



## AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, January 24, 2024; 12:00 P.M.

**Location:** The BMO Center Board Room—Lower Level  
300 Elm Street, Rockford, IL 61101

### MINUTES

**Board Members Present:** Craig Thomas Rudy Valdez Staci Brown  
John Phelps Bobbie Holzwarth  
Tom Walsh Dan McMahon

**Board Members Absent:** Geno Iafrate Megan McCoy

**Others Present:** Alderman Chad Tuneberg  
Alderman Frank Beach  
Kevin McCarthy, Winnebago County Liaison  
Tim Rollins, Attorney  
Julie Thomas, Executive Director, Rockford Symphony Orchestra  
Vanessa Hita, Executive Director, Rockford Dance Company  
Epic Jones, President, Artistic Director, The West Side Show Room  
Beth Howard, Executive Director, Friends of the Coronado  
Alderman Mark Bonne

**Staff Present:** Gretchen Gilmore, General Manager, ASM Rockford  
Doug Johnson, Assistant General Manager, ASM Rockford  
Jackie Powers, Finance Coordinator/RAVE Board Secretary, ASM Rockford

**Chairman Thomas called the meeting to order at 12:05 P.M.**

Craig Thomas calls the meeting to order.

**MINUTES** – The minutes from the December 6, 2023, meeting are reviewed and approved.

***MOTION: To approve the December 6, 2023, minutes made by Rudy Valdez, second by Tom Walsh. Motion passes unanimously.***

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- **Finance** **Mr. Tom Walsh, Chair**

Tom Walsh defers to the Treasurer's report.

- **Executive** **Mr. Craig Thomas, Chair**

Craig Thomas defers to the Chairman’s report.

- **DEIB Advisory Committee** **Mr. Rudy Valdez, Chair**

Rudy Valdez reports the DEIB Committee will be meeting the second Thursday of each month, and their first meeting was January 11, 2024. Attention is called to the December and January DEIB Pledge updates in the board packets. Rudy Valdez informs that Gretchen Gilmore will be attending the Coalition of Latino Leaders meeting in March to answer questions and give an overview of opportunities at each of our properties. Rudy Valdez gives a brief overview of the Coalition of Latino Leaders to the board. Gretchen Gilmore reports on a recent team-building event at the Northern Illinois Food Bank.

- **Program Advisory Committee** **Mr. Geno Iafrate**

No report at this time.

- **Marketing and Social Media Committee** **Ms. Megan McCoy, Chair**

No report at this time.

- **Capital Planning Working Group** **Mr. John Phelps, Chair**

John Phelps defers to the General Manager’s report.

- **Hockey Advisory Committee** **Mr. Craig Thomas, Chair**

Craig Thomas reports he is coordinating with the Rockford IceHogs and Chicago Blackhawks as to participants and the schedule for regular Hockey Advisory Committee meetings.

#### **TREASURER’S REPORT – Mr. Tom Walsh, Treasurer**

Tom Walsh reports November and December were both strong months and informs the board there is a hard copy of the approved annual audit in the board packet. Tom Walsh defers to Gretchen Gilmore to discuss the November and December 2023 financials.

Gretchen Gilmore reviews the November financials, highlighting events at both venues. Gretchen Gilmore reports that ASM Global was able to negotiate better service fee rates on our behalf with TicketMaster, resulting in higher net profit. Craig Thomas and Gretchen Gilmore explain higher profits on IceHogs games can be partly attributed to higher attendance and higher Food and Beverage income. Gretchen Gilmore revisits the issue of higher electricity invoices and reports the higher bills are part of the recoupment of an over-payment of Carbon Free Adjustment credits, which will continue through 2027. Gretchen Gilmore relays she has been in contact with the City of Rockford, and they are also being charged the higher rates. This unforeseen issue is expected to have an impact on the budget. A discussion follows regarding the increased rate of usage, the rate of recapture of the rebate, and reduction of use in the future. Chairman Thomas requests Attorney Tim Rollins look into the issue and determine if there is any action being taken by others in regard to the high rate of recoupment.

Craig Thomas requests a season comparison of average attendance for the Rockford IceHogs. Gretchen Gilmore will provide the information.

***MOTION: To approve the November 2023 financials made by Tom Walsh, second by Bobbie Holzwarth. Motion passes unanimously.***

Gretchen Gilmore reviews December events and Food and Beverage point of sale profits, explaining December outperformed its budget. Gretchen Gilmore anticipates having the financial forecast available for review at the February 2024 Board Meeting. Tom Walsh clarifies that we have reached the “break-even” point of the budget sooner than expected for a seasonal business and expects positive results for the rest of the year. Chad Tuneberg praises the profit increase and inquires as to the increase of IceHogs game revenue. Gretchen Gilmore explains the IceHogs have over doubled season ticket membership, have increased their group sales, and have capitalized on selling different areas of the arena. Additionally, group attendance continues to rise as we move away from the previous shutdown. Gretchen Gilmore informs the board there will be nine IceHogs games in the month of February.

***MOTION: To approve the December 2023 financials made by Bobbie Holzwarth, second by Tom Walsh. Motion passes unanimously.***

#### **GENERAL MANAGER’S REPORT – Ms. Gretchen Gilmore, GM**

Gretchen Gilmore defers to Doug Johnson who provides programming updates. Doug Johnson reviews recent successfully completed events and upcoming programming at both venues. Doug Johnson informs the board that some shows will be using a different ticketing system through AEG per our agreement with ASM.

Gretchen Gilmore reviews upcoming IceHogs events. Gretchen Gilmore reports the Park Avenue window project with the City of Rockford is moving forward and the LED light conversion in the theatre is ongoing. Gretchen Gilmore informs the board there have been a couple of patron incident reports at Coronado shows.

Doug Johnson reviews current and upcoming events for both venues. Rudy Valdez discusses an upcoming event at the Coronado during February for Black History Month. With help from the City of Rockford, the event will be free and will include an essay contest, choir, and speakers. Doug Johnson informs the board that our Ashley Minnick, Director of Event Management, has been nominated for Billboard’s 40 Under 40 award.

Gretchen Gilmore reports we have been given the green light from the City of Rockford to move forward with event planning for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration and Friday Night Flix at Davis Park. The exterior façade project for the Coronado will be advertised for bids in March. Gretchen Gilmore informs the board that updates and improvements in lighting, the sprinkler system, and the Park Avenue window project, continue at the Coronado Performing Arts Center.

Gretchen Gilmore updates the board on building renovations. Concerns about the construction of the BMO Center box office have been addressed. The new website is on track to be live this Spring. A leaking broken pipe during an event has been repaired and staff are commended for how the situation was managed with patrons in the building. Logistical problems and how they were addressed brought on by the recent cold snap at Disney on Ice are discussed.

Gretchen Gilmore reports the Rockford IceHogs have contracted with Jones Signs for the illuminated BMO signs on top of the building in 6-8 weeks. The building automation system is going well and working properly and has signaled some equipment to be updated or repaired.

#### **COUNSEL’S REPORT – Attorney Tim Rollins**

Tim Rollins reports that he has not heard back regarding the Parking IGA and will follow up with the relevant parties.

#### **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

Chairman Thomas states discussions are ongoing with the City of Rockford and Winnebago County regarding the IGA with RAVE, and he will keep the board updated as things move forward. Craig Thomas introduces Julie Thomas, Executive Director of The Rockford Symphony Orchestra for a short informative presentation regarding the symphony and its relationship as a Resident Company to the Coronado and the Rockford region as a whole. The text of Julie Thomas' remarks is attached to these minutes.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

None at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT** – The Authority Board adjourned at 1:01 P.M.

***MOTION: To adjourn made by Rudy Valdez, second by Bobbie Holzwarth. Motion passes unanimously.***

Respectfully Submitted

Jackie Powers, Authority Board Secretary/ FOIA Officer

Attachment: RSO Executive Director Remarks

RAVE Presentation

Julie Thomas, Executive Director Rockford Symphony Orchestra

1/24/24

In 1934 during a time of amazing challenges for our country and world, our community chose to celebrate Rockford's centennial by creating an orchestra. This cultural institution formed the framework for the artistic vibrancy that we experience in Rockford today. In every year since, with the exception of the early years of World War II and the COVID-19 pandemic, the RSO has brought music to the Rockford region. This year we are celebrating our 90th anniversary and the first season with our new Music Director Yaniv Attar.

Music brings enrichment and beauty into our lives, something the RSO believes is critical to a healthy and thriving community. I think all of us here know why that's important. We want people to choose to live in Rockford. And of course, to spend their entertainment dollars here.

The mission of the RSO is to lead in the creation of vibrant music experiences that enlighten, educate, and entertain. Being a nonprofit is unique. Serving our community is the priority over profit.

The RSO is a community asset, and we are honored to be a resident company of the Coronado Performing Arts Center. So much of our identity is tied into the Coronado. This beautiful, historic venue is as much a part of the concert experience as the music itself. It is a treasure to be shared with the community.

We value the ability to use the Coronado for a discounted rental rate. But as a reminder, we pay for all labor costs, cleaning, security, and other production expenses. As an example, the total cost to use the Coronado for Holiday Pops for the two days we used the facility was \$10,188.

In addition, each ticket we sell is charged a facility fee and amusement tax. So far this season, RSO tickets sales, including for the Nutcracker, produced more than \$16,000 from facility fees, and another nearly \$7,500 in amusement tax. Plus, we estimate \$135,000 is spent on parking and dining in Rockford before or after a performance. In just four months, RSO performances generated nearly \$160,000 of revenue for the city of Rockford, Rockford business, and the Coronado.

Coming back from Covid has been difficult. Many in our audience were slow to return to live performances. I'm delighted to share that each concert this season has sold more tickets than the concert before. Ending in a sell out for Holiday Pops! Nutcracker, which is our collaboration with the Rockford Dance Company, was a near sell out for the public performance, and a complete sell out for the student matinee.

What is different about being a resident company is that we are not just presenting arts and entertainment – we are producing it. While we are a fully professional orchestra, we invite local performers to join us. In addition to the orchestra, Holiday Pops had 80 adult and 50 student singers on stage. The Nutcracker, co-presented with another resident company the Rockford Dance Company, featured 80 local children and adults in the cast. Performing on the stage of the Coronado Theatre is a tremendous thrill and could be a life changing experience for a young person. These opportunities are only available through a local production.

I would be remiss if I didn't advocate for continued maintenance to preserve the historical charm of the Coronado as well as the parts of the facility that make it a good orchestra hall, which was one of the priorities of the renovation, specifically the enhancement system, the orchestra shell, and the continuation of well-trained stagehands and staff. I also must advocate for the importance of being able to rehearse on the stage. It is essential to a productive rehearsal – to ensure the sound is balanced and the stage is safely set up for performers, and that the final product is at the level our community expects and deserves.

As you finalize the intergovernmental agreement, I ask that we make more official the parameters of being a resident company. I appreciate the opportunity to keep the lines of communication open to express our needs and how we can best complement all the Coronado has to offer.

Thank you and I'm happy to address any questions.