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# CITIZENS SUMMARY

## Findings in the audit of the St. Louis Regional Convention and Sports Complex Authority and Use of Rams Settlement Funds

### Insufficient Planning for Future Needs of the Dome

The St. Louis Regional Convention and Sports Complex Authority (RSA) has not adequately planned to meet the future maintenance obligations of The Dome at America's Center (the Dome), bringing into question the long-term financial condition of the RSA and the Dome, despite receiving a substantial settlement from the NFL. Expected Dome maintenance needs exceed available resources by approximately \$67 million. Based on a recent facility condition assessment conducted for the RSA, the Dome will require an estimated \$155 million in repairs and maintenance over the next 10 years to keep equipment functional, deliver a positive guest experience, and remain locally and nationally relevant. As of December 31, 2023, the cash balance of the RSA was approximately \$87 million. This balance includes the \$70 million in NFL settlement funds the RSA received in 2023. After investment of NFL settlement funds, the cash balance of the RSA increased to approximately \$88 million by December 31, 2024. While significant, this balance is still well below what is needed to complete the necessary repairs and maintenance.

Revenues generated from the events and activities hosted in the Dome currently do not go toward funding the RSA and preservation of the Dome. For example, attendees of an event held at the Dome come to St. Louis, pay for admission to attend the event, pay for hotel stays that generate lodging taxes, eat at restaurants in the city and/or the county, and potentially shop and spend money on entertainment while attending the event. Currently, none of the revenues from any of these activities go toward the maintenance and preservation of the Dome. This includes a 3.5 percent Convention and Sports tax imposed by St. Louis County on hotel stays within the county. The statutory purpose of this tax is for "funding a regional convention and sports complex authority and for other recreational and entertainment purposes." St. Louis County previously used this tax to make the county's preservation payments to the RSA. While St. Louis County has stopped making preservation payments to the RSA, the county still collects this lodging tax.

The RSA also has an ongoing lease agreement with the Convention and Visitors Commission (CVC) that originated in 1991. The lease agreement allows the CVC to market the space in the Dome and attract vendors and events to use the facility. According to the RSA Executive Director, the RSA does not receive any money for events hosted at the Dome, and instead all money received from events goes to the CVC. However, the lease agreement states the CVC is not responsible for assisting the RSA with preserving the Dome, which remains an obligation of the RSA. Additionally, the CVC receives funds from a 3.75 percent Convention and Tourism tax charged on hotel stays within St. Louis County that was approved by voters in 1984. This tax is separate from, and in addition to, the 3.5 percent Convention and Sports tax assessed on hotel stays in St. Louis County and received by the county.

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Invoice Reviews Are Not Adequate and Procurement Procedures Do Not Exist

Significant weaknesses were noted in the oversight of the planning phase of the riverfront stadium project. Normal commission approval procedures were overridden for expenses related to the riverfront stadium. This change resulted in the payment of invoices without sufficient detail, payment of unreasonable expenses, and payment of invoices without any formal approval. In addition, the RSA did not use a formal policy for procuring professional services related to the riverfront stadium project and continues to not have a formal procurement policy in place.

During the riverfront stadium project, a total of 44 vendors were contracted and paid, including 23 vendors for professional services and 21 vendors for land contract options. The audit judgmentally selected 30 invoices that collectively totaled \$2.1 million to determine if sufficient detail was included to describe the product or service. These 30 invoices were from 15 different vendors contracted by the RSA for planning, developing, financing, and constructing the riverfront stadium. These 15 vendors received \$15.1 million of the total \$19.4 million spent by the RSA on the riverfront stadium project. Testing of these invoices identified various issues including invoices that were not adequately detailed, unreasonable expenses that were paid because of inadequate review, and the project consultant approving his own invoices for payment.

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County Settlement Funds Spent Without Formal Analysis of Needs

The St. Louis County Council has approved spending \$56.2 million of the \$169 million received for the settlement related to the Ram's departure from the City of St. Louis without a formal process to evaluate potential uses and to determine the most effective use of the funds. The Council has not established formal criteria for deciding which projects will receive settlement funding or established any potential restrictions on settlement fund use. Instead, the Council has decided on a case-by-case basis to use settlement funds for various purposes. In contrast to the county, the City of St. Louis has not allocated any of its settlement funds. Instead, it is performing planning to identify the best uses for its share of the settlement funds based on the needs of the city. The RSA similarly has not allocated any of its settlement funds, and is also developing a plan to identify how it can best benefit from this money.

In the areas audited, the overall performance of this entity was **Fair**.\*

\*The rating(s) cover only audited areas and do not reflect an opinion on the overall operation of the entity. Within that context, the rating scale indicates the following:

- Excellent:** The audit results indicate this entity is very well managed. The report contains no findings. In addition, if applicable, prior recommendations have been implemented.
- Good:** The audit results indicate this entity is well managed. The report contains few findings, and the entity has indicated most or all recommendations have already been, or will be, implemented. In addition, if applicable, many of the prior recommendations have been implemented.
- Fair:** The audit results indicate this entity needs to improve operations in several areas. The report contains several findings, or one or more findings that require management's immediate attention, and/or the entity has indicated several recommendations will not be implemented. In addition, if applicable, several prior recommendations have not been implemented.
- Poor:** The audit results indicate this entity needs to significantly improve operations. The report contains numerous findings that require management's immediate attention, and/or the entity has indicated most recommendations will not be implemented. In addition, if applicable, most prior recommendations have not been implemented.



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**Recommendations in the audit of the St. Louis Regional Convention and Sports Complex Authority and Use of Rams Settlement Funds**

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Insufficient Planning For Future Needs of the Dome

The St. Louis Regional Convention and Sports Complex Authority (RSA) pursue additional recurring sources of revenue to provide the funds necessary for expected long-range needs of the Dome, and continue to develop a maintenance plan that maximizes available resources. In addition, the RSA, City of St. Louis, and St. Louis County should engage in discussions to help ensure the preservation of the Dome to allow the facility to continue to serve the St. Louis region in the long term.

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Invoice Reviews Are Not Adequate and Procurement Procedures Do Not Exist

The RSA:

- 2.1 Ensure commission approval procedures remain in place for all expenses, and ensure invoices contain sufficient detail and are for reasonable purposes before making payment.
- 2.2 Establish a formal procurement policy to guide commissioner decisions for contracting firms, and follow established procedures for future procurement actions.

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County Settlement Funds Spent Without Formal Analysis of Needs

St. Louis County formalize a process to identify and consider potential uses for remaining settlement funds, including input from the public, to ensure the use of these funds aligns with the county's short- and long-term needs and priorities.