

UD Marriott says it's owed money for canceled WSU debate rooms

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Max Filby Staff Writer 12:24 p.m Wednesday, May 24, 2017 News

News



Marriott at the University of Dayton.

Fallout from Wright State University's lost presidential debate is surfacing again as a local hotel seeks at least \$170,000 in damages for canceled rooms.

Attorneys representing Concord Hospitality Enterprises Co., the management company that runs and is partial owner of the Marriott at the University of Dayton, filed a lawsuit today against Wright State in Greene County Common Pleas Court.

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The lawsuit also names as defendants John McCance, a consultant who helped WSU secure the debate, and his consulting firm as well as the Commission on Presidential Debates.

According to the lawsuit, 130 rooms were booked for the debate commission at the Marriott on Patterson Avenue in Dayton. Although the debate was cancelled, the hotel contract called for 75 percent of the hotel costs for the rooms to be paid, according to the lawsuit.

Officials from the University of Dayton and Wright State declined to comment on the dispute. A spokesman for the debate commission could not be reached to comment.

UD and Concord jointly bought the Marriott for \$18.5 million in 2014. Though the university is a part owner and the hotel bares UD's name, it is not considered a university facility, according to a 2014 release.

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The Marriott was chosen for the debate because it met requirements set forth by the debate commission and the United States Secret Service, McCance said.

The hotel dispute comes just a few months after McCance filed a lawsuit claiming personal damages over the canceled debate.

McCance in January filed a \$1 million lawsuit against Wright State, alleging that infighting and "epic gross buffoonery" caused the commission to pull the first debate from WSU. McCance's lawsuit contradicted former president David Hopkins' announcement on July 19 that WSU chose to withdraw from the Sept. 26 debate because of rising costs.

Businesses in Dayton, which are near Wright State University are now dealing with the fallout of the university pulling out of hosting the first presidential debate in September.

Wright State is responsible for the hotel payments, McCance said, because Hopkins told him to book the block of rooms at the Marriott. WSU is now saying that McCance is responsible for the room cancellations, the consultant said.

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A letter from the hotel's attorneys states McCance may not have had the authority to book the rooms, despite the fact that he was hired to bring the debate to Wright State.

McCance said he doesn't think Wright State's claim that he didn't have authority to book hotel rooms is retaliation for the lawsuit he filed, but rather a reflection of the university's recent struggles. Wright State has not brought any legal action against McCance for the hotel room dispute.

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"(WSU's troubles) are due to much broader systemic and cultural problems with the university than me filing the lawsuit," McCance said.

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Wright State has been plagued by scandal and budget problems over the last two years. The university is under federal investigation for possible immigration-related wrongdoing and in April the school released a long-guarded audit of its research funding. On Friday, WSU announced it would likely lay off 71 employees and eliminate 107 jobs in an attempt to correct years of overspending.

TIMELINE: [How Wright State lost the first 2016 presidential debate](#)

McCance said WSU's claim that he did not have the authority to book hotels came as a surprise to him. He had previously booked rooms for members of the commission on at least three occasions prior to WSU being awarded the event.

Bringing the debate commission into the hotel dispute could have long-term implications for the area, McCance said.

"Dragging the commission into it just further alienates them," McCance said. "I'm afraid because of this, the university and Dayton region will never see a presidential debate."

A Wright State spokesman said the Marriott was the only hotel booked because the university was only responsible for finding hotel accommodations for the debate commission. The Greene County Convention and Visitors Bureau said there is no way of knowing if or how much the lost debate could have impacted area business as a whole.

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