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MCCA NAMES SALES & MARKETING CHIEF

Experienced executive steps in to lead revamped effort

The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority (MCCA) in partnership with the Greater Boston Convention & Visitor's Bureau (GBCVB), today announced the appointment of Milton H. Herbert, Jr. to the position of Executive Director of the Convention Marketing Center, responsible for reforming and reenergizing the sales and marketing efforts at the new Boston Convention & Exhibition Center (BCEC) and the John B. Hynes Convention Center.

Herbert brings impressive breadth of experience and leadership to the position, having previously served in several senior executive posts in private industry, including posts within the meetings and tradeshow business. For 12 years, Herbert served as the Chief Operating Officer of Ziff-Davis Events Division, a publicly traded company that produced major tradeshow such as Comdex and Seybold. The Ziff-Davis Events Division grew revenues by more than 400 percent during Herbert's tenure.

"One aspect of Milt's background that sold us was his experience with 'change management.' Those skills are going to be in demand here because our sales and marketing effort is very clearly still in transition to what we feel it needs to be," said James E. Rooney, interim executive director of the MCCA and its Director of Development & Construction. "We are going to revamp and improve this function, and Milt's going to be the leader who gets it done."

"Milt Herbert is just what the doctor ordered," said Gloria C. Larson, Chairman of the MCCA Board of Directors. "This sales and marketing effort is past due to get under way in earnest, and we're very fortunate to have, in Milt, someone who knows the industry and can hit the ground running. This puts us back on track, and I look forward to watching our investment pay off and the bookings pile up."

In June 2002, the MCCA Board voted to overhaul its sales and marketing functions by creating the Convention Marketing Center (CMC) in partnership with the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (GBCVB). The CMC serves as a new one-stop-shopping venue for the convention and meetings marketplace and combines the sales units of the MCCA and the GBCVB. Herbert will serve as head of the CMC, and will report directly to Jim Rooney.

“Milt Herbert is going to be a great leader for our convention sales staff. He’s shown he can achieve dramatic improvements elsewhere in the industry and that’s what we’re looking for in Boston,” said Pat Moscaritolo, President and CEO of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. “I think he’s going to be a great partner, and he’s going to be great for the City of Boston.”

Currently scheduled to open in June 2004 and host its first event one month later, the BCEC to date has over 100 tentative and 24 definite bookings in its first nine years of operation, generally accepted as a sufficient “ramp-up” period. And while nearly 16 of these definite bookings have come within the past six months, authority officials remain concerned with that pace and are looking to Herbert to provide new direction and new bookings.

“There’s no question that this Authority remains unsatisfied with the marketing and sales results thus far, confident we can reform our practices, and certain that Milt Herbert is the right agent for change,” said Rooney.

Herbert began working at the CMC on March 10, 2003, and will make an interim report to Larson and Rooney by April 15 that will offer his initial reaction as to what changes need to be made.

His contract contains several performance incentives to reward increased bookings at the BCEC, a standard industry practice, but one that did not previously exist when the MCCA retained its own sales staff.

Other factors should help revive the sales effort. Recently, the MCCA signed a long-term lease with Starwood Resorts Worldwide, Inc. to develop a privately financed 1120-room headquarters hotel on the northeast corner of the convention center site. The hotel will provide room-block guarantees necessary to attract conventions and meetings to Boston.

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