

MINUTES OF THE METROPOLITAN ENTERTAINMENT & CONVENTION AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING – AUGUST 31, 2026

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 1:08 p.m. on Monday, August 31, 2026.

Roll Call:

Present were: Chairwoman Diane Duren, Ms. Susie Buffett, Mr. Tom Kelley and Mr. Jay Noddle. Mr. Ben Gray was not in attendance.

Proof of Publication:

Notice of the meeting was published in *The Daily Record* on August 24, 2026, and in the *Omaha World-Herald* on August 24, 2026.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Kelley moved for approval of the minutes of June 30, 2026, MECA Board Meeting, seconded by Ms. Buffett.

Motion carried: 4-0.

President/CEO Report:

Mr. Adam Straight noted that it has been a great summer and joked that he may have been responsible for bringing some New Orleans weather to the Midwest.

He reported that the summer has allowed the team to catch up on several internal projects and maintenance needs across MECA’s facilities while also preparing for the next quarters.

Mr. Straight added that two concerts are scheduled over the next two weeks and then turned the floor over to his team for additional updates.

Other Business:

Convention Center Sales & Marketing Update

Ms. Denise Niebrugge reported that there are currently 116 events scheduled, representing 222 event days. Since the June 30 Board meeting, 19 additional events have been secured, totaling 41 event days have been added, generating over 8,600 hotel room nights; and 33 license agreements have been signed.

Mr. Straight and the team also attended industry events in San Antonio and Indianapolis. At MPI in San Antonio, approximately 300 attendees visited the Omaha booth. At the ASAE Annual Meeting & Exposition in Indianapolis, more than 375 attendees visited the booth, generating 18

leads. The booth featured interactive elements highlighting Omaha attractions and the city's story, which generated strong engagement and interest.

The team continues to receive positive feedback about Omaha, along with frequent questions regarding the convention center expansion. There are currently 14 signed contracts utilizing the expansion and 40 additional proposals that could not have been pursued without added space.

The team is also working to accommodate short-term business opportunities while coordinating closely with internal staff on construction schedules and event access. Overall, there continues to be significant excitement and interest surrounding the expansion.

Operations & IT Update

Mr. Kevin Raymond stated that this summer's schedule has provided an opportunity to complete annual maintenance inspections and several recently approved Board projects.

Work continues on the Hall C project. Due to increased rainfall in August, progress has been slightly delayed; however, completion is still anticipated by October.

Annual maintenance activities have included electrical infrared testing, fire system inspections and seating inspections. Approximately 2,100 floor seats in the arena are being individually inspected, cleaned and maintained to ensure they are safe and in good condition for the upcoming season.

The AV control room project, approved at the previous Board meeting, is also well underway. The improvements will provide the production team with greater ability to showcase and utilize the arena's LED systems.

In addition, the new court production lighting system was activated for the first time on Friday. Additional programming and customization are still underway to enhance the game day production and that environment for volleyball, basketball and state wrestling. The goal is to have the system ready for a Board demonstration at the next meeting, followed by a media reveal.

Levy Food & Beverage Update

Ms. Chris VanDorn reported the team is preparing for a busy September, beginning with the Benson Boone concert tomorrow night. Based on anticipated per-capita spending, merchandise sales are expected to be particularly strong. Outdoor merchandise sales will begin on the front apron in the afternoon, followed by sales at five interior locations through the end of the show. Strong attendance is also anticipated.

The convention center continues to keep the sales, banquets and culinary teams extremely busy, with that activity expected to continue throughout September and beyond.

The arena team has also been focused on seasonal planning, maintenance checklists and new menu development in advance of Creighton basketball season beginning in October. As part of this process, Levy's data and analytics team provided national food and beverage trend information to help guide menu planning. National menu growth shows nachos, quesadillas, multi-protein

offerings are up 15% to 26%, desserts are up 12% and fruit-based desserts are up nearly 10%. Popular flavor trends include Hot Honey, Honey Garlic, Nashville Hot and Carolina Gold Barbecue. Smashburgers also continue to perform strongly, with the team highlighting the success of those introduced at the ballpark during this year's Men's College World Series. Levy will have available several variations of these items and more available throughout the arena this season with about 25 to 30 new items in total.

On the beverage side, demand for non-alcohol and low-alcohol options continues to grow significantly. The team is working with distributors to ensure these products are intentionally placed and readily available to guests.

Finally, the team was recognized for earning the highest rating in its division on a recent risk-based internal audit. The two-day onsite audit was conducted during the Men's College World Series and included an in-depth review of high-risk operational areas, including finance, group sales, information technology, operations, responsible alcohol service, legal, risk management, purchasing and human resources. It was the first in-person audit conducted at the location in several years, and the team was commended for its strong performance.

Strategic Initiative Update

Ms. Kristyna Engdahl stated that since the last Board meeting several initiatives were launched designed to position the expansion and renovation in front of meeting planners now, well ahead of our fall 2027 opening. That includes an ongoing print and digital ad campaign in *Meetings Magazine*, built around the idea that we're not just bigger, we're better, pairing architectural renders with real-life imagery to make the space feel tangible and urgent. For the first time, real construction imagery is being put in front of a national planning audience, and the building is starting to speak for itself. The campaign also introduces arena availability as a bookable option; a message not led with before and one that expands how planners think about what our building can offer.

Beyond traditional advertising, the team has launched a live, SEO-optimized Meet in Omaha webpage built specifically for the meeting planner audience, and a deliberate newsroom content strategy to improve our search standing over time. MECA has also been intentional about elevating our meeting planning staff on platforms such LinkedIn, so that when someone searches for meeting planners in Omaha, our people surface. It's an organic strategy that puts human faces on the destination before a planner ever picks up the phone.

MECA's leadership positioning efforts continue. In June, an executive spotlight series was introduced, putting faces to the organization. That rollout has now concluded across the full leadership team, which has added increased visibility, stronger credibility and a growing sense that MECA's leadership is present in the community's broader conversation. That momentum was also used alongside the search for the final piece of this team, MECA's eventual chief commercial officer.

Another initiative was stakeholder engagement. MECA's Men's College World Series suite hospitality strategy brought the right people into the room during that event, and that work carried

directly into the Populous visioning sessions. In conjunction with those sessions, subsequent one-on-one conversations were had with arts organizations, community influencers and civic voices to understand where they might contribute to or be shaped by MECA's long-term planning. Ms. Engdahl has also heard from groups who learned about the effort and are eager to get aligned. The goal is to carry the energy from last week forward and shape these conversations into something cohesive, rather than let them drift into silos, as it's been in the past.

And finally, premium seating. A targeted outreach was done to engage current clients around additional purchase opportunities, and it resonated, both visually and in message. The team followed that with a survey seeking feedback on the future of premium seating, and the response has been telling: some clients were simply glad to be asked. That alone tells us we're already moving in the right direction.

Capital Projects Update:

Ms. Katie Bassett reported that she has appreciated the opportunity to become more involved in the convention center expansion and renovation over the past two months.

On the exterior, completed glass is now visible from Riverfront Drive. The loading dock is also taking shape, with several concrete pours completed over the past month. Metal panels are expected to begin going up within the next few weeks, which will move the addition closer to being fully enclosed.

Inside the expansion, walls are beginning to go up, mechanical and plumbing systems are being installed, and the meeting room spaces are becoming more clearly defined. On the renovation side, meeting rooms 215 and 216 have been completed and are already in use. Work continues on the Junior Ballroom, southeast restrooms and pre-function area, where architectural features such as wave wall panels and new room entries are beginning to take shape.

The team is also working to ensure that new building systems integrate properly with existing systems, including lighting, linear strip lighting and in-house sound. Additional opportunities for facility improvements, including the Grand Hall HVAC system, continue to be evaluated so improvements can be made both aesthetically and functionally during available non-event windows.

In October, renovation of the kitchen is scheduled to begin. The work is expected to take approximately three months and will require Levy to temporarily relocate its operations. A containerized temporary kitchen and prep area will be set up on the loading dock during construction.

The expansion and renovation remain on time and on budget. The expansion is expected to be completed in approximately 11 months, with the renovation scheduled to conclude by the end of 2027.

Finally, the Board packet today includes an agreement with APMA for renovation of the CHI Health Center administrative offices. Design evaluation is currently underway with the goal of creating a more updated, functional and collaborative workspace.

Public Relations Update:

Ms. Grace Safford stated that Adam and MECA continue to be featured as leaders in the Omaha metro in local and national media.

The *Midlands Business Journal* featured Adam as a leading voice in the Omaha/Council Bluffs tourism industry in an article published Friday.

Meetings Today also highlighted MECA. In the article, Adam discussed the CHI Health Center's convention center expansion and renovation, why meeting planners should add Omaha to their shortlist of destinations, and the city's overall growth.

Also representing MECA in the media is our Chief Strategy Officer, Kristyna Engdahl. She was featured in the *Midlands Business Journal* as a part of MBJ's "Midlands Leaders Q&A" series. Another great way in which we continue to celebrate and feature the incredible people at MECA.

Lastly, in collaboration with the Operations Team, a new pre-pay parking program was promoted 'MECA's - Know Before You Go' email ahead of the Benson Boone concert. The email went out yesterday morning, and as of this morning, 141 of the 150 pre-paid parking passes were purchased.

Committee Updates:

Internal Governance Committee

Mr. Tom Kelley reported that the Internal Governance Committee met on Wednesday, August 19, 2026. In attendance were Ms. Diane Duren, Mr. Tom Kelley, Mr. Adam Straight, Mr. Bob Freeman, and Ms. Diane Mills.

The Committee reviewed the 2026 Men's College World Series financial performance, commonly referred to as the "Waterfall." It was reported that the event performed well financially and that MECA's partnership with the NCAA continues to be strong. The MECA team was commended for its excellent work in producing and supporting this year's Men's College World Series.

Real Estate Committee

Mr. Jay Noddle stated that the recent Populous visioning sessions brought together a broad group of stakeholders and community leaders, including representatives from the development community. The discussions were described as informative and encouraging.

Looking ahead, several development projects are expected to begin moving through the City approval process in the coming months, including multifamily housing, office and retail projects, independent retail and hotel developments. That development activity is expected to continue steadily through the winter and into 2027, helping fill in additional areas surrounding the district.

The streetcar project continues to make good progress, with visible improvements occurring along the route. The Omaha Streetcar has also been branded “OSCAR,” and related promotional efforts have been well received.

Finally, Mr. Noddle noted that broader discussions continue regarding truck traffic and access in the area. While several potential solutions are being considered, he emphasized that there is unlikely to be a single solution and that efforts are focused on minimizing negative impacts as future decisions are made.

Contract Approvals:

Chairwoman Duren indicated there are seven contracts requiring Board approval.

Mobile Kitchen Solutions

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and Mobile Kitchen Solutions for a turnkey temporary kitchen set-up while the main kitchen at CHI Health Center Omaha is renovated, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Noddle; seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0

DLR Group, Inc.

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and DLR Group, Inc. for architectural interior design and MEP Engineering for the renovation of the Convention Center at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Noddle; seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0

AmpThink

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and AmpThink for data switches for the Convention Center Expansion at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Gray; seconded by Mr. Noddle.

Motion carried: 4-0

Security Equipment, Inc.

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and Security Equipment, Inc. for surveillance camera upgrades at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Noddle; seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0

Johnson Controls

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and Johnson Controls for chilled water valve replacement at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Gray; seconded by Mr. Noddle.

Motion carried: 4-0

Diode Technologies

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and Diode Technologies for television replacements at CHI Health Center Omaha, as more fully described on the attached summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Gray; seconded by Mr. Noddle.

Motion carried: 4-0

Nebraska Furniture Mart

RESOLVED, that the Agreement between MECA and Nebraska Furniture Mart, Inc. for television replacements at Charles Schwab Field Omaha, as more fully described on the attached

summary, is hereby approved, and Adam Straight as President/CEO is authorized on behalf of MECA to execute the 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 Mr. Noddle; seconded by Mr. Gray.

Motion carried: 4-0

Next Board Meeting

The next Board of Directors Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 8, 2026, at 1:15 p.m. in the MECA Board Room.

Executive Session

Chairwoman Duren stated the time is 1:40 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. Kelley.

Motion carried: 4-0.

Adjournment

At 2:18 p.m. a motion was made to come out of Executive Session, and to adjourn, made by Mr. Kelley, seconded by Ms. Buffett.

Motion carried: 4-0

Adjournment 2:18 p.m.