

TicketNetwork Shops For Home

By Becky Bergman

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The eight-year marriage between TicketNetwork and Vernon is on the rocks.

Vernon's largest private employer has begun talks with other towns about relocating and expanding just weeks after the town's Planning and Zoning Commission shot down a proposal to build a 2,500-seat amphitheater adjacent to the company's headquarters on Frontage Road.

"The town has sent a clear message," said TicketNetwork CEO Donald Vaccaro. "If you're looking to expand company headquarters in Vernon, go to another location."

Vaccaro, who has done some form of business in Vernon for 21 years, would not disclose which town is wooing TicketNetwork to relocate, but he said property tax abatements are part of the deal.

Vaccaro had proposed an outdoor summer stage — TicketNetwork Forest — on nine acres of forest between downtown Hartford and the Boston area, where the venue would draw up to 20 concerts annually and 2,000 fans per event.

It would have been the first green concert venue in the state, utilizing temporary staging equipment and renewable resources, according to Vaccaro. Company officials promised to preserve the natural landscape and nearby walking paths.

But the commission denied the application to construct TicketNetwork Forest, saying the venue would cause hazardous public



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health and safety conditions that were not compatible with adjacent neighborhoods, according to published reports.

Neither Vernon Mayor Jason McCoy nor the planning and zoning commission returned calls seeking comment.

Vaccaro hopes the town reconsiders allowing him to construct the outdoor summer stage, but says he is not optimistic that will happen.

"I have to look at all the offers that come by at this time," said Vaccaro. "I don't see the town coming to us to say they want a company like ours around. I don't think they understand the economics of having a headquarter business in town and the revenue and jobs it creates."

Vaccaro said he plans to keep his current employees if relocation is in the cards.

"My employees are our utmost concern," he said. "The folks we have at our current headquarters would move and expand with us."

Founded in 2002, TicketNetwork provides event tickets and technology solutions

for ticket buyers and sellers. With \$1 billion in real-time ticket inventory, the company's marketplace provides sought-after tickets to concerts, sports, theater and live events worldwide.

TicketNetwork employs 240 full-time workers. TicketNetwork Forest would have added another 39 full-time, permanent positions and 70 seasonal jobs from parking attendants, security personnel, box office workers and event staff.

TicketNetwork Forest would have also generated at least 100 jobs outside the company, according to Vaccaro. The business spillover from the venue would have contributed to the local economy by adding more than 1,500 overnight stays in local hotels and 6,000 pre-concert dinners at local restaurants on an annual basis.

Vaccaro estimates that the new project would have generated \$43,690 in additional local government revenue, \$55,234 in state government revenue and an additional \$1,480,000 in total expenditures. ■