

# Columbus Sports & Entertainment Authority

## Minutes

March 9, 2026 • 1:00 pm

Columbus Civic Center, Hospitality Suites

400 4<sup>th</sup> St, Columbus, GA 31901

---

### ATTENDANCE:

Voting Members Present – Andy G. Luker (Chair), Robert L. Wadkins Jr. (Vice Chair), Ashley Woitena (Secretary), Morgan Moore, Mike Welch, Jim Rutland, and Gerald Miley.

Voting Members Absent – Herman E. Lewis, Jr (Treasurer) and Will Taylor

Ex-Officio Members Present – Director Ryan Pruett, Charles Auer, Lt. Kelly Phillips, Assistant Director Jeremy Miles, Director Holli Browder, and Jeff Croop

Ex-Officio Members Absent – Deputy City Manager Lisa Goodwin

Visitor(s) Present: Deputy City Manager Pam Hodge

#### 1. Call to Order

- Andy Luker, Chair, called the meeting at 1:05 pm.

#### 2. Roll Call

- Authority Department Secretary – Zeanne Abano, Civic Center

#### 3. Approval of Minutes

- Minutes for February 9, 2026, approved.

#### 4. Executive Director Search and Management Options:

- Executive director job description subcommittee reviews draft reflecting ordinance and full authority oversight.
- Discussion on hiring executive director search firms versus private management company for facility.
- Search firms propose 8–15-week timelines; one boutique firm suggests 6 months.
- Proposal to create or expand subcommittee to explore private management options before RFP.
- Private management offers include facility operations, promotions, and financial benefits, concerns about process and contract details.
- RFP process for management company typically 3-5 months; city cautious about management changes without thorough evaluation.
- Committee considers informational sessions with management firms to clarify structure and benefits before formal RFP.
- Subcommittee to coordinate with Kanise Wiggins for venue contacts and schedule Zoom meetings for compliance confirmation.
- Oak View Group is considered as booking agent alongside executive director search; contract duration and benefits to be evaluated.

**5. Facility Upgrades and Maintenance Needs:**

- Memorial Stadium renovation costs are estimated to be between \$100M and \$140M with phased approach preferred over full remodel.
- Renovations include field widening, turf installation, locker room upgrades, new scoreboard, and improved facilities for safety and compliance.
- Facility upgrades aim to attract more major events like MLS games, concerts, and increase revenue through naming rights and enhanced amenities.

**6. Ticketing Policies and Event Promotion**

- Parks & Rec budget has remained flat for 20 years, covering only basic operational costs.
- Civic Center ticket distribution policy is unclear, causing confusion among council and authority members.
- Current ticket allocation: Civic Center management team gets 4 tickets each, operation team gets 2 tickets, City Council receives 42 tickets separately.
- Proposal to add authority members to ticket distribution communications alongside City Council.
- Tickets serve as employee perks and operational tools, allowing staff to attend or monitor events post-work.
- Discussed City Council tickets as a perk without official policy or vote needed.

**7. Budget Planning and Financial Discussions**

- Air handler replacement cost estimated at nearly \$5M; need creative funding and RFP process.
- Elevator modernization approved with costs around \$400,000; elevators inspected annually by state.
- Columbus Lions to repair the old marquee and maintain sign under a 5-year contract, receiving 75% of sign rotations.
- Marketing report highlighted 200+ annual events, increased ticket sales by 49%, and extensive digital engagement.
- Preventive maintenance budget discussed to avoid over-reliance on Friends Account Funds.
- Bid process for air handlers requires engineering expertise; long lead times expected for equipment delivery.
- Concerns raised about safety risks from aging equipment dating back to 1996, including air handlers and elevators.
- City Council to draft official contracts for marquee sign and other agreements to avoid informal arrangements.

**8. Public Comment – NONE**

**9. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.**

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

*Next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 13, 2026, at 1:00 pm,*

*Columbus Civic Center, Hospitality Suites, 400 4<sup>th</sup> St, Columbus, GA 31901*