

Public Records Request #3776

The following materials have been gathered in response to public records request #3776. These materials include:

- Letter From Republican National Committee Counsel's Office – Plans Concerning the 2020 RNC – June 12, 2020

This information was provided as a response to a public records request on 6/12/20 and is current to that date. There is a possibility of more current information and/or documents related to the stated subject matter.

Further Information

For further information about this request or the Citywide Records Program, please contact:

Cheyenne Flotree
Citywide Records Program Manager
City of Charlotte/City Clerk's Office
600 East 4th Street, 7th Floor
Charlotte, NC 28202
Cheyenne.Flotree@charlottenc.gov

Amelia Knight
Public Records Specialist
City of Charlotte/City Clerk's Office
600 East 4th Street, 7th Floor
Charlotte, NC 28202
Amelia.Knight@charlottenc.gov



**Republican
National
Committee**

Counsel's Office

June 12, 2020

John Lassiter
Chief Executive Officer, CLT Host 2020, Inc.
550 S. Caldwell Street, Suite 760
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Marcus D. Jones
City Manager, City of Charlotte
City Hall, 600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Tom Murray
Chief Executive Officer, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority
501 South College Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Dena R. Diorio
County Manager, County of Mecklenburg
City Hall, 600 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202

Fred Whitfield
President, Vice Chairman, and Alternate Governor & Minority Owner
Charlotte Arena Operations
333 East Trade St
Charlotte NC 28202

Dear Sirs and Madams:

On behalf of the Republican National Committee and the Committee on Arrangements for the 2020 Republican National Convention (collectively "RNC"), we write concerning our plans for the 2020 Republican National Convention (the "Convention"). Specifically, this letter outlines the Convention we anticipate holding in Charlotte, North Carolina, as well as other Convention-related events and activities we anticipate holding in Jacksonville, Florida in the days that follow.

We anticipate holding the Convention in Charlotte pursuant to our contractual obligations.¹ Last year, we issued a national call to the Republican voters of the United States directing their delegated representatives to be convened in Charlotte “for the purpose of nominating candidates for President and Vice President to be voted for at the presidential election on Tuesday, November 3, 2020” and for “the transaction of such other business as may properly come before” the delegates at that time.² The delegates who we plan to assemble in Charlotte in response to that call will perform “a task of supreme importance to every citizen of the Nation” by nominating President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence as the Republican candidates for President and Vice President of the United States.³ And in so doing, the delegates will accomplish a vital component of American tradition of self-government that sustains our Republic and which is the envy of the world.

In our May 28, 2020 letter to Governor Cooper, we reinforced our intention to conduct important party business, including the nomination of President Trump and Vice President Pence, in Charlotte, and that it was our desire to celebrate the nominations before a large, enthusiastic crowd of thousands of Americans who are eager to Keep America Great. In our letter, we asked Governor Cooper to approve our proposed safety protocols for such Convention-related celebrations, which are designed to protect the health of the individuals in attendance at the Convention, and that of the citizens of North Carolina, consistent with North Carolina law. We likewise expressed to representatives of the City, and CLT Host 2020, Inc., that the parties would need to resolve these issues quickly given that the anticipated start date of the Convention is rapidly approaching.

Unfortunately, Governor Cooper has thus far been unable to confirm whether he would allow our planned Convention-related celebrations to proceed, or when he plans to lift his Executive Order that currently prohibits any event “that brings together more than ten (10) people indoors or more than twenty-five (25) people outdoors at the same time in a single confined indoor or outdoor space, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, or meeting hall.”⁴ This understandably has made it difficult for the City and CLT Host 2020, Inc., to provide us with assurances that they would be able to host our planned Convention-related celebrations.

As a result, we have no choice but to host the Convention-related celebrations and related events elsewhere. The Governor’s Executive Order prohibits us from conducting our Convention-related celebrations in Charlotte. And we cannot wait any longer to see if and when the Governor may loosen the restrictions in his Order—particularly when COVID-19 cases continue to rise in

¹ See Framework Agreement for the 2020 Republican National Convention § 3.1(a) (dated July 30, 2018); Site Agreement for the 2020 Republican National Convention § 3.8 (dated April 9, 2019).

² Republican Nat’l Comm., *Call of the 2020 Republican National Convention 2* (Nov. 2019), https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/media/documents/2020_RNC_Call_of_the_Convention_1575665975.pdf.

³ See *Cousins v. Wigoda*, 419 U.S. 477, 489 (1975); see also *id.* (“The vital business of the Convention is the nomination of the Party’s candidates for the offices of President and Vice President of the United States”).

⁴ N.C. Exec. Order No. 141 § 7 (May 20, 2020), <https://files.nc.gov/governor/documents/files/EO141-Phase-2.pdf>.

North Carolina.⁵ Given the substantial planning and massive logistical undertakings entailed in connection with our celebration activities, we need to make major decisions and finalize arrangements now.

The centerpiece of these other Convention-related activities will be a speech delivered by President Trump in celebration of his nomination as the Republican Party candidate for President of the United States. We anticipate that this speech, and speeches by other individuals and candidates, will take place in Jacksonville on August 25th, 26th, and 27th. By celebrating the Republican Party's nomination in this manner, President Trump will be following in the footsteps of the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, who accepted the Party's 1860 nomination in his hometown of Springfield, Illinois, five days after the vote to nominate him took place in Chicago.⁶

In Governor Cooper's June 2, 2020 letter, he reiterated his view that the Convention will need to be "scaled-back," and he directed the RNC to the CDC's interim guidance regarding mass gatherings.⁷ In the spirit of cooperation, we have reviewed those guidelines, which state that event organizers should "consider holding the event but significantly reduce the number of audience members" with no more than 250 attendees.⁸ While it is impossible to reduce attendance to that level for a national party nominating convention, we have taken steps to modify our Convention-related plans in order to accommodate the Governor's request.

To that end, we would like to outline the events that we anticipate taking place in Charlotte from August 21, 2020, to August 24, 2020. Foremost, and as described above, the delegates will convene in Charlotte to nominate President Donald J. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence as the Republican candidates for President and Vice President of the United States. This vital party business is, of course, the primary purpose of any national convention, and we are pleased that North Carolinians will have front row seats to this historic occasion as the Convention is formally called and the assembled delegates hold the roll call vote to nominate President Trump and Vice President Pence on Monday, August 24, 2020.

In addition to these nominations, the delegates in Charlotte will vote on any other business that may properly come before the Convention. This year, we anticipate that such business will include the acceptance of the report of the Convention Committee on Credentials, the passage of resolutions regarding the Publication of Proceedings, and deliberations on other important party business.

⁵ See NCDHHS COVID-19 Response, *COVID-19 North Carolina Dashboard*, <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard> (last updated June 11, 2020, at 11:55 a.m.).

⁶ See Library of Congress, *With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition*, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/the-run-for-president.html> (last visited June 11, 2020).

⁷ Letter from Governor Roy Cooper, North Carolina, to Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, RNC, and President Marcia Lee Kelly, RNC (June 2, 2020).

⁸ CDC, *Interim Guidance for Event Planners*, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-ready-for-covid-19.html> (Mar. 15, 2020).

We further anticipate that the delegates in Charlotte will engage in official Convention business that takes place off the floor. Beginning on August 21, 2020, certain of the Convention Committees are scheduled to meet. For example, we expect that there will be sessions held by the Convention Committee on Credentials. In addition, there may be other Convention-related meetings that occur on various party matters during the August 21 to August 24 timeframe. Finally, we plan to hold the 2020 RNC Summer Meeting in Charlotte on August 21 to August 22.

Consistent with Governor Cooper's directive that we hold a "scaled-down" Convention, we modified our rules so that fewer delegates and staff are required to gather in Charlotte to perform these critical party functions. Under our revised plan, each State and Territory of the United States will send six (6) delegates to the Convention floor for the nomination and other votes, for a total of three hundred and thirty-six (336) delegates. The remaining two-thousand, two-hundred and fourteen (2,214) delegates can designate floor delegates as proxyholders to cast their votes for the nominations. These rule changes will greatly reduce the number of individuals who are required to attend the Convention in Charlotte. In addition, certain Convention Committees (such as, for example, the Committee on Permanent Organization) will not be required to meet in 2020, thus reducing the number of individuals required to conduct other Convention business. Although the number of Convention delegates under our revised plan would exceed the number of individuals who may assemble in North Carolina under the current restrictions in Governor Cooper's Executive Order, it would be comparable to the number of attendees permitted at other events in North Carolina during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹ Accordingly, we are hopeful that our good-faith efforts to be responsive to the Governor's request that we reduce the number of individuals necessary for a successful Convention will permit us to work with you to obtain the State's approval for our revised plan.

It is important to note, however, that while we have developed a plan to conduct Convention business with fewer people in Charlotte in order to comply with the Governor's order, we have built in flexibility for more delegates and their guests to attend the Convention in Charlotte should the Governor revise his order to make that permissible.

Consistent with the above, we anticipate some changes in our needs for venues. The health experts with whom we have consulted have advised that the Charlotte Convention Center or similar venue is a better setting to accommodate our planned number of delegates with the observance of appropriate safety measures than would be the Spectrum Center. We advise you to take this information into account as you finalize arrangements with these venues. Specifically, we hereby request that CLT Host 2020, Inc., not make any additional payments to the Spectrum Center as we do not anticipate holding any Convention events and activities at that location due to the restrictions in place in North Carolina. With that said, we stand ready to work with CLT Host 2020, Inc. and the Spectrum Center to negotiate an amicable resolution of our agreement.

⁹ See Letter from Secretary Mandy Cohen, N.C. Department of Health and Human Service to Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel, RNC, and President Marcia Lee Kelly, RNC (May 29, 2020) (citing NASCAR, *Event Operations Protocol* (May 21, 2020), <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/NASCAR-Event-Operations-Protocol.pdf>).

Along those same lines, we also hereby request that the City and CLT Host 2020, Inc. refrain from incurring any additional costs that are no longer necessary as a result of the scaled-down Convention that we will host in Charlotte, including hotel rooms, venues, transportation, and security, as well as any marketing, public relations, media, signage, and professional fees, where possible. In addition, we request that the City and CLT Host 2020, Inc. review all of the existing agreements that they have in place and take steps to reduce their costs in light of the scaled-down Convention, including reducing insurance coverage, as appropriate. Similarly, the RNC commits to cease incurring, or causing to incur, any new additional risk or liabilities that may impact the City or CLT Host 2020, Inc.

This letter represents our best efforts to keep you apprised of our plans to hold the Convention in Charlotte in a manner that both satisfies our contractual obligations and is consistent with the restrictions North Carolina law has imposed on us and on the city. It is our hope that you will find this plan satisfactory and that you will work with us to obtain the necessary approvals from the State. We appreciate the opportunity to hold the 2020 Republican National Convention in Charlotte, and we likewise appreciate your continued efforts to host a safe and successful Convention in the Queen City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Justin Riemer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Justin Riemer
Chief Counsel, Republican National Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JL", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joy Lee
Counsel, Committee on Arrangements

CC: The Honorable Roy A. Cooper
North Carolina Office of the Governor
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699