

QUESTIONNAIRE

General

- Name of Bid:

Memphis in 2023

- What dates are you bidding for?

August 23-27, 2023

- What is your proposed convention host city? Is your convention site in a city center location or a suburb? If a suburb, what are the transport options into the city centre? How far is the site from the city centre?

Our location is at the Memphis Cook Convention Center. It is downtown.

- What are your main facilities? How far are your hotels from your main venue?
Our primary (intended) hotel will be the Sheraton Memphis (approximately 600 guest rooms). We expect to have additional room blocks at other hotels in the vicinity; the other hotels either adjacent to the Convention Center or in a cluster several blocks away within one block of the Main Street Rail Line have roughly another 1200 rooms. We expect that these hotels will provide a wide range of price points. Several other hotels were supposed to be finished by 2023, and while we expect that some of these will come online we are not including them in our plans.
- Who is your bid chair? Who is on your committee? What experience do they have in general? In running Worldcons?

Our current bid chairs are Cliff Dunn and Kate Secor.

Kate has filled positions at almost every level at various conventions, including con chair, roving troubleshooter, GoH coordinator, Associate Area Head of Site Selection, and Deputy Division Head of WSFS Division. She is currently acting as the head of programming for Capclave 2020.

- If known, who will be the chair of the convention? What experience do they have?

See above.

- Have you agreed to participate in Pass-Along Funds? Would you be willing to increase the percentage from 50% to 70% of surplus?

We will participate in Pass-Along Funds. We cannot speak to percentage increases as this would depend on what impact this increase would have on our ability to fulfill responsibilities such as attempting to reimburse our committee and staff.

Travel

- What is the typical current airfare to your closest airport from world cities such as London, Boston, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Melbourne etc ?

Please note that the following fares are from last winter; due to present circumstances the availability and pricing of flights right now is absurdly unrepresentative for international trips versus

what we expect in three years (and if we're still in the present situation in 2023, I think we can all agree there are bigger issues to be had):

Coach air fares (2-3 weeks advance purchase/3 month advance purchase both presuming a Saturday night stay and +/-1 day flexibility; exchange rates via Google):

-Auckland: NZD2029-2184 (\$1313-1413)/NZD1688-1832 (\$1092-1185)

-Boston: \$275-278/\$275-278

-Chicago: \$239-256/\$239-256

-Dallas: \$136-228/\$136-228

-Dublin: EUR817-1150 (\$924-1300)/EUR643-899 (\$721-1007)

-Helsinki: EUR898-1300 (\$1015-1471)/EUR767-1000 (\$859-1120)

-London: £953-1150 (\$1147-1384)/£597-714 (\$720-862)

-Los Angeles: \$237-254/181-197

-Melbourne: AUD1422-2266 (\$965-1538)/AUD1464-1703 (\$995-1158)

-New York City: \$226-262/\$255-270

-Seattle: \$204-321/\$293-296

-Washington, DC: \$211-296/\$194-244

- Do international flights, as well as domestic, fly into your local airport? Which airlines? If not, where is the closest international airport? Are direct flights from the cities above flown into your local airport?

Memphis has generally had direct flights from most hubs. As of last summer, there were direct flights to/from Chicago (both O'Hare and Midway), Dallas (both DFW and Love Field), and Los Angeles (LAX). *We make absolutely no representation whatsoever* as to what the flight situation will look like after October 1, nor are we under any illusions that anything we search up right now is going to reflect either the October 1, 2020 situation nor anything in the next few years.

A small number of international flights to/from Canada have flown into Memphis, but the airport is primarily domestic (and most of those Canadian flights really aren't running right now anyway). The international flight situation is similar at all airports in the region. The nearest "true international" airports are in Chicago (from which there is a daily train), Dallas, and Atlanta.

Amtrak runs daily service from Chicago to New Orleans via Memphis. As of last summer, coach fares over the next 30 days, from Chicago, run from \$87-168 one-way, while roomettes (with one passenger) run roughly \$197-259 one-way and bedrooms run \$259-420 one-way. Please note that the Amtrak service is also in a bit of limbo due to the current circumstances.

- How far is your convention site from the nearest airport/train station and what is the likely cost of getting to the hotels by both public transport and taxi from that airport/train station?

-The Memphis airport is approximately ten miles from the Convention Center. Taxi fare is estimated at \$27.98, with ridesharing in the ballpark of \$18-20.

-The Memphis Amtrak station is approximately 1.5 miles from the Convention Center. Taxi fare is estimated at \$10, with ridesharing in the ballpark of \$8. The Riverfront Trolley Bus line stops at the station (operating every 40 minutes) and the Main Street Trolley Rail line stops approximately one block away (operating every 12 minutes). Both will take you to the convention center and the hotel areas.

Facilities

- What hotel(s) are being used for the convention? How many rooms, what type, do they accommodate accessibility needs, etc.?

The Memphis Cook Convention Center contains approximately 300,000 square feet of total space (meeting rooms, ballrooms, pre-function, etc.). This includes a 118,000 square foot exhibit hall and 46 meeting rooms (most of which can be combined into larger spaces, as programming needs dictate). We had planned to carry out a site visit in late April or May, but our ability to do so was overtaken by events.

- What are your hotel room rates? Do these rates include breakfast? Do they include internet access in the room? How firm are these rates? What additional taxes and fees are there?

Let's start with the easy part: Even if hotel rates theoretically include "breakfast", the question of what that involves and whether it survives an ongoing wave of amenity cuts at hotels as of late will be wide-open. As such we would advise attendees to presume it does not.

We're presently in protracted negotiations with the hotel(s) regarding rates. As of last year, rates ran from \$133/night to \$169/night at the Sheraton (plus \$25-32 in local taxes); we're not including rates from this year because of heavy distortions in all directions from the present situation. As with flights, hotel rates may or may not be indicative of prevailing rates post-virus.

We also need to be frank: Given present circumstances, we will be starting with a smaller hotel block than normal. Even if the virus goes away "in a timely manner", we're painfully aware that some elements of fandom may be changed either in the medium term or permanently. Even with a vaccine theoretically "in hand" as of 2021, we have no idea what attendance will look like at conventions in 2022 and we are *extremely* wary of exposing ourselves to a large hotel block. Though we intend to reserve several hundred rooms from the start, we are also unwilling to expose ourselves financially more than is absolutely necessary until we know how fandom is going to react long-term. Fundamentally, we plan to reserve a substantial "starter block" of hotel rooms and move from there.

- What does parking cost at your main hotels?
We will be attempting to negotiate included parking at our main hotels.
- What is the distance from the nearest door of your main hotel(s) to the closest entrance of the convention site? What are the transportation options for those who prefer not to walk or who have mobility difficulties?

The hotel and our main hotel are under the same roof (there is a skybridge).

- Where will your large events (i.e. Hugo Ceremony and Masquerade) be held?

The Convention Center has an attached 2100-seat auditorium (the Cannon Center for the Performing Arts) which can readily host the "big ticket" events.

- Please describe the restaurant scene near your site.

Downtown Memphis has a number of restaurants, and Memphis is in particular known for its BBQ. In addition to restaurants located near the Convention Center and along the pedestrianized Main Street Rail Line, Beale Street is located a short trolley ride from the convention center.

- What arrangements will be made for evening socialising and party space?

This will be negotiated. We will have an answer as soon as possible — the current situation makes it very hard to determine whether these sorts of events will be permitted, and both in terms of legal concerns and safety concerns we cannot commit to any party model at this stage.

Do you have a corkage waiver and a forkeage waiver?

This is presently under negotiation; negotiations have also been complicated by the present circumstances.

Are there legal restrictions on attendees who are under the legal drinking age? (And what is that drinking age?)

The drinking age is 21. We will be examining state/local laws in the upcoming weeks/months to avoid any post-vote surprises, but we would note that alcohol laws in the US have wound up “in flux” for the last few months.

- Please describe the policies / laws regarding smoking in your hotel(s), convention centre, and city.

Hotel(s): Memphis bans smoking in all hotels.

Convention Center: Our convention center will be non-smoking.

City: Smoking is banned in all enclosed public spaces per public law. There is not a ban on outdoor smoking.

- Given the current pandemic, have you considered any arrangements have been made for social distancing and the health and safety of members? If you have, can you describe what your current plans are?

Frankly, we are three years out and we have no idea what is or isn't going to work in terms of the event. Our hope is that a few conventions will run in the next twelve months to give us a good idea on this front (both in terms of feasible measures while holding an event and, frankly, attendee compliance levels). In some respects, we probably will not be able to answer parts of this until late in 2022, but at least for now we're still waiting for conventions (in general) to start happening so we can get a feel for things that will or won't work.

Miscellaneous

- What type of weather can we expect during your convention? What is the average temperature during that time of year?

You can expect hot weather. Average highs are around 90F/32C, with lows around 70F/21C. On average, it rains about once a week.

- What are some of the main tourist attractions of your city?

-Graceland

-The Memphis Zoo

-Beale Street

-Lots of Blues music

-Lots of BBQ

- Are you planning to have any membership discounts for certain demographic groups, such as young

adults, military, or seniors?

We are planning to have group discounts for young adults, children, first-time Worldcon attendees, and military members. We will examine pricing packages for families as well as for kids-in-tow and similar scenarios.

- Do you have a code of conduct? If so, is it available online and if so, where?

Our bid has a Code of Conduct available here:

<https://www.memphis23.org/about/code-of-conduct/>

Our convention will also have a Code of Conduct that will be similar in terms of its expectations of our members.

- What changes or challenges do you expect the current pandemic to present?

So, our convention is still three-ish years out (presuming that we win) and the jury is frankly out on what we'll be able to do, either legally or safely (two factors which may or may not be closely-related). We're reasonably hopeful that we'll be able to do a "full" Worldcon, but that is not a 100% thing at this stage. Here's where we are:

(1) If for some reason a vaccine is not able to be developed, we're screwed and there is no way around this. This is complicating our negotiations since trying to arrange a sufficient "out" if, for example, Tennessee has no social distancing rules in place but the virus is still out there is problematic. Absent a vaccine being both available and widely distributed, there's probably no way the virus will be under control enough for a "full" event.

(2) Beyond this, there's always a risk that we'll be stuck under an onerous set of group assemblage restrictions (anything up to about 1000 would probably force us to move to a smaller venue for purposes of economics and practicality but permit a convention *of some sort* to happen but with a very limited set of programming tracks; at about 250 we'd be having a full Business Meeting, probably something close to a "nominee-only" in-person Hugo ceremony, and not a whole lot else).

(3) Presuming that none of this applies, we're looking at a lot of "what works/what doesn't work" in terms of virtual events. We're also going to be cognizant about crowd limits and what needs to be done to prevent "line backups" if that comes up.

Basically, the biggest challenge right now is keeping approximately five plans workable ("Standard Worldcon", "Standard Worldcon With Reduced Attendance", "1000-person Worldcon", "250-person Worldcon", and "Constitutional Minimum In-Person Worldcon") and not ending up on the hook for it personally if things go wrong/we have to unexpectedly downsize and we're sanguine to the possibility that some things may simply *not* work if we're going mostly-virtual or all-virtual. Because of the sheer uncertainty involved, we're being compelled to act "defensively" in our negotiations and planning. For example, until we have some sense that fandom is back to "normal" in terms of convention attendance and operations, we're constrained in our ability to negotiate for a large hotel block without risking a planned 5000 person convention morphing into a 2500 person convention because of wary attendees and suddenly we find ourselves exposed on the hotel attrition front. As of last year, there were certain "plug-and-play" elements to these negotiations; as we are not a recurring event and can't roll forward by a year we are inherently exposed for the time being.

One thing which we *are* committed to is that, in the event we are forced to go all-virtual, we will keep the price for the virtual membership as low as possible. The challenge for this will be doing so without either leaving people who signed up earlier stuck "holding the bag" on a substantially more expensive membership or bankrupting the Concom on refunds. We also realize that there may be no perfect solution here and that having to switch formats after seating may provide its own

challenges. We *do* commit to being frank and open in such a situation, as we recognize that communication is important to fandom in situations like this while a failure to communicate our situation will inevitably be the cause of much frustration.

- Have you planned for a virtual component to your convention?

We are currently examining a lot of what works and what doesn't work in this respect. Realistically, we're hoping to make a more educated call on what we can/can't do virtually (either in the absolute or practically). We're going to be sensitive to panelist (and attendee) concerns insofar as broadcasting and/or recording every panel. We're also going to look into what can be done/should be done in terms of discussing this in our Code of Conduct. But given the various mixed results with some conventions' virtual implementations, we're not comfortable judging what we can/cannot do at this point.

- What is a notable aspect of your local fan culture and how do you plan to incorporate it into your Worldcon?

Memphis is the home of MidSouthCon, and we are trying to open discussions with them to bring local fannish culture into the Worldcon.