

**THE SPORTS AUTHORITY OF THE  
METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE & DAVIDSON COUNTY**

**Board of Directors MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, January 19, 2023 | 10:30 am | Geodis Park – Lo Siento Goal Post Club**

---

**Attendees**

**Members:** Cathy Bender (Chair), Frank Harrison (Vice Chair), Kim Adkins, Don Deering, Glenn Farner, Melvin Gill, Dan Hogan, Winston Justice, Aaron McGee

**Staff:** Monica Fawknorton (ED), Valda Barksdale, Brandon Little, Melissa Wells, Joshua Thomas (Metro Legal), Lexie Ward (Metro Legal)

**Visitors:** Adolpho Birch (TN Titans), Michell Bosch (Metro Treasurer), Danny Butler (Preds), Katie Cafiero (Preds), Balogun “BC” Cobb (Metro Legal), Tom Cross (Metro Legal), Benjamin Eagles (Mayor’s Office), Adam English (Sounds), Kelly Flannery (Metro Finance), Ross Florey (Fifth Third Bank), Bob Flynn (TN Titans), Ron Gobbell (GHP), Jasper Hendricks (Fair Board), Quinton Herring (Former SA Staff), Kenya McGruder (Urban League), James Morrison (Barton Malow), Burke Nihill (TN Titans), Lindsey Paola (Nashville SC), Victoria Payne (Nashville Chamber), Ben Reeves (NSC), Doug Scopel (Nashville Sounds), Vice Mayor Jim Shulman, Shereme Siewnarine (TN Titans), Edith Tiller, David Urso (Preds), Sam Wilcox, (Mayor’s Office), Metro Council Member Brett A. Withers, Laura Womack (Metro Fairgrounds)

***Call to Order***

Chair Bender called the meeting to order by welcoming everyone- including Metro Nashville Council Member Brett Withers- to Nissan Stadium and thanking the Nashville Soccer Club & Geodis Park for hosting. Vice Mayor Jim Shulman was also recognized and thanked for joining the meeting.

***Consider Approval of Minutes from December 1, 2022 Meeting***

Chair Bender asked if there were additions or corrections to the December 1 meeting minutes. There being none,

**Upon a motion made by Director Adkins and seconded by Director Farner, the board approved the minutes from the December 1, 2022 meeting.**

***Executive Director’s Report***

ED Fawknorton gave an update on the receding pavers at First Horizon Park which created a trip hazard and required immediate attention and repair. The board approved the repairs last fall and the work was completed in October prior to the opening of the very popular and well attended Enchant Winter Lights event. A few remaining repairs have a February completion date and include vacuuming of a few seams and the replacement of several drainage filler materials.

The project stayed within budget (\$15k) and payment of the repairs was advanced by the Sounds. The Sports Authority is requesting approval from Metro Finance and Metro Council to reimburse the Sounds from the General Fund 4% Reserve Fund account. It is anticipated that a decision will be made in January.

ED Fawknorton also reported that replacement of club seats at First Horizon Park is scheduled to begin in February. The removal of broken seats and installation of new seats will take about three weeks and it is anticipated that the project will be completed in mid-March, prior to the opening season for the Sounds.

ED Fawknorton further reported that the Metro Office of Internal Audit are continuing their work on the Geodis Park audit. It is anticipated that the lead auditor will complete a draft report within the next few weeks which will be reviewed internally by Metro Auditors. ED Fawknorton will keep the board up to date as the audit progresses.

### ***Titan's Stadium Update***

Deputy Mayor Sam Wilcox reported that the NFL TN Titans Stadium Project Term Sheet has been approved by the Metro Council. The Metro Project Team (Mayor's office, Legal & Finance) is working towards finalizing the project documents (agreements, lease, etc) which they would like to present to the Sports Authority Board within the next 30-60 days. They will continue to work with the Sports Authority staff to ensure the documents are presented to the board with ample time for review and to address questions. Director Adkins requested clarity regarding whether the board will need to take action during that time frame or will the documents be made available within that time frame. Mr. Wilcox noted that the goal is to have the documents to the board for review and approval within the 30-60 daytime period. It is anticipated that the documents will be presented to Metro Council for approval in March. Mr. Wilcox noted he and the Team will remain accessible and available to address any questions. The objective is to ensure the board is comfortable with the documents presented.

### ***Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway Proposal***

Benjamin Eagles, Senior Advisor, Mayor's Office shared an update on the progress being made at the Fairgrounds Speedway. He reported that the Fairgrounds track is a legendary venue in motorsports which began hosting horse racing back in 1891 and auto racing in 1904. Mr. Eagles shared quotes from Chase Elliott, NASCAR Champion and Dale Earnhardt, Daytona 500 winner who both hold the Fairground Speedway in high regards as one of the most favorable tracks for racing. He further reported that in 2011 71% of Nashville voters supported a Metro Charter amendment to protect the historic uses of the Fairgrounds, including the speedway. As a result, the Fair Board is under a mandate to financially maintain the speedway facility and operate a racing program.

Due to lack of capital for maintenance investment of the speedway, its current condition lacks ADA compliance and infrastructure safety for racers and fans. At the Fair Board's request, Metro Planning is currently procuring an independent review and costing of necessary capital improvements. The Mayor's primary goals are to: 1) Develop a modernized Fairgrounds and speedway and preserve a piece of Nashville's history; 2) Shift the financial burden from taxpayers by leveraging long-term outside financial investments for facility improvements and ongoing maintenance; and 3) Respect the surrounding neighborhoods by focusing on better---not more---racing including plans for sound walls and barriers and restricting the number of practices.

Discussions are underway for Metro to partner with Bristol Motor Speedway (BMS) to manage, operate and maintain Nashville Fairgrounds Speedway. BMS is part of the Speedway Motorsports family which owns and operate eleven racing facilities. Metro has signed a Letter of Intent with BMS and will present a 30-year lease and development agreement to the Fair Board for review and approval. If approved by the Fair Board, the documents will also be presented to the Sports Authority for review. Once approved, BMS' role will include hiring and managing personnel, financial operations, hosting NASCAR Cup races at least every other year, management of Capital Asset Management Plan, attracting events and sponsors, maintaining the current 10-weekend race schedule and developing a robust calendar of non-racing activities including corporate events and festivals.

The proposed renovations include developing a 30k+ venue capacity, new multi-purpose facilities for year-round use, racing surface renovations, installation of state-of-the-art sound absorption features to reduce auto racing sounds by 50% and updating the entire facility to ADA compliance. Additional plans include a partnership with the Nashville Convention & Visitors Center (NCVC) which has committed to a \$17m contribution and annual rent for use of the facility plus a \$17m grant for facility upgrades from the State of Tennessee spearheaded by Governor Lee. Sports Authority issued revenue bonds will be backed by: 1) Annual rent payments from BMS, NCVC use payments and a \$103,125 guaranteed annual payment by Bristol to the Fair Board; 2) Sponsorship revenue including a 10% share of any naming rights agreement; 3) Taxes paid by venue patrons (ticket, state and local sales taxes generated at the Speedway; and 4) Event revenue sharing outside of BMS four event weeks (5% gross revenues & 15% share of food & beverage sales).

The design phase will include construction cost figures that can be relied upon to receive a guaranteed maximum price bid. One third of the design costs will be funded by NCVC and BMS will cover cost overruns and all pre-development expenses in excess of \$6m.

A financial review of the proposal was conducted by Conventions, Sports & Leisure International (CSL) which resulted in several significant changes prior to the deal being presented to the Fair Board. The report is available for review on the Fair Boards website.

Director Hogan questioned the estimated time frame of the project, the Sports Authority ongoing role and whether the state's \$17m contribution is contingent upon any conditions. Mr. Eagles noted that the proposal will involve several steps including a financial analysis, Request for Proposals, design review committee and a public hearing. It is anticipated that the proposal will come before the Sports Authority in the spring or summer. The Sports Authority role will be in issuance of revenue bonds for the project funding and review of agreements for approval. Governance of the operations will be the responsibility of the Fair Board. There is no contingency for the state contributions other than funding from the other sources; \$17m alone is not sufficient funding to bring the speedway up to NASCAR standards.

Director Justice questioned the estimated anticipated revenues in terms of ticket sales to which Mr. Eagles commented that given that the speedway 30k seat capacity will be the smallest in the NASCAR circuit and in partnering with BMS a world class operator, they are confident that the races will be sell outs.

Director Gill questioned whether there is a requirement for the project to include minority participation to which Mr. Eagles noted that both the mayor and BMS are deeply committed to achieving DBE goals. Director Gill requested that BMS present their DBE goals to the Sports Authority prior to the final presentation to which Mr. Eagles concurred.

Director Adkins questioned whether a Fairgrounds Speedway and Nashville Soccer Club (NSC) event can take place the same day and who is in charge of scheduling. Mr. Eagles noted that it is not possible to have a soccer game and race within the same day. He further reported that the NSC, Fair Board and Metro Legal are in collaboration with scheduling to ensure that both entities are able co-exist.

Chair Bender requested clarification regarding the types of events to be hosted by NCVC to which Mr. Eagles noted that the fairgrounds will be a potential site for the NCVC to host corporate events, expos, car shows and other non-racing events away from the downtown area where event space venues are typically booked to capacity.

## ***Facility Questions***

Director Adkins requested an update regarding the damage at Nissan Stadium due to freezing temperatures. Burke Nihil, President/CEO TN Titans reported that within a 26-hour time period beginning Friday, December 23 the Stadium experienced busted water pipes, frozen sewer lines and 20-30 busted sprinkler heads which resulted in a one-hour game delay on Saturday. Restoration efforts in mitigating the damage were led by Bob Flynn, VP Facilities, who shared a video and further reported that there were several leaks above the concession stands, freezing water discharging from the popped sprinkler heads, tile damage and freezing water throughout the stadium. Case Restoration arrived within two hours and dispensed heat throughout, placed 30 fans to dry out the building and turned off the water. Even though the temperatures dropped to -2 degrees, there was minimal damage to the building, just two concession stands were inoperable and only two falls were reported on game day. Mr. Flynn further reported that he has been in communication with Traveler's Insurance for damage assessment.

### ***Geodis Park Updates***

Brandon Hill, Head of Community Engagement Nashville Soccer Club (NSC), reported that the organization is tremendously proud of its community impact within the past three years despite the pause in 2020 due to Covid. NCS' approach to Community Engagement is based on three pillars: involvement, engagement and investment. For the year 2022 the team developed seventy-two partnerships with local community organizations, donated 1,700 home game tickets to the community and completed over 500 volunteer service hours to various community causes. The team also engaged the community by talking with its various stakeholders including police officers, school principals and teachers to learn how the NSC can make an impact. As a result of those conversations, *Kick Start To Reading* (a literacy program) was launched and doubled in size within the first year. Over 200 students have clocked approximately 2,500 hours in reading. Investment initiatives includes a community fund that was launched in 2022 to support local entities. Over \$131K grants were donated to neighborhood nonprofit and community organizations.

The league is dedicated to highlighting and celebrating various groups including Black History Month, Asian Pacific Islander (API) Heritage Month, Pride Month, Hispanic Heritage Month and minority owned businesses. Community Health & Well Being is another area where the team utilizes their resources to make an impact. The team visited schools to talk with students about their nutrition and fitness regimen to ensure they are healthy plus they donated over 200 healthy food boxes.

Ben Reeves, VP of Finance, reported on the following recap for the 2022 season: Geodis Park hosted 19 soccer matches and 100+ other events; NSC placed 5<sup>th</sup> in MLS Western Conference and qualified for the playoffs; player Hany Mukhtar is named the MLS MVP; players Walker Zimmerman & Shaq Moore were invited to play in the World Cup; over 23k fans purchased season tickets; and MLS Operations and Business Intelligence Department were both recognized as Teams of the Year. For the 2023 season Geodis Park is scheduled to host over 19 soccer matches including its first concerts (Shania Twain 6/7 & Pink 9/22), the She Believes Cup, and the official opening match for MLS on February 25, NSC vs NYCFC.

### ***Adjourn***

Director McGee congratulated ED Fawknoston for being awarded the 2022 Allen Morgan Award, one of Carson-Newman University's Athletics Distinguished Service Awards. The award is named after Carson-Newman's former Athletics Director and former Superintendent of Knox County Schools. The award is presented to a former Carson-Newman student athlete or coach for notable professional accomplishments and life experiences.

The next board meeting is scheduled for 10:30am on Thursday, February 16 at Nissan Stadium and the Finance Committee will meet prior to at 9:30am. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Valda Barksdale, The Metro Sports Authority

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbD0vUS3M28>

<https://metronashville.sharepoint.com/sites/SportsAuthority/Shared Documents/P-Drive-Sports Authority/SA BOARD/SA Board Materials/FY23/2023 Feb 16 Board Meetings/Minutes 2023 Jan 19 BODFINAL.docx>

