

**Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority  
Meeting held Thursday, March 23, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.  
Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority  
4065 S. Virginia Street, Board Room, Reno, Nevada**

The Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority Board of Directors met at 9:00 am on Thursday, March 23, 2023. The meeting was properly noticed & posted in compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

---

## ***A. OPENING CEREMONIES***

### **A1. Call to Order**

Chair Charlene Bybee called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

### **A2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Bybee asked Board Member Chapman to lead the pledge.

### **A3. Roll Call**

The Clerk of the Board took roll call.

---

#### **Board Members Present:**

Councilwoman Charlene Bybee, RSCVA Chair  
Stephan Ascuaga, RSCVA Board Member  
Andy Chapman, RSCVA Board Member **[Arrived 9:16 am via Zoom]**  
Shannon Keel, RSCVA Board Member **[via Zoom]**  
Rick Murdock, RSCVA Board Member  
Mayor Hillary Schieve, RSCVA Vice Chair **[Arrived 9:12 am via Zoom]**  
Ann Silver, RSCVA Board Member

#### **Board Members Absent:**

Jessica Sferrazza, RSCVA Board Member

---

#### **RSCVA Executive Staff Present:**

Charles Harris, President & CEO  
Courtney Jaeger, Vice President, Finance  
Trent LaFerriere, Vice President, Facilities  
Mike Larragueta, Vice President, Sales  
Christina Erny, Vice President, Marketing  
Art Jimenez, Executive Director of Tourism Sales  
Ben McDonald, Senior Director of Communications and Public Affairs

#### **RSCVA Legal Counsel:**

Benjamin Kennedy, Dickson Wright

#### **Board Clerk:**

Lisa Farmer, Executive Assistant to the President & CEO

---

## ***B. COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR BY THE PUBLIC***

Ms. Jessica Schneider, Owner, Junkee Clothing Exchange, thanked the Board for their support of the Haunted House event held at the National Bowling Stadium in October.

She showed a brief video highlighting the event and event visitors. Plans were underway for a larger event in October 2023.

Ms. Holly Spohr, Dark Corner Haunted House, continued the video presentation noting that the event welcomed over 10,000 visitors and created 90 temporary jobs. She thanked the National Bowling Stadium staff for their assistance and for the smooth operation of the event. It was so successful that the local PBS station created a broadcast program about it.

Mr. Peter Menchetti, Debauch-a-Reno, informed the Board about a music festival being planned for mid-June. He was concerned about the increasing price of room nights. In planning for this event, he said the room rates had almost doubled from 2019, the last time this event was held. Mr. Menchetti thought the price would deter event participants and people planning to attend from out of the area.

Ms. Lisa Farmer, Board Clerk, relayed a letter had been received from Mr. Mark Sterbens, Senior Vice President and General Manager of the Nugget Casino Resort related to item F2. It had been included in the agenda materials.

### **C. CONSENT AGENDA:**

- 1. Approval of the Agenda of the March 23, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors**
- 2. Approval of the Minutes of the February 23, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors**
- 3. Approval of the Purchase of a Portable Event Stage in the amount not to exceed \$297,240.00, from the Vendor, StageRight**
- 4. Approval of the Purchase of Portable Event Risers in the amount not to exceed \$147,010.00, from the Vendor, StageRight**

Board Member Silver spoke to a statement in the February 23, 2023, minutes. On page 6, Board it was noted that Member Sferrazza made a statement that Mr. Charles Harris' contract (RSCVA President and CEO), was "one of the highest paid in the State". Board Member Silver said that statement was not factual and an unfortunate comment.

**Motion:** Move to approve consent agenda as presented.

**Moved by:** Board Member Ascuaga

**Seconded by:** Board Member Murdock

**Aye:** Board Members: Ascuaga, Bybee, Chapman, Keel, Murdock, Schieve, and Silver

**Nay:**

**Absent:** Board Member: Sferrazza

**Abstain:**

**Vote:** Motion passed 7-0-1

## **D. EXECUTIVE UPDATES**

### **D1. Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority CEO Update**

President and CEO Charles Harris discussed highlights of items provided in the recent CEO report. One of the goals in the Reno Tahoe annual plan was to offer eight events with their hotel partners. The team was working on scheduling three additional events beyond the original benchmark of eight. Progress was being made on the Destination Master Plan, an RFP had been issued, staff was now looking at the submissions. Mr. Harris announced that the Marketing Team won three American Advertising awards.

Marketing had recently issued and closed two RFPs, one for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and another for web development. They were in the process of reviewing submissions.

Mr. Harris reported that facility occupancy rates, specifically for the Reno-Sparks Convention Center (RSCC) were up approximately 8% from the previous year. Revenue for the RSCC was up \$230K, the Reno Events Center (REC) was up \$187K, and both the National Bowling Stadium (NBS) and Reno-Sparks Livestock Events Center (RSLEC) were up as well.

Board Member Ascuaga said the increased revenue from venue rentals was outstanding, he congratulated Mr. Harris and staff. Chair Bybee echoed the sentiments and said venues had previously been seen as anchors, with annual losses. It was good to see the facilities being utilized and increased occupancy. Mike Larraguetta, Vice President of Sales, recognized the sales and events facilities team for adopting the new model and working to get the facilities rented year-round.

Board Member Silver complimented Mr. Harris on a very thorough CEO report. Chair Bybee agreed it was a good report and prime example of transparency. Mr. Harris keeps the Board up to date with information every month. Board Member Murdock appreciated that the RSCVA was letting organizations use the facilities with the extreme weather conditions this winter.

**Board Member Ascuaga left the meeting at 9:28 a.m. and returned at 9:29 a.m.**

## **E. PRESENTATIONS**

### **E1. Presentation: Annual Plan Update - RSCVA Communications**

**Board Member Murdock left the meeting at 9:28 a.m. and returned at 9:30 a.m.**

Mr. Ben McDonald, Senior Director of Communications and Public Affairs, gave a presentation to update the Board on RSCVA Communications and Public Affairs. He focused on Community Engagement, Public Relations, and Industry Newsletters.

Chair Bybee asked where the Discovery Guides for the USBC bowlers could be found. Vice President of Marketing Christina Erny responded that they were provided as part of the bowler's registration packet. Mr. McDonald thanked the Downtown Reno Partnership for their help in gathering all the items to create the guide.

Discussion followed regarding the reach of the Reno Tahoe "In the Know" weekly emails.

## **E2. Presentation: Bowling Update - RSCVA Bowling Sales**

Mr. Brent Bowers, Director of Sales at the National Bowling Stadium (NBS) introduced himself and provided a brief background on his experience as it relates to bowling and management of bowling facilities. He shared a presentation outlining current and future events planned at the NBS as well as his strategies to increase occupancy at the venue. Mr. Bowers' goals for the venue included creating and growing new events that reside at NBS, improving efficiencies, and improve the marketing and visibility of the NBS.

Board Member Silver thanked Mr. Bowers for the presentation. She said the Chamber would like to be more involved with the NBS. They could work on creating a "Chamber Day" at the venue. Mr. Bowers liked the idea and said he would follow up with Board Member Silver to discuss it further.

Discussion followed regarding participation in the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America (BPAA) and the possibility of having their annual convention in Reno again. Board Member Murdock asked if the professional bowlers would be coming to the area. Mr. Bowers said he was working on it and had been in communication with the Professional Bowlers Association (PBA).

Mayor Schieve thanked Mr. Bowers for the presentation. She was excited to have him on board as she had been asking for this position for a while. She asked if Mr. Bowers would be working on finding opportunities for other events, to make the facility more of a multi-purpose type of environment. Mr. Bowers said he was still researching opportunities and had been in discussions with the University of Nevada about the possibility of future events at the facility. Mayor Schieve asked if it was a possibility for Reno to have a collegiate bowling team. Mr. Bowers said the western half of the US was barren in terms of bowling programs. NCAA bowling is more popular in the Midwest and on east coast. It would take some work and it would have to be a definite combined effort to look into the feasibility. There were other opportunities for "club" bowling programs. Mr. Harris added that nationwide there were only 63 collegiate teams. Proximity to other schools with programs may be a hurdle as many were on the eastern side of the country.

Chair Bybee asked if the facility would be available for conventions, meetings, corporations, etc. to hold events as part of their visit to the area or as teambuilding opportunities. Mr. Mike Larragueta, Vice President of Sales, said his team was always looking for opportunities to include such activities when booking events. Chair Bybee said it was a great way to share the venue with visitors and locals alike.

**F. BOARD MATTERS**

**F1. Public Hearing Regarding the Approval of Resolution #599 Adopting a Budget Augmentation for the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority for Fiscal Year 2022-23**

Vice President of Finance Courtney Jaeger provided a presentation outlining the proposed budget augmentation.

**Board Member Silver left the meeting at 10:16 am and returned at 10:18 am.**

The budget augmentation was presented to the Finance and Facilities Committee and was recommended by them for approval to the full Board of Directors, with the caveat that the full Board further discuss the proposed remodel project at the Reno Events Center (REC) prior to giving final approval.

Vice President Jaeger reviewed the anticipated and actual revenues and the request to augment the budget to increase expenditures by \$3.2M. Expenses would be allocated to Capital Projects, Convention and Tourism Promotion (to include increases in Marketing and Sales), and Facilities Operations. The augmentation was being funded by revenues that exceeded budget estimates for Q2 and revised estimates for the remainder of the fiscal year.

The Finance and Facilities Committee requested at their previous meeting for the full Board of Directors to discuss proposed changes to the budget for the REC suite remodel and the addition of changes to the improvements in the green room, concourse, and dressing rooms. \$100,000 was initially approved during the previous budget augmentation for a light refurbishment of the suites and green room. The revised estimate was \$512,911 which included updated electronics and expansion of the project to the dressing rooms and suite level concourse. Vice President of Facilities Trent LaFerriere outlined the proposed renovations which included updated flooring, furniture, and paint. The largest part of the expense was new electronics, including large screen monitors in the suites and in the concourse, at approximately \$300K.

Mr. Harris added that since the opening of the venue in 2005, there had not been any changes to the rooms or suites. The goal was to modernize the spaces in hopes of increasing sales and use of the suites. There was an outstanding question as to whether RSCVA wanted to fund improvements for a building that they did not own (the building is owned by the City of Reno). He suggested offering to pay half and then approach the City asking them to fund the other half. Or another possibility was for RSCVA to fund the internal renovations and then ask the City to replace the electronic signage outside the building estimated from \$180K to \$200K. Discussion followed regarding the proposed improvements and the need to replace the video sign on the outside of the building.

Board Member Murdock disclosed that he was employed by The Row, which has a business relationship with the REC. He noted that the proposed capital improvements were for the overall building and its use by other events and organizations, thus he would not be materially affected by any decision to fund projects at the venue.

Board Member Murdock said the casinos and resorts find and book large names (and pay to rent the REC), expect the RSCVA to collect room tax and surcharge on the visitors attending those events. He felt that in all fairness, the RSCVA should spend the money to keep the venue up to date and a place that artists want to come to.

Board Member Silver asked if the City of Reno had been approached about contribution to the proposed renovations. She agreed the update was much needed and the outside signage needed to be repaired. Mr. Harris said he had not approached the City yet, as he was awaiting the decision from the Board on this item. If the Board would like to request that the City contribute, he would talk to the City about cost sharing.

Board Member Ascuaga said the initial discussion was to update the suites in hopes of turning them quickly to help generate more suite sales and rentals. When the actual planning for the project started to happen, it was noted that more areas needed attention. He was inclined to vote in favor of funding the whole project, but in the future sit with the City to discuss the exterior sign.

Discussion followed on the requirements of RSCVA regarding maintenance of the facility and the thresholds for repairs. Mr. Harris said historically that projects over \$10K would be the responsibility of the City of Reno. She agreed that funding the changes to the suites and property are beneficial to the RSCVA in terms of future suite sales. Mr. Harris agreed the venue is a reflection of the destination and the current spaces were not up to par.

Board Member Chapman was in support of funding the project to help increase the competitiveness of the venue. A call should be made to the City to talk about cost-sharing, possibly on this project and definitely on future improvements. He was worried about setting precedence that would open the door to other organizations asking for funds at other locations. More discussion followed regarding the need and funding for the project.

Board Member Ascuaga suggested the Board go on with the budget augmentation presentation and go back to this item. Chair Bybee emphasized that it was a benefit for the RSCVA to fund the renovation project as they received the revenue from event rentals and hopefully would realize increased suite sales/rental revenues. It needed to be done sooner rather than later so those spaces were available to sell.

Vice President Jaeger continued with her presentation. In the proposed augmentation, Marketing would increase their expenditures by \$121K mainly for increased advertising production for leisure campaigns and meetings and conventions campaigns. Sales would be increasing their budget by approximately \$162K for initiatives including Biggest Little Sites program and the addition of one FTE in Tourism Sales.

Facilities would receive approximately \$2.47M to be used towards costs including personnel, utilities, deferred maintenance, and security services, which are largely driven by increased events and related activity at the venues. The apportionment to the Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Bureau would increase by \$43K.

Board Member Silver was in favor of the whole augmentation as proposed as it was critical to advance tourism and room nights. It was needed to create a more modern facility with an enjoyable ambiance.

Mayor Schieve said with a decline in business and events in the downtown area to pay the \$2 surcharge fee to the City of Reno then there's not enough revenue in that fund to pay for major projects and it is siphoned out to pay for other things. She asked how long the exterior sign had not been working properly. Vice President LaFerriere said it really started degrading over the last couple of years. During the last six months, there has been a lack of ability to repair it as the components are no longer available for purchase. There had been good maintenance on the sign, but it was 18 years old and needed to be updated. Mayor Schieve said it was important to have it up and running as it was a calling card for the area, adding that Mr. Harris had been asking for this for a while.

Discussion followed regarding the \$2 surcharge fund at the City of Reno.

There was consensus that it was a benefit to the RSCVA to proceed with paying for the proposed renovations at the REC to generate more income for the venue and the area.

**Motion:** Move to approve Resolution #599, adopting a budget augmentation for the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority for Fiscal Year 2023 as presented.

**Moved by:** Board Member Silver

**Seconded by:** Board Member Chapman

**Aye:** Board Members: Ascuaga, Bybee, Chapman, Keel, Murdock, Schieve, and Silver

**Nay:**

**Absent:** Board Member: Sferrazza

**Abstain:**

**Vote:** Motion passed 7-0-1

## **F2. Procedure for Hiring President/CEO**

Mr. Ben Kennedy, Legal Counsel, said the current CEO's contract was set to expire on October 31, 2023. This item was added to the agenda to allow the Board to discuss finding a replacement and what procedure to use in the search for a new President and CEO. Mr. Kennedy said in the last search, the Board approved an RFP for a search firm. A search firm was selected by the Board and the Board set parameters for how candidates would be presented for consideration. Staff and Legal Counsel needed direction from the Board to move in that direction if an RFP was to be used again to retain a search firm. Discussion followed regarding a proposed timeline. The entire process, if started in March, would allow for a candidate to be in place by October.

Discussion followed regarding how long the RFP should be open and how long it would take to get the information to the Board for a future meeting. Mr. Kennedy said it was realistic to be able to consider submissions at the May Board of Directors meeting.

Mayor Schieve asked when the new Board Members would be joining the RSCVA Board of Directors. Mr. Kennedy said there would be some changes to the membership in July. Mayor Schieve shared her concerns about making a decision and then having new Board Members join mid-process. She said this process that been done multiple times. The search firms are expensive, and they go out to find the best of the best. She thought the Board should also look locally for someone who wants to be in the community. It was problematic that the RSCVA continues to wave a big carrot (in terms of a compensation package) and then have to look for new people every couple of years. If the Board would like to use a search firm, then she would like to see some benchmarks added to the contract and staff has to be included in the process. Chair Bybee clarified that a national search does not preclude the RSCVA from hiring local. Mayor Schieve said it was important to have a candidate that understands tourism, gaming, open meeting law, and how a quasi-governmental agency works. She added that often search firms push their own candidates so that they can earn bonuses if their candidates are hired.

Chair Bybee was in favor of national search and said it would be up to the Board to vet the submissions and hire the best fit in terms of the Board's needs in order to find the right candidate. Board Member Keel asked if the search firm received a bonus when local candidates are considered. Mr. Kennedy said the process and fees were the same regardless of who finds the candidate, the search firm does the same amount of work. Board Member Keel preferred not to have a search firm involved in the process for local candidates. Discussion followed regarding distinct types of search firms.

**Motion:** Move for the Board of Directors to accept moving forward to give staff direction to begin the search process for the President and CEO position including but not limited to a request for proposals for a national search firm.

**Moved by:** Board Member Ascuaga

**Seconded by:** Board Member Schieve

Mayor Schieve said she was in favor of finding the best candidates, regardless of their location. But the Board needed to avoid the pitfalls they continued to find over and over. She said she would not be voting in favor of the motion because she felt RSCVA needed to quit waving the carrot and think about the community. This process had been done over and over and was not working, so she thought something different needed to be done. Board Member Murdock said RSCVA needed to negotiate with the search firm. Board Member Silver agreed and added that the Board needed to do their due diligence to find a good search firm and cast a wide net to find the best candidate.

**Aye:** Board Members: Ascuaga, Bybee, Chapman, Keel, Murdock, and Silver

**Nay:** Board Member: Schieve

**Absent:** Board Member: Sferrazza

**Abstain:**

**Vote:** Motion passed 6-1-1



**G. BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPORTS, AND UPDATES**

Board Member Murdock invited everyone to attend the Nevada Commission on Tourism Rural Round-Up in Mesquite, April 11 through April 13.

Board Member Chapman recognized Mr. Art Jimenez. He had spent a week in Canada with Mr. Jimenez as a part of the Travel Nevada sales mission. Board Member Chapman said it was a pleasure to travel and work with Mr. Jimenez. There was strong interest in the region from Canadians as the country opens and starts to allow travel again.

Board Member Ascuaga asked if the Board could get a tour of the venues. Mr. Kennedy confirmed that tours could be given to four Board Members at a time to avoid a quorum.

**H. COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR BY THE PUBLIC**

Chair Bybee opened the floor to public comment. There was none, public comment was closed.

**I. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Bybee adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.

The meeting may be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/live/miG6mkbE9w8?feature=share>