

July 9, 2009

Ms. Dolly Vogt
General Manager
Richmond Coliseum
601 E. Leigh St.
Richmond, Va. 23219

Dear Dolly:

This is in response to your request that I formalize some of the CAA's concerns about the Coliseum we discussed in our post-tournament evaluation.

Initially, we are very proud to stage our men's basketball championship in the Richmond Coliseum for the past 20 years, pumping millions of dollars into the Richmond economy during tournament week. Richmond is the conference's hometown and a certain amount of civic pride is also attached to putting on a "good show" for our out of town (state) teams, administrators, fans and a national television audience. I want to make these points initially to state that the CAA is more than some itinerant tenant that simply rents the Coliseum for its event. I live here. Unfortunately, members of my Board do not and they cast the votes. They also come from some of the nation's most prominent metropolitan areas including, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, DC, Atlanta and Norfolk which they compare to Richmond. It is a prominent peer group to be measured against.

We have no illusions about the age of the Coliseum. However, at the same time, there is growing concern from within our constituencies that some conditions and facilities need to be improved or corrected if the tournament is going to continue to stay in Richmond. Most (if not all) of our institution's home arenas are in significantly better condition and provide a different fan experience. Obviously the newer facilities such as the Siegel Center and ODU's Constant Center have a big comparative advantage, but William & Mary Hall (1971), JMU's Convocation Center (1982), GMU's Patriot Center (1985), UNCW's Trask Coliseum (1977), and Towson's Arena (1975) are of a similar vintage as the Coliseum but have been significantly renovated and upgraded featuring some of the current (and expected) fan-friendly amenities. When our teams and fans arrive in Richmond to play the premier event of their season, it is conducted in a building far below their experiences with their own facilities. This reflects poorly on the CAA whose name is on the tournament and the City which serves as our host.

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Everyone in Richmond has anguished over the past year about the Richmond Braves leaving town because of the deteriorating condition of the Diamond. An identical parallel is now unfolding with the Coliseum which represents much more to the City than just a sporting venue, yet I have heard very little public concern expressed about the condition of the building in recent years. It is way past the time to start that dialogue. While I am offering observations from my own event's perspective, I know that most are shared by other clients of the building.

I want to be very clear that my issues are not with SMG in the operation of the building. Over the years the staffs of SMG and the CAA have developed a tremendous professional and personal respect for each other and have worked tirelessly to insure the successful operation of our tournament. My concerns rest almost exclusively with major capital improvements to an aging building way past its prime without any known major renovation plans on the horizon. There is just so much humans can do to support a failing infrastructure of equipment and systems.

Roof. Last year on the Sunday night/Monday morning prior to our tournament beginning Richmond experienced 10 inches of snow. Because of the storm's heavy, wet snow, you had staff physically shoveling snow off the Coliseum roof to minimize leakage. Still as late as Wednesday afternoon, there were a number of waste barrels on the basketball court catching water leaking from the roof. Fortunately, when team practices began on Thursday morning, the snow had melted and the roof was dry (in large part due to your staff's shoveling efforts) and practices

occurred without interruption. But, what if “mother nature” wasn’t as friendly or the storm occurred 2 days later, or it was a rainy weekend with a roof leaking everywhere? The public embarrassment and complications of an unusable building for “March Madness” would be of epic proportions nationally.

Seats. In general, other than the newer club seats, the general seating areas of the Coliseum are embarrassing. None of us would use the folding blue chairs for a function in our home. They are broken and permanently stained, probably beyond fixing. During set-ups, I had the worst ones removed – yet they constitute prime courtside seating occupied by our university Presidents and other prominent university guests. We also received a number of complaints about permanent, arena seats that were damaged, permanently soiled and unusable. Fortunately we were able to provide temporary alternate seating, but it was not a favorable impression.

Scoreboard. Without delving into new era video boards with all their “bells & whistles”, the present scoreboard is living on “borrowed time” more than any other piece of equipment. With the huge stakes involved in our basketball championship to determine our conference champion and NCAA qualifier, having to rely on the present scoreboard in its precarious operational condition is becoming a risk of significant proportions. Several years ago the Coliseum and the City were greatly embarrassed on national television having to suspend a basketball game due to ice condensation on the court. Similar embarrassment (with even greater stakes involved) lurks

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in the shadows with the current scoreboard. I know that the Coliseum incurs the extra expense to have a factory scoreboard technician at the tournament, but if a part fails, we don’t have the luxury of waiting for the shipping of a replacement part (if one even exists). You may also recall that last year we cancelled a planned promotion because we weren’t sure that if we lowered the scoreboard to add a camera, that we would be able to raise it back to its proper position.

Locker rooms. The team locker rooms are far below the expected quality of current facilities, especially for a championship event. For the past several years we have provided a RV “backstage” for the officials because their locker room is so substandard.

Sound System. Due to the inadequate arena house sound system, we supply additional amplification so that public address announcements are audible. An adequate arena sound system should be a standard feature of any building.

Power and transmission. The electrical service to press row was frayed and caused a number of shorts that damaged some electronic equipment. The in-house cable transmission lines were often distorted and sometimes interrupted. With the great advancements in electronic information technology, high-quality internet, ethernet and wireless networks need to be established and fully functioning. Our tournament constantly feeds national media outlets and broadcasts throughout tournament weekend and for the past several years we have had to incur the expense to create these temporary networks (often with spotty performance) because of the difficulties with temporary engineering. Permanent accommodations of these new technologies need to be made.

HVAC & Plumbing. Criticizing the building deficiencies in these areas is really “piling on”. I know that prior to the tournament all the facilities are operational. However, with a full building, the facilities (due to age and infrastructure) simply can’t handle the crowd. I know that you have a plumber on site throughout tournament weekend to respond to problems. He is just overmatched. Suffice to say, the operational status of particularly the public bathrooms, is a significant embarrassment for the CAA, building and City.

Outside Entertainment. While this is not necessarily a function of the building, the closing of the food court at the Marketplace has created a fairly noticeable void for fans before, after and between games looking for a place to socialize, have a meal and enjoy Richmond.

This has been a very difficult letter to write because I am criticizing my own City, friends and colleagues that have been significant partners in the spectacular success of our tournament in Richmond for the past 20 years. As I

mentioned initially, Richmond is the CAA's "hometown" and we have a very vested interest in showcasing our City to thousands of out of town guests and a national television audience. Our contract with the City runs through March 2012, and shortly,

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we will begin evaluating future tournament sites. This time, more and more concerns are being raised about the continuation of the tournament in Richmond due primarily to the condition of the Coliseum. To keep these concerns abated from within our ranks, I believe that we need be able to point to some very significant and tangible items of capital improvements to the Coliseum in both the short and long terms. Otherwise, I am afraid that we may be replicating the Diamond scenario.

I'd be happy to discuss any of these items in greater detail if you desire.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Yeager
Commissioner

Cc: The Honorable Dwight C. Jones
J.R. Pope
Jack Berry