



MINUTES
December 21, 2010
12 p.m. – 2 p.m.
BCEC Room 153C

Attendees: *Partnership Members:* James Coyle, Rick Dimino, James Doolin, Scott Jordan, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Colleen Keating, Rep. John Keenan, Councillor William Linehan, Ellen McDonough, Charlayne Murrell-Smith, Joseph Nee, John Palmieri, James Rooney, Paul Sacco, Darryl Settles, Sam Tyler, Michael Widmer
Others in attendance (partial list): Maureen Shea Baker, Ali Butler, James Carmody, Mac Daniel, Howard Davis, Jim English, Katie Hauser, Milt Herbert, James Kennedy, Colleen Richards Powell, Lowell Richards, Ken Sinkiewicz, Kairos Shen, Bill Smith, Johanna Storella

1. Welcome & Recap

Mr. Rooney opened the meeting with an outline of the planned presentations. He asked members to consider the meeting “an open conversation” where the group would recap the year’s findings and ask themselves to consider what might be missing. The presentations were designed as a road map leading to the question “What happens next?” Mr. Rooney reminded Convention Partnership members that they didn’t have to solve every problem with a definitive answer. He suggested that some issues may be presented to the MCCA Board, elected leaders and legislative members - with several potential options – before moving forward.

2. What have we done?

Mr. Rooney began with a PowerPoint presentation to document the last year of Convention Partnership meetings. The presentation recapped the mission of the Partnership, their relationship to the MCCA and its board, and summarized a year’s worth of presentation topics. Mr. Rooney’s presentation is on file with these minutes.

- Mr. Sacco asked what steps would take place after the final recommendations were completed. Mr. Rooney said the process would be similar to the 1997 process to build and finance the BCEC: The Convention Partnership will decide early action steps and present them to the MCCA board, and some sort of legislative process will occur afterward.
- Mr. Richards asked Mr. Rooney to place more emphasis on the number of permanent jobs that will be created as a part of BCEC expansion and/or additional hotel development. He also asked that the final recommendations include points about the “broader impact” of conventions as described by Mr. Leo Jago’s November presentation to the Partnership.

3. Where are we today?

Mr. Davis presented slides that highlighted preliminary conclusions made throughout the last year by the Partnership. The conclusions included information gathered through careful market analysis of the BCEC , Hynes and Boston as a convention market, as well as studies of competitive meeting and convention markets. The preliminary conclusions were grouped by the 2010 summer working groups: Headquarters Hotel, Finance, and BCEC Expansion/Urban Context. Mr. Davis's presentation is on file with these minutes.

- In relation to Slide 30, Mr. Shen suggested that the Partnership take a position on the Johnson Report (agree or disagree) and clarify points about Johnson Report projections (i.e. proximate vs. city-wide hotel room availability, etc.).
- Mr. Shen also asked that the group analyze the city-wide hotel market over the last 10 years and clarify that hotel development has occurred in other parts of the city, even though there has not been as much hotel development as desired near the BCEC.
- Mr. Dimino asked that a final report include the conclusion that more hotel development would equal an expanded market. Hotel rooms within walking distance of the BCEC would make dual concurrent events possible at the BCEC.
- Ms. Moss Kanter asked that the Partnership address the BCEC's ability to outperform expectations in an unfavorable environment. If the BCEC has been successful (even with insufficient hotel room supply, smaller ballroom/exhibit hall, etc.), what is the impetus for change? Do some of the byproducts of this (i.e. necessary transportation to/from hotels) generate jobs? Is it a sustainable business strategy (i.e. operating with a competitive disadvantage, such as an inadequate inventory of proximate hotel rooms) or is a change necessary to maintain/grow market share?
- Ms. Moss Kanter also suggested that the Partnership think more carefully about recommendations for phasing and timing of development. She noted that each expansion phase has implications that must be addressed to combat arguments for delay of the project.
- Mr. Widmer asked that Mr. Herbert and the MCCA team clarify what lost business numbers truly represent. (i.e. were the 65 lost events confirmed or just speculative?). Mr. Sacco concurred that any lost business numbers cited in final recommendations should be solid and supportable.
- Ms. Moss Kanter asked if there was a way to show other construction projects that would match or exceed the job generation expected by hotel development or BCEC expansion. What other public investment opportunities are out there for people to compare to the project we're proposing? Mr. Widmer also noted that the Top 5 project would mean asking for public money and tradeoffs during a time of intense competition and limited funds.
- Ms. Moss Kanter noted that the true value of the tourism and hospitality industry to the Massachusetts economy is under appreciated. She suggested the Partnership emphasize the value of the tourism and hospitality industry by raising visibility so that the argument for expansion occurs with an understanding of the tourism and hospitality industry's importance to greater economic development. Mr. Rooney added that the focus has been placed heavily on visitor spending and that this project is an opportunity to address all the other Commonwealth industries that benefit from convention activity.

- Mr. Richards suggested that the Partnership articulate job generation benefits – both numbers of jobs and types of jobs. He felt the Partnership should emphasize that the hospitality industry is one of the few fields where someone with a high school diploma or associate’s degree can have a rewarding career and achieve a professional level leadership position, all within a single field. These positions cultivate local talent and keep it in the state.
- Mr. Dimino asked that the final report quantify how use of Back Bay hotels by BCEC events affects Hynes events.
- Mr. Sacco suggested analysis of booking patterns for hotel usage related to BCEC/Hynes compared to hotel usage from business and leisure travelers. Does BCEC/Hynes usage fill gaps?
- Mr. Dimino asked that the presentation explain why the hotel needs a ballroom and meeting rooms in addition to the convention center’s existing space. People may think that both facilities can share one ballroom and meeting, so the report needs to explain that each facility needs its own ballroom. The Westin Boston Waterfront is a prime example of a hotel that planned on utilizing BCEC space, but quickly realized it needed its own ballroom and meeting space.
- Mr. Richards suggested the Partnership be careful with the use of the term “ballroom.” Although the term is understood by industry insiders, it is not understood by the general public. He suggested the term “multipurpose space,” which better suggests the various functions it serves.

4. Where are we going?

Mr. Rooney concluded the meeting with an overview of a proposed four-month game plan for compiling the final recommendations. He suggested the group compile their analysis and answer four key questions:

- Why are we doing this?
- What do we propose to do?
- How much will it cost?
- How could it be paid for?

The answers to those four key questions will serve to guide the final report and implementation plan. Mr. Rooney also noted that the final report must address the previously recorded “tough questions.” Mr. Rooney’s presentation is on file with these minutes.

The meeting was adjourned at 2 p.m.

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