

ARENA DISTRICT STEERING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Committee Members Present:

Mayor Kelly Girtz, Committee Chair
Commissioner Allison Wright
Commissioner John Culpepper
David Bradley, Athens Chamber of Commerce
Jennifer Zwirn, Classic Center Authority
Tres Small, Classic Center Authority
Jason Leonard, Downtown Development Authority

Committee Members Absent:

Staff:

Brad Griffin, Acting Manager
Andrew Saunders, Interim-Assistant Manager
Ilka McConnell, Interim-Assistant Manager
Judd Drake, County Attorney

Chinesia Thompson, Executive Assistant
(Recorder)

Visitors:

Paul Cramer, Classic Center

Committee Chair Mayor Kelly Girtz called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

A. Approval of Minutes:

The Committee Chair opened the meeting by entertaining a motion to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2025 meeting. During the discussion, members revisited a prior motion concerning quarterly updates on performance related to the Classic Center's revenue and expenditure pro forma, with particular attention to bond repayment. Interim Assistant Manager Andrew Saunders mentioned that staff recommended replacing the previous summary statement with a more detailed pro forma, which had been shared with Athens-Clarke County in August 2024.

Commissioner Wright moved to amend the current agenda by adding an item to clarify the pro forma, designating it as Item D. The motion was seconded by Jennifer Zwirn and passed unanimously. David Bradley then moved to approve the April 4, 2025 meeting minutes, with Tres Small seconding. The motion carried.

B. Updated Parking Plan Report from Classic Center Authority

Paul Cramer from the Classic Center Authority presented an updated parking plan proposing the addition of 424 spaces to the existing deck by extending it eastward over the rail line. This expansion, designed by Smallwood Reynolds, would bring the structure to the edge of the Multimodal Transportation Center. The estimated project cost is \$15.9 million, to be financed through bonds with an annual debt service of \$975,000 over 25 years. Anticipated parking revenue is \$1.5 million annually, yielding a net gain of approximately \$300,000 after expenses. This plan replaces a previously proposed, more expensive 1,300-space structure and addresses the increased demand generated by recent events like sold-out arena shows. While approval from the Arena District Steering Committee is not required, the plan will proceed to the

Mayor and Commission for conceptual approval, potentially by mid-June, with construction targeted to begin by early fall.

C. Finalize Development Facilitator Job Description

The committee reviewed the revised job description for the Development Facilitator position, a key role designed to support and coordinate the public-private development process within the Arena District. The updated description outlines qualifications such as experience in public-private partnerships, knowledge of architectural, engineering, and construction processes, and familiarity with financial instruments used in development financing. A new qualification was added during the meeting to emphasize the ability to engage with key stakeholders, including downtown businesses, hotels, the Classic Center Authority, and the University of Georgia. The job posting will remain open for four weeks, followed by a two-week review period by the committee. Committee members requested a follow-up on confidentiality and whether portions of the selection process could occur in executive session.

Funding for the position is proposed to be shared equally between the Classic Center Authority and the Unified Government's Tax Allocation District (TAD) funds. Additional clarifications were made to the job description, including updating the name of the "Akins Ford Arena" and specifying that the committee referenced in the responsibilities is the Arena District Steering Committee.

A motion was made by Commissioner Wright to approve the Development Facilitator job description with the following amendments:

- Correct the naming to "Akins Ford Arena"
- Identify the "committee" as the Arena District Steering Committee
- Add a bullet point under qualifications: "Understanding and experience with financial instruments to support public-private projects"
- Include a new bullet point under qualifications: "Ability to engage with downtown stakeholders, the Classic Center Authority, and the University of Georgia"

The motion was seconded by Jennifer Zwirn and was approved unanimously.

D. Clarification of Pro Forma

The committee revisited a previous discussion regarding quarterly financial updates related to the Classic Center's performance, particularly in connection with bond repayment. Interim Assistant Manager Andrew Saunders clarified that, moving forward, staff recommends utilizing a more detailed version of the revenue/expenditure pro forma that was originally shared with Athens-Clarke County in August 2024. This version includes more comprehensive line items, offering greater transparency and clarity on both revenues and expenses.

The Committee agreed that this format would improve the committee's ability to monitor financial performance and bond repayment metrics. It was emphasized that while some figures within the pro forma may have shifted slightly since its original publication the August 2024 format provides the best framework for consistency in reporting and ongoing evaluation.

A motion was made by Jason Leonard to adopt the August 2024 detailed pro forma format for all future quarterly performance updates related to the Classic Center's revenue and

expenditures. Commissioner Culpepper seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

The committee discussed the next meeting date and time. Set the next meeting for June 4th at 10am.

Commissioner Wright made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jennifer Zwirn seconded. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 10:48 a.m.