

**MINUTES OF THE METROPOLITAN ENTERTAINMENT & CONVENTION  
AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – MARCH 11, 2025**

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Entertainment & Convention Authority (“MECA”), a Nebraska nonprofit corporation, was called to order by Chairwoman Diane Duren at 1:11 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

**Roll Call:**

Present were: Chairwoman Diane Duren, Ms. Susie Buffett, Mr. Ben Gray, and Mr. Tom Kelley.

**Proof of Publication:**

Notice of the meeting was published in *The Daily Record* on March 4, 2025, and in the *Omaha World-Herald* on March 4, 2025.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Ms. Buffett moved for approval of the minutes of the February 18, 2025, MECA Board Meeting, seconded by Mr. Kelley.

Motion carried: 4-0.

**President/CEO Report:**

Mr. Roger Dixon reported attending a meeting with Lamp Rynearson, local Omaha general contractors, to discuss the new North Omaha Trail. The trail's goal is to create a connection from North Omaha south to downtown Omaha, linking with the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge expansion, commonly known as the "Baby Bob" pedestrian bridge, as well as the downtown RiverFront and the First Ave Trail in Council Bluffs.

The Baby Bob is still officially under construction, though many people have found ways around the barricades. Completion is expected before the start of the Men's College World Series (MCWS).

Expansion work continues, and while there were concerns about contaminated soil beneath the back drive, none has been found so far.

**Other Business:**

**Convention Center Sales & Marketing**

Ms. Denise Niebrugge stated that there are currently 128 events on the books, utilizing 257 event days for the current fiscal year. Since the February 18 Board meeting, 6 events with 15 event days and over 14,000 hotel room nights have been added.

### **Corporate Sales & Marketing Update**

Mr. Tom O’Gorman reported that the operations team is making progress with ice preparation for the Disney on Ice event, having started yesterday with the portable system.

A sponsorship agreement with HDR, Inc. is up for Board approval today, which is linked to four platinum club seats. If approved, all platinum club seats will be allocated. Additionally, a client decided not to renew their suite, which was promptly filled from MECA’s waiting list.

The two stadium shows tentatively scheduled for this summer have been cancelled. One artist opted to move their event inside the facility, while the other group chose to focus on touring in Europe.

### **Operations & IT Update**

Mr. Kevin Raymond reported that, despite facility precautions to address the region's extreme cold weather and the expectation of fewer issues this year due to modifications made in recent years, a sprinkler head malfunctioned in the Grand Hallway. This caused flooding that impacted the convention in progress; however, the disruption was minimal.

The portable ice maker arrived, but a technical issue with a cable required the chiller unit to be replaced. Despite the shorter turnaround time, the ice will be frozen and painted before the start of Disney on Ice.

The convention center expansion project is progressing smoothly. The team, in collaboration with Kiewit, is focused on establishing drive lanes for loading and unloading. Ensuring safety for everyone in and around the area remains the top priority while maintaining efficiency throughout the process.

### **Levy Food & Beverage Update**

Ms. Chris Van Dorn stated that 26 events were hosted in February, eight of which were in the arena, including the NSAA High School Wrestling Tournament. The event produced the highest sales of the month making up almost 30% of February’s revenues. Levy saw a 25% growth in revenue compared to last year’s tournament due to the two additional days with the boys and girls events being separated this year. Levy remains slightly ahead of budgeted sales by 2% for fiscal 2025 year-to-date. The bottom line is ahead of the budget by 4.1% with a year-to-date flow through of just over 80%.

Levy has undergone two external audits at CHI Health Center Omaha since the last Board of Directors meeting. The first was a safety and sanitation audit, typically conducted three times a year by an external company that partners with Levy nationwide. During the event, ten locations were evaluated, each receiving the highest rating of five stars, resulting in an overall five-star rating for the property. Additionally, this past weekend, there was an audit of the payment policy and compliance with the responsible alcohol service policy. Inspectors conducted unannounced observations at over 20 locations and found no violations of either policy by team members or volunteers throughout the entire event.

Levy enjoyed a fantastic opening day at the stadium on Sunday with the double-header. Fans enjoyed watching baseball in 70-degree weather, which contributed to higher-than-projected sales.

### **Public Relations Update**

Ms. Kristyna Engdahl reported that although it may feel early, active engagement with media partners has already begun to discuss comprehensive coverage plans for the Men's College World Series. One of the key highlights this year will be the return of an entire morning newscast, which will take place at the start of the Series. Media outlets rely on MECA not only to determine logistics but also to help curate content that will fill the show. Last year's collaboration was a great success, and MECA will continue this strong partnership, which is valuable - not only for the event itself but also for the NCAA and all partners involved. The morning newscast is just one component of the broader event coverage, but it significantly boosts the reach and demonstrates a strong community commitment from organizers. Being entrusted to manage such a high-profile project is something that has been earned through consistent delivery and positive outcomes.

Regarding MECA's digital presence, three key websites - CHI Health Center Omaha, Charles Schwab Field Omaha, and MECA - have recently undergone redesigns and have now been launched. These updates feature modern, user-friendly interfaces that better align with audience needs while enhancing functionality and visual appeal.

Additionally, the team is developing a series of informational videos for MECA's partners, specifically tailored for concerts and exhibitions. These videos will guide guests on accessing the back of the building during the ongoing construction phase over the next few years. While maps and other materials have already been made available, the instructional videos are expected to offer a more effective and engaging way to clarify the navigation process, address confusion among the team and partners, and ensure a smoother experience for all stakeholders.

Looking at the media monitoring data for CHI Health Center Omaha in February, concert announcements and Creighton basketball once again took center stage. The publicity generated from these activities amounted to about \$29.4 million in media earned, reaching approximately 3.2 billion people. A notable highlight was MSN.com picking up coverage of the state wrestling championship, which included vital "know before you go" information, as well a focus on girls' wrestling, an exciting area of growth that garnered significant attention. The Creighton Bluejays' continued success throughout the basketball season also made a major impact, with coverage in national outlets like *USA Today* and *Yahoo! Sports*, further increasing the facility's exposure on a national scale and solidifying MECA's presence as a key player in the region.

### **Committee Updates:**

#### **Internal Governance Committee**

Mr. Tom Kelley reported that the Internal Governance Committee met on Monday, March 10, 2025. In attendance were Ms. Diane Duren, Mr. Tom Kelley, Mr. Roger Dixon, Mr. Bob Freeman, Ms. Diane Mills, and Mr. Stephen Curtis, City of Omaha Finance Director.

The Committee reviewed the November 2024 Financial Statement, which was strong and in order. After overviews from and discussions with Ms. Mills, the Committee found the report to be reasonable compared to plan and prior periods, and consistent with standard MECA accounting practices.

In addition, the Committee also received an update on the convention center's expansion progress.

### **Contract Approvals:**

Chairwoman Duren indicated there is one contract requiring Board approval.

#### **HDR, Inc.**

**RESOLVED**, that the Advertising/Sponsorship Agreement between MECA and HDR, Inc. for advertising at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Roger Dixon as President/CEO is authorized to execute this agreement following its finalization in a form reasonably approved by counsel.

Chairwoman Duren invited public and Board comment and asked for a motion.

Moved by Ms. Buffett; seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0

### **Contracts Recently Awarded:**

MECA has recently awarded the following contracts:

- Garret's Lawn Service for exterior plant replacement at Charles Schwab Field Omaha.
- Mulhall's for mulch replenishment at Charles Schwab Field Omaha.

### **Next Board Meeting**

The next Board of Directors Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, April 16, 2025, at 9:15 a.m. in the MECA Board Room.

### **Executive Session**

Chairwoman Duren stated the time is 1:29 p.m. and invited a Motion to enter into closed Executive Session for purposes of discussing personnel, real estate and potential claims matters.

A Motion to go into Executive Session for these specified purposes was made by Ms. Buffett, seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0.

### **Adjournment**

At 1:37 p.m. a motion was made to come out of Executive Session, and to adjourn, made by Mr. Gray, seconded by Ms. Buffett.

Motion carried: 4-0

Adjournment 1:37 p.m.