Providence was to smallest city on the list.