Rendell Lauds Convention Center Expansion Progress

By Jaclyn Ratajczynk

Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell lauded the progress toward expansion of the Pennsylvania Convention Center during a press conference held after the opening general session of PCMA’s 50th Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, January 9.

At the session the Governor announced completion of a deal to buy the biggest parcel of land needed for the expansion. It is owned by the Academy of Fine Arts.

Overall, he said there are 27 major parcels, 26 of which are privately owned; the other being a fire house.

He said all of the landowners have all been notified with appraisals on the land, after which will follow condemnation proceedings. Rendell called the acquisition, “a fair deal on the way to acquiring property to make expansion a reality.”

He said “we expect to have ownership of all the parcels needed by June” with a groundbreaking by year’s end and completion by late 2008 or early 2009.

Rendell praised the existing center as “the best, most attractive, most functional, best run” but said without the expansion it couldn’t accommodate “biggest shows or two shows at the same time.”

PCMA Imports To End Fiscal Year
$261,000 In The Red

The Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) expects its 2005 fiscal year to end over $261,000 in the red, Deborah Sexton, PCMA President and CEO said at a press conference January 9 in Philadelphia.

According to the Treasurers Report published at the 50th annual meeting, which gave an unaudited nine-month statement, the association had revenues of $6,040,970 for the period January 1, 2005 through September 30. Expenses for the period were $6,261,963 for a loss of approximately $261,000. There was also a “non-recurring expense item totaling $135,660.”

The report summarized saying “through September 30, 2005 revenues were 8.3 percent below budget expectations while operating expenses were 4 percent over budget expectations.”

(The nine-month’s statement was provided since PCMA switched its fiscal year from ending in June to ending in December.)

Revenues were budgeted at $6,404,727 and expenses at $6,060,518 so the difference between budget margins and actual was nearly $532,000.

Sexton told USAE that the association’s finances will turn around in 2006 when she works with budgets and programs she has entirely developed.

Sexton took over the leadership of PCMA in March 2005 after the previous CEO David Kushner, CAE, CMP was fired by the PCMA board shortly after the association’s annual meeting in Hawaii.

Student Gives Perspective On Industry, PCMA

By Jaclyn Ratajczynk

Winning the Professional Convention Management Association’s (PCMA) Chairman’s Scholarship Award brought Katie Steigerwalt to the 50th Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. She is currently a senior attending the University of Delaware, and majoring in Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management.

The award, sponsored by NYC & Company, included complimentary hotel accommodations, round-trip airfare and free registration for the meeting. The scholarship was established to honor James H. Youngblood, the 2001 PCMA Chairman of the Board.

As a freshman, Steigerwalt became a student member of PCMA after becoming increasingly aware of the importance and involvement in educational programs outside the classroom can be. She was president of her student chapter last year, which prompted her to apply for the scholarship in April 2005.

Upon registering on Jan. 7 Steigerwalt paged through the final program itinerary and highlighted sessions and networking events she wanted to attend. She is especially excited to be able to speak with Gregg Talley, Chairman of PCMA, “to be in contact with people you wouldn’t normally contact,” one of the perks as a Chairman’s scholar.

Before attending the Student Day Program on January 8,
there are those who plan only 19,000 session only spends in the helping phase has a toolbox, a train more for and business badge developed standards. A design soft office Excel and

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ferred to as “Table Top Exercises” or war games where authorities sit around a table and different inputs and variables to situations are put in and participants have to come up with contingency plans on the spot. This type of tactic was recommended to be used with local governments.

Communication during disaster situations and having varied means of communication was touted as an important as well as having knowledge of the structure of management and who would be in charge.

“[During Katrina] it was impossible to find any one person who was in charge. The Mayor didn’t know who was in charge of public safety and when the same question was asked of the Governor he said ‘Why isn’t the Mayor of course,’” said Myers.

The talk by Myers was followed by a discussion moderated by Peter Shure, Director of Strategic Marketing for Conferon, about what can be done when disaster strikes.

“You have to be calm. These are terrible situations and have to remember that things come up that you don’t plan for,” said Bill Talbert CEO Greater Miami CVB. “For example, the state [Florida] made sure everyone had enough gasoline for all their workers to get gasoline but without electricity you can’t pump gas. So you have to learn from experience.”

The duality of New Orleans as a city was discussed by Kathleen Kity Ratcliffe, executive VP New Orleans Metro CVB. She commented that her community was really two different worlds.

“The historic district and garden district that everyone that comes to New Orleans to see were saved. Those are older areas near the river where the ground was higher. But the other world is the neighborhoods that were destroyed and we are responsible for the people that work for the hospitality industry.”

Mirroring Myers comments about the importance of communication Talbert told the crowd some success stories including being forced to calm the nerves of arriving guests about airport closures.

“I was via cell phone almost by the hour with the airport to see if it was going to be open and I had to tell people that the airport was going to remain open regardless of what was being said on the television. The media doesn’t always have the facts right.”

His comments were followed by applause.

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Steigerwalt sat down with USAE to provide a view of the PCMA Annual Meeting from a student’s perspective. One of the most important pieces of advice about which she wanted to inform all students about, was to come to prepared to any meeting.

Her other pieces of advice include: always be on time to an event, keep up-to-date on information and changes in the industry, mentally prepare, and coordinate with colleagues.

After the Annual Meeting, Steigerwalt will gather business cards she collected from networking events and will follow up with the people by sending a little note or card. It is the “little things,” and extra effort put forth she finds to be very rewarding.

“I think as a senior, every little bit can help. It is always beneficial if you take just one thing away,” she said.

Along with Steigerwalt, the University of Delaware also received an award at PCMA this year. The 2005 Educator of the Year Award went to Brian Miller, Assistant Professor for the Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management. He also serves as the University’s PCMA student advisor. Steigerwalt got a chance to work one-on-one with Miller as a student member of PCMA. “Dr. Miller is dedicated to education. He helped us start the PCMA student chapter which is only four to five years old.”

After college, Steigerwalt will be entering the management training program at Marriott International Inc. Attending the networking events at conventions like PCMA contributed to her career decision. “At the meetings I try to talk to different people from meeting management companies that I’m interested in getting involved with.”

One last tip from Steigerwalt at the Annual Meeting is to try and avoid embarrassing situations. “It is very embarrassing if you don’t know how to act in a business luncheon. Eating correctly is very important. There is a certain way to eat,” said Steigerwalt.