

Dec. 30, 2008

Good Afternoon All,

I needed to allow joyous holiday spirits to wash over me before responding to Dan Lynch's December 22 article "\$10 million bad decision" about Albany's Convention Center. It is unfortunate that many readers might take such platitudes lightly thrown about as a true picture of Albany's meeting and convention industry. They are not.

- First, the Albany Convention Center Authority as a NY State Agency continues to conduct its business with great transparency and integrity.
- The claims made regarding the Times Union Center are purely imaginary. There are a number of NCAA and other athletic conference events, which also include convention and trade show elements that Albany cannot host, due to the size of the Center and ancillary spaces. A connector between the Convention Center and Times Union Center is planned to maximize those and other opportunities.
- The Empire State Plaza has certainly served this community well and will continue to do so, but as Dan stated it is in the bowels of the Empire State Plaza and there are many meeting and conference requirements that it cannot fulfill.
- The proposed convention center has been planned to be the correct size to develop and service new meeting business and plan for future business for Albany. The revised plan presented to the Governor also includes the opportunity for significant private investment. Located in a now mostly undeveloped yet highly accessible site it will also provide an appropriate gateway to the Capital City of the Empire State.
- The proposed convention center will also become part of the fabric of the city, integrating the other facilities mentioned and providing new and enhanced economic opportunity, and jobs throughout the region that will support our hospitality community.

Mr. Lynch notes in his article that Albany has no palm trees or casinos and that is true. The conferences that currently do or want to make Albany their meeting destination deal with real work and issues that affect all New Yorkers and others such as education, technology, commerce and social services and the business of government and generally do not have much time for casinos but they do appreciate Albany's arts and cultural scene, rich history and architectural treasures.

I applaud the Governor's bold decision to provide the Capital City of New York State with hundreds of permanent jobs and an economic engine that will benefit this region. The Albany County Convention & Visitors Bureau will gladly provide Mr. Lynch with a briefing on our industry the next time he visits Albany.

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