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## **Albany Convention Center Management Won't Include The Egg**

By Michael DeMasi

Hands off The Egg.

That was essentially the message today about the future of the egg-shaped performing arts center at the Empire State Plaza in Albany, NY, and a \$66.5 million convention center that will be built downtown.

Officials are laying the groundwork for a new, coordinated manager to oversee the convention center and existing meeting space at the Empire State Plaza.

Bringing those two venues under the same management umbrella is considered a critical element in the future success of the convention center because the facility — the Albany Capital Center — will be marketed to trade show and event planners as part of an overall package of meeting space downtown.

Management of The Egg, however, will remain independent. The performing arts center is overseen by a public entity whose members are appointed by state and local government leaders, and that will continue, officials said today.

Heather Groll, a spokeswoman for the state Office of General Services, said the coordinated management of the convention center “will not include management of the Egg but may consider service efficiencies such as assisting with ticketing or booking acts at some point in the future.”

The Times Union Center, also a key part of the convention center plans, is owned by Albany County and managed by SMG under a contract that expires in 2020. It's possible SMG will bid on a contract for management of the convention center and Empire State Plaza.

Bids for that contract are expected to be sought in May.

The Albany Convention Center Authority voted today to work with the Office of General Services on the terms of the Request for Proposals for the coordinated manager.

The authority and OGS will split the cost for a Washington, D.C.-based consultant, Brailsford & Dunlavey, to write the RFP. The contract is not to exceed \$12,822, said Duncan Stewart, executive director the authority.

The coordinated management will also include the elevated walkway connecting the Times Union Center, Empire State Plaza and new convention center. Officials want to be sure the walkway, which will be enclosed and upgraded, remains clean and safe for visitors.

The authority voted today to take other actions:

- A public hearing on the draft environmental impact statement for the convention center site will be held April 15, 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., at the county office building on State Street. A copy of the DEIS will be posted on the authority's website next week. The authority must adopt a final environmental impact statement before it can close on the \$4 million purchase of the land at the corner of Eagle and Howard streets where the convention center will be built. The property is owned by Columbia Development Co.
- The authority will move to a temporary office in the rear of 126 State St. so officials can be physically closer to the construction site. The authority's offices are on Broadway, several blocks away, near the land where the convention center was previously planned.