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BACKERS OF BUILDING NEW AUGUSTA ARENA CHEER PERFORMANCE REPORT

A fiscal "best year yet" bolsters plans to build a new facility to replace the aging James Brown Arena, backers say.

Spectra by Comcast Spectacor, formerly Global Spectrum, has managed the Augusta Entertainment Complex of James Brown Arena and Bell Auditorium since 2009, including concessions, hospitality, ticketing and marketing.

For a third year, Spectra reduced the facilities' deficit while booking 129 events, 33 more than last year, according to an announcement from the company.

"When all three of Spectra's divisions work together, we can operate more seamlessly for our clients and drive profitable growth for their facilities and businesses," said Spectra's Chris Bird, the general manager for the complex.

The arrangement works well and Spectra's success backs the Augusta-Richmond County Coliseum Authority's continued push to build a new arena, board Chairman Cedric Johnson said.

"Bringing in Spectra has saved us \$2.9 million over the last eight years," he said. "Our venue operating deficit has decreased from \$1,184,112 in fiscal year 2009 to \$528,657 in fiscal year 2016. This is a 55 percent reduction in the deficit since fiscal year 2009."

More than 290,000 customers visited James Brown Arena and Bell Auditorium in 2015-16, attending concerts, Broadway shows, comedy and family shows. The lineup included Miranda Lambert, The Avett Brothers, Mary J. Blige, REO Speedwagon, Brantley Gilbert, Patti LaBelle, Katt Williams, Boyz II Men, Frankie Valli and Rascal Flatts.

The authority last year commissioned a feasibility study that found the region could support a new 10,000-seat, \$110 million arena to replace the 36-year-old James Brown Arena.

"This year's support reinforces our feasibility study and allows us to take the next step to build the state-of-the-art arena this community deserves," Johnson said.