

Status Notes of Exhibition Center Developments by Walt Rugland

January 24, 2011

Last week I received confirmation from the State that the Fox Cities Exhibition Center, Inc. has been registered as a Wisconsin non-stock corporation. So the organization is now a legal entity.

The first annual meeting of the corporation will be Friday, January 28. At this time a full board of directors will take over, bylaws will be passed and committees will be structured to pursue the objective of realization of an Exhibition Center during this window of attractive financing costs and construction prices and as outlined in the Community Coalition report. The Board will also authorize an Advisory Council whose members have indicated interest in supporting specific committee assignments.

Last Wednesday letters to the key partners of Montclair Partners (PVH owners) were sent by FedEx updating them on the FCEC initiative and asking for opportunity to discuss a partnership with the PVH. A FCEC Board committee will be following up on this facet of the effort. As indicated in the last status report, Jay Schumerth has been alerted regarding this contact.

Two (Tom Nelson and Mike Thomas) of the six invited candidates for Outagamie County Executive met with Karen Harkness and me along with OC Board Chair Helen Nagler (Anne Strauch sent regrets due to illness). There was good discussion with respect to potential project concerns within the County administration and Board about the proposal and the proposed site. As a result of the discussion I have done some more thinking about the potential impact of the Center on airport utilization and the overall benefit the County can realize by being home to a first class exhibition facility. Each component of the County's visitor offerings multiplies the enhancement of its attractive, winning image. We can list the attributes of Downtown Appleton, but beyond them are Fox Cities Stadium, the Fox River Mall and surroundings, USA Soccer, the River vision, the Nature Preserves, and more.

I have had brief discussions with Boldt to reflect some potential ideas with respect to possible County questions about design. These will likely be more focused after I brief the County Property Committee at its meeting tomorrow, Jan. 25. A Power Point style handout has been prepared for this meeting; let me know if you would like a copy.

Last Thursday noon Karen Harkness and I briefed the Fox Cities Lodging Assoc. There was a good turnout and some great discussion. The discussion focused on the eventual room tax question that will emerge after we have good design schematics and cost estimates, Montclair/Radisson agreement, County commitment to provide the site, City agreement to funding infrastructure, and firm expectation of other grants. The room tax is targeted at 3%, given the Coalition estimates of costs; the actual level will depend on other financing arrangements as they emerge. The tax would provide for a bond for construction and not be used for operating support. It would expire when the bonds are retired; (the 2% room tax supporting a bond for the FCPAC will expire in 8-9 more years). A 3% tax would provide as much as \$14 million.

Friday I met with Jim March, Town Administrator of Grand Chute. We discussed the various opportunities presented to Grand Chute by the Center initiative and he is going to suggest a Grand Chute rep for the FCEC Board. Jim came to the Fox Valley from Minnesota and he recognizes the value of a full capacity convention/exhibition facility for the broader community.

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