



## Five Flags Civic Center Advisory Commission Meeting January 18, 2022

- COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Bryce Parks, Mackenzie Blau, Brenda Christner. Participating by phone are Rod Bakke and Tyler Daugherty
- COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None
- STAFF PRESENT:** HR Cook, Jesse Gavin, Jacquelyn Pfohl, Julie Husemann, Aaron Rainey
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Marie Ware (by phone)
- CALL TO ORDER:** Vice Chair Daugherty called the meeting to order.
- MINUTES APPROVED:** Commissioner Parks motioned and Commissioner Blau seconded, to approve the minutes of October 25, 2021 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.
- INTRODUCTION OF COMMISSIONER BRENDA CHRISTNER AND OATH OF OFFICE:** Five Flags General Manager HR Cook introduced new Commissioner Brenda Christner, who replaces Nicholas Huff. Christner explained that she moved to Dubuque roughly two years ago to be nearer to her grandchildren and has felt inspired to be more involved in the community, seeing the Civic Center Commission as a good way to do so. Oath of Office was administered by Five Flags Marketing Manager Jesse Gavin.
- ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Daugherty expressed interest in moving from Vice Chair to Chair of the FFCCC, and was nominated by Blau with a second by Bakke. Vote approved 5-0. Bakke then nominated himself to serve as Vice Chair. Seconded by Blau. Approved 5-0.
- UPDATE BY LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER MARIE WARE:** Ware explained that the City Council will hold a work session about the potential expansion of Five Flags Center on January 24 and encouraged Commission members to be present or participate virtually, though there will be no public input at the work session. Consultants from CSL International will participate in the session virtually. The purpose of the work session will be to bring the current members of the City Council up to speed on the proposed project, including an overview of the previous feasibility studies and public input, as well as updating them on what has happened since the issue was tabled by the Council in 2020. Because it is a work session and not a regular council meeting, no action can be taken. City staff has identified potential dates for a referendum, should the Council choose to go that route. The earliest such date would be in September of this year. Any action taken by the council would have to come at a regular meeting. Cook also mentioned that a study of the potential economic impact has been commissioned by Dubuque Main Street and is expected to be completed in the coming week or two.

**UPDATE BY HR COOK  
ON CAPITAL  
IMPROVEMENT  
PROJECTS:**

Cook explained that among the projects being handled by Five Flags Center staff include the purchase of new basketball goals. The previous goals have been in place for decades and hang from the ceiling, which at times impedes production setup for shows. New goals will be the “roll in” variety commonly used in NBA and major college basketball arenas. New chairs for the arena floor are also in the works. Projects going through the city include new carpet for the theater. Cook believes the hiring of a Leisure Services Project Manager will make capital improvements easier by taking some things off of Ware’s plate.

**UPDATE BY HR COOK  
ON SHUTTERED  
VENUES GRANTS:**

Cook reminded the Commission that the facility received two grants from the state of Iowa. The city has now received the money, and is the process of transferring it to Five Flags Center. Among projects to be funded by the grants are the purchase of new projectors for the facility, particularly the Five Flags Theater. The current projectors are between 20 and 25 years old. Total cost of replacements will be roughly \$45,000. A new ice machine has already been purchased and installed. Sound system improvements are also being considered. Additional funds have also been earmarked for creating an Assistant Maintenance Manager position to help ease the eventual retirement of longtime Five Flags employee Bob Richardson.

**EVENTS REVIEW AND  
BOOKINGS UPDATE:**

Cook noted that Five Flags Center’s bookings have returned to 2018/2019 levels. Larger concerts are keeping up, despite concerns they would focus on larger venues coming out of COVID. Five Flags has begun working with many new promoters and agents since the pandemic. Between 35 and 40 events are currently on sale, with new bookings being announced all the time. COVID is still impacting ticket sales and attendance. Five Flags has been seeing up to 20% “no shows” which reflects industry-wide trends.

**INTRODUCTION OF  
NEW STAFF:**

Cook introduced new Events and Operations Director Aaron Rainey. Rainey comes to Five Flags Center after most recently being the Entertainment Director at the Diamond Jo Casino in Dubuque for ten years. He has more than 25 years experience in the entertainment industry, including his time at the Diamond Jo and a previous radio career. Cook explained that Five Flags is again seeking to hire a new Food and Beverage Manager, with a decision hopefully coming in the next week. He mentioned that he’s excited by the staff that is in place and their ability to lead the facility into a possible new era with potential expansion on the horizon.

**STAFF REPORTS:**

Director of Finance Julie Husemann presented the most recently available financial statement for Five Flags Center, which was completed at the end of November. At that time, the facility had taken in about \$213,000 in revenue, while expenses were roughly \$530,000. Utility costs are staying below budget. The current forecast would see the facility meet the city’s benchmark, but miss the budget set by ASM Global.

Cook also noted that Five Flags Center worked with the American Red Cross to house 37 residents of the Canfield Hotel following a fire there in early December. He praised Red Cross staff for being impeccably organized and very easy to work with. The Canfield residents were at Five Flags Center for approximately four days before being relocated. The city will be re-imbursed by the Red Cross for “hard expenses,” such as staff hours, restroom supplies, etc.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No public comment was given in person, but commissioners had received a letter from Tim Hitzler, who questioned the financial projections of a potentially expanded Five Flags Center.

**ADJOURN;  
VOTE:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Bakke, seconded by Parks. The motion passed unanimously.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Tuesday, January 18, 2022.