

Columbus Sports & Entertainment Authority

Organizational Meeting

Minutes

December 8, 2025, • 2:00 pm

Columbus Civic Center, Hospitality Suites

400 4th Street, Columbus, GA 31901

ATTENDANCE:

Voting Members Present – Andy G. Luker (Chair), Ashley Woitena (Secretary), Herman E. Lewis, Jr (Treasurer), Mike Welch, Morgan Moore and Gerald Miley

Voting Members Absent – Robert L. Wadkins Jr. (Vice Chair), Will Taylor and Charles Jim Rutland

Ex-Officio Members Present – Deputy City Manager Lisa Goodwin, Director Holli Browder, Director Ryan Pruett, Lt. Kelly Phillips, Charles Auer, and Jeff Croop

Ex-Officio Members Absent – Director Forrest Toelle

Visitor(s) Present: Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge, Assistant City Attorney Lucy Sheftall, Clerk of Council Lindsey McClemore, and City Councils

1. Call to Order

Chair Andy Luker called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM.

Minutes for November 10, 2025, approved.

- Minor change to minutes = Secretary Ashley 'Wotenia' to 'Woitena'

2. Roll Call

- Authority Department Secretary – Zeanne Abano, Civic Center

3. New Business

- **Clarifying Authority's Purpose and Executive Director Role:**
 - i. No vote required to excuse absent members, verbal acknowledgement sufficient.
 - ii. Non-voting members cannot send substitutes in their absence.
 - iii. Sports and Entertainment Authority created to consolidate and improve facility management efficiency and profitability.
 - iv. Executive Director position proposed to oversee all sports and entertainment facilities; no operational or staffing changes planned.
- **Facility Oversight: Liberty Theater, Civic Center, South Commons:**
 - i. Liberty Theater currently closed for renovations and construction
 - ii. Operating structure and management model for Liberty Theater remained undecided; council holds authority.

- iii. Liberty Theater is temporarily managed under Civic Center; final responsibility lies with council.
 - iv. Confusion exists regarding authority and reporting structure between Civic Center, Liberty Theater, and other facilities.
 - v. Council and advisory board continue discussion to clarify management, transparency, and operational intentions.
- **Strategic Planning, Mission Statement, and Financials:**
 - i. Executive director position identified as key for authority operations and collaboration.
 - ii. MOUs to be developed with Parks & Rec, Sports Council, and other entities for South Commons.
 - iii. Authority executive to assume functions of former Civic Center director and coordinate with City Departments.
 - iv. Short-term Goal: to hire executive director; Long-term Goal: to achieve financial self-sustainability (operate in the black).
 - v. Mission Statement and Strategic Vision to be developed; 2–3-year MOU with Parks & Rec proposed for operational continuity.
- **Governance, Bylaws, and Conflict of Interest:**
 - i. Ordinance and bylaws define authority structure; ordinance is difficult to change.
 - ii. Job description for executive director unclear, especially regarding Liberty Theater and other facilities.
 - iii. Authority over A.J McClung Stadium and South Commons facilities remains with Parks & Rec; executive director role involves collaboration, not direct control.
 - iv. Collaboration with other entities through memorandums of understanding is expected; operational clarity may take 2-3 years.
 - v. Success depends on hiring the right executive director to coordinate with city and facility leaders.
- **Facility Preservation, Subcommittees, and Next Steps:**
 - i. Council discussed need for a subcommittee focused on facility preservation and strategic planning.
 - ii. Current funding (TAD Dollars) for A.J McClung Stadium is insufficient; alternative revenue sources are required.
 - iii. Golf authority previously identified 90% of assets as outdated; strategic upgrades improved financial performance.
 - iv. Emphasis is placed on hiring the right director and using a search firm for best candidate selection.
 - v. Next meeting to review job description and discuss future vision for facilities.

4. Old Business

- **Bylaws:** No Changes; will bring up to next meeting
- **A.J McClung Stadium and South Commons Facility Tour Schedule:** Andy Luker (Chair) will send out three (3) available dates for board members to tour the facility and set the schedule by January meeting.
- **Monthly Board Meeting:** The schedule has been changed *from 2:00 pm to 1:00 pm, every second Monday of every month.*

5. Public Comment – *NONE*

6. Adjournment – *Meeting adjourned at 3:18 pm, Mike Welch*

Minutes Recorded by: Zeanne Abano, Civic Center, Authority Department Secretary

*Next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, January 12, 2026, at 1:00 pm,***

Columbus Civic Center Hospitality Suites, 400 4th St Columbus, GA 31901