

CIVIC CENTER COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

1-21-2021

Attendees:

CCC Members Present: Chairman John Harrity, Commissioner Lowell Alexander, Commissioner John Brissette, and Commissioner Penelope Herideen

Absent: Commissioner Jim Knowlton

City: John Odell, Timothy McGourthy, Candee Raphaelson

SMG: Sandy Dunn, Jim Moughan, Melissa Bishop

Also present via WebEx: Matthew Hunt, CliftonLarsenAllen, and Steve Foskett, Worcester Telegram

Chairman Harrity welcomed the newest Commissioner, Penelope Herideen, who expressed pleasure to be a part of the Commission and excited about all that was happening in the City.

Call to Order: Chairman Harrity brought the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. John Odell took the roll call. Four Commissioners present.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes: Chairman Harrity asked for a Motion to accept the Minutes of December 17, 2020. Commissioner Alexander made a motion, Commissioner Brissette second. All in favor.

Audit Report: Matthew Hunt, from CliftonLarsenAllen first commended Melissa Bishop and her staff for doing such a great job on the FY2020 audit despite being remote. He then clarified that the phrase adverse opinion was a procedural term that must be used as this was an audit of just the financials, not the full scope of the DCU Center. Due to the pandemic shutdown in March 2020 the City advanced \$710,000 to SMG to cover ongoing costs and refunds due to advance ticket sales. The shutdown also the reason why no incentives thresholds for either the Food and Beverage department or Management were met. The Internal Controls review did not identify any deficiencies. Chairman Harrity remarked that although the numbers were frightening it could only get better from here. He thanked Sandy, Jim and Melissa for their great work. Seeing no questions from the Commissioners a Motion to Accept was made. All in favor.

UMass Use of DCU Center Space- Amendment Review: Chairman Harrity asked Sandy if she had reached out and gotten any information from other ASM facilities across the country with respect to their being used as field hospitals. Sandy confirmed that four were identified: Providence, Denver, Detroit and Columbus. She had no details on any of the specific contracts each may have had, but they

generally received rent with the belief that the payment would be reimbursable by FEMA or other federal funds. She also noted that with the exception of the Columbus convention center, which is similar in size to the DCU Center, the other three are much larger facilities.

Chairman Harrity then questioned how many patients were currently in the field hospital. Sandy said as of Tuesday, January 22, there were 48 patients. 49 patients had been discharged over the weekend. Total 199 discharged. At this point the total number of patients that have used the facility was over 400. The field hospital staff are very active and are in position to serve up to 100 patients in pods of 25 beds. Plans are in place to go to 125 if necessary based on available staff.

Chairman Harrity then asked if there had been any change in the footprint since he had walked through in the spring. Sandy confirmed that yes, the configuration had changed dramatically. In the spring the trailers for housing showers for staff, laundry, tents, etc. were housed outside of the building and at this time they are all in the interior so the footprint needed takes many more square feet of the convention center floor. A larger space was also needed for staff services so convention area space and lower box office space was added. Also, the ballroom is being utilized for training the staff as there was not enough space to allow for social distancing.

Chairman Harrity inquired about rent for the extra spaces being utilized and Sandy confirmed that they were paying $\frac{1}{2}$ which the usual rate is \$9500.00. They are only paying on the days they are utilizing the space with respect to the ballroom. Chairman Harrity then asked on a side note about the repair to the overhead door. Sandy explained that the door was broken, repaired and broken again. At this time there is a temporary repair that is holding up and unless or until it doesn't they are leaving the temporary repair in place. Their usual overhead door company refused to go in to the area due to contamination but they found a company that used the proper PPE and went in and fixed it. They are on standby to repair as necessary. In addition to the original failure, subsequent to the repair a third party linen company truck backed into the door as they failed to raise the door enough to provide access. ASM is dealing with that company's insurance company to cover the costs to fix the damage.

Chairman Harrity asked Commissioner Brissette to discuss his motion to review the rent free day. Commissioner Brissette asked Sandy about the follow up after 30 days when the Commission agreed to the rent free days. Sandy reminded him it was a two month review agreed to which was up earlier this week. Commissioner Brissette recommended altering rent free status to generate revenue for the building. He suggested 50% percent for one month, then 75% for the next month, and then beginning March 21st 100%. His thoughts are based on UMass getting reimbursement from FEMA and asked to be corrected if wrong. He noted that the Commission has been very pleased to support UMass hospital, and will continue to do so, but felt this would be a fair arrangement for the City and UMass. Chairman Harrity confirmed with Sandy that 50% would be \$4,750.00 per day.

Chairman Harrity then asked CFO Timothy McGourthy for his input. Mr. McGourthy stated he would defer to the Commissioners, but mentioned that it is challenging for the City to try and identify funding sources to cover DCU costs right now due to the pandemic and any additional revenue source to try and offset the costs would be a very welcome improvement over the status quo.

Chairman Harrity then asked Sandy to look into her "crystal ball" to see if she thought UMass would be there for another 6 months. Sandy confirmed that it would be speculative to estimate as Lowell would

be closing soon, so the DCU Center would be the only field hospital backup available in the State and that it was also being considered as a potential vaccine site. She said it was all guesswork at this point.

Chairman Harrity then asked if the arena was being considered for the shots and Sandy confirmed that the State had done a virtual walkthrough and that they had been provided with maps, etc. and that the City Manager had weighed in. Sandy also asked to footnote an earlier conversation. She wanted to be clear that UMass is paying for all the out of pocket costs and that the discussion was only rent for the building, nothing else.

Commissioner Alexander explained he felt similar to Commissioner Brissette that they should look at receiving some revenue. Commissioner Herideen said that being good partners with UMass was important but if they are being reimbursed by FEMA then Commissioner Brissette's proposal was sound and feasible. She also asked Sandy about any other venues charging for a vaccination site. Sandy did not know but would be happy to do a survey if in fact the state came back and thought that the DCU was a viable option. Sandy wanted it to be clear that she was not suggesting anything yet. Chairman Brissette wanted to clarify his motion was not to do with a vaccination site-it was strictly for the field hospital now in the building. UMass, not the State. Sandy then asked if they were including the ballroom that was at 50% rent for thirty days. Commissioner Brissette asked if that was included in the \$4750.00 and was told it was not. Jim Moughan confirmed the ballroom was separate and the 50% was \$2250.00 per day on usage days only. Chairman Harrity remarked that this is the same for any vendor that would want both. Sandy wanted to be clear if the motion was raising both or only the field hospital. Chairman Harrity recommended both as it is the Commissioner's main duty to make sure the revenue was coming in. He wholeheartedly supported Commissioner Brissette's motion and position and asked Commissioner Brissette to make a motion for both the ballroom and the field hospital. Chairman Harrity asked for a roll call on the Motion. Commissioner Alexander second. All in favor.

Project Status Updates:

Chairman Harrity requested an update on the status of the telephone system upgrade and any other ongoing projects. John Odell stated that the telephone/camera bid had been delayed as the City's Technical Services Dept. was completing a final review, but that he expected the bid to be posted with the next two weeks. He also noted that the Phase 2 projects remain on hold due to the pandemic and the resulting lack of revenue coming into the district, which would be used to pay for the work.

SMG Reporting

Sandy Dunn explained that much of the review was covered previously with the UMass discussion, however she did note that the box office remains open 1 week per month with the MA Pirates indoor football season being the current priority. Expected sales for the Pirate season are expected to begin in March. She also stated that they are continuing to recruit for several key full-time positions due to a number of recent retirements. It's been a challenge finding qualified candidates though and the issue is being experienced nationally, not just in the Worcester region. She also called out the retirement of Joe Heelon, their senior Facility Technician, who had worked there for over 38 years. The loss of his institutional knowledge, along with that of other recently retired staff, is significant.

Melissa Bishop walked the Commissioners through the year-to-date budget numbers. As expected the news was not favorable with almost all revenue sources removed due the pandemic. Total losses through November were \$895,850.

Jim Moughan went through the sales and marketing reports. Status updates via social have continued throughout the pandemic and the local businesses and community have remained active with the DCU accounts. The staff are still regularly fielding questions and remain in active contact with their customers, whether that be to reschedule a planned event or to review anticipated timelines for their event. He also noted that despite the pandemic the local hospitality industry has done better in central MA as compared to the rest of the State. This is likely due to the field hospital and all the visiting medical personnel (nurses, doctors, and support staff) who have come to assist with the surge of Covid-19 cases.

Chairman Harrity made a Motion to Adjourn at 10:03; Commissioner Brissette second. All in favor.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 25, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. via WebEx.