

Flere Lag Stevne Site Selection Committee Visit to Rochester MN Best Western Mayo Clinic / Empire Event Center on Monday, 28 June 2020

Contact at the Hotel/Empire Event Center (under single ownership):

Danielle Robards (who proved to be very knowledgeable and helpful)
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[Best Western Rochester May Clinic Ara / At. Marys Link](#)
[Empire Even Center Link](#)

Site Selection Committee Members Present: Robert Fossum, Barry Dahl, Dixie Hansen, Dick Lundgren, Andy Berg. Not able to be present: Mary Baumgartner; Others Present: Robin Fossum, Erling Hansen

Dixie says: As promised at our June Flere Lag Stevne Committee meeting, I have now created a sub-page on the Nord Hedmark or Hedemarken Website where, on an ongoing basis, I can post documents relating to the Flere Lag Stevne Planning Committee. The link to that FLSSC page is here:

<http://nhohlag.org/flssc/> (or you'll find it as the last dropdown item in the NHOHLag menu bar under Stevne)

Items posted on that page relating to today's site selection visit include:

[2022 Empire Event Center Banquet & Catering Menu](#)

[2022 Empire Event Center / Meeting Room Map & Room Sizes](#)

[2022 Rochester Trolley & Tour Co Brochure](#)

Information Gleaned:

Danielle is holding the dates from **Wednesday 3 August to Saturday noon on 6 August 2022** for us. Set up on Tuesday night for genealogists is fine. Vendors would likely prefer to set up on Wednesday.

Hotel Room Rate [block to include choice of rooms w/ 2 Queens or 1 King (as available in our contracted block – most rooms in the hotel are “double bedded”) in the area away from the pool]. \$94/night (with 15.125% tax = \$108.22). Hotel Rooms include internet, parking and breakfast for all in the room **[Follow-up Needed: I don't think any of us asked if breakfast is plated, had hot food options, or was a more typical “grab and go.” I'm not sure we care particularly, but we'll want to know for promotional purposes]**. Hotel is pet-friendly (pet charges apply). Room block (we'll decide later how many rooms to block) is held for us until 2 weeks prior to Stevne. Then it reverts to general sale, as available. They do have suites and pool side rooms available at higher rates. Although we would not include those higher \$ rooms in our block (in order to keep pricing simplified) our attendees could book those premium rooms directly if they chose. Hotel rooms were recently completely refitted (new ownership 2 years ago). Rooms have mini-fridges and microwave ovens.

Event Space Fee: \$2,400 flat fee (not taxed) for the entire conference. Includes both ballrooms, adjacent hallways, and (after 11 AM) the breakfast room . Full deposit required upon contract signature (though when I said we hadn't developed a combined treasury yet, she said she would work with us – and that 50% deposit could be negotiated. [Note: we asked, but actual contract language is not available to us until they get enough details from us to create it from their template]

No catering, or hotel room count commitments are required from us. They do not require that we have insurance. Contract does have some pandemic cancellation language, which we'll want to review, but it sounded probably reasonable.

Tables for vendors and genealogy lab, internet access in event areas, and all AV included as part of the \$2,400 event space fee They have projectors which can display simultaneously on multiple screens for group settings in adjacent ballroom sections, ceiling sound system, multiple connections to the AV system for laptops, *etc.*

Although they do not have an onsite restaurant, the Wildwood Sports Bar and Grill is immediately adjacent (just out the door next to the reservation desk). The Event Center does have a kitchen and does on-site food prep for the banquet. Tax on Food: 8.125% plus a 20% service charge. (Current menu is on the flssc sub-page – and they are OK with us providing our own lefse for the banquet and their chef will work with us on menu variation, if requested.

Contingent on full committee decision, the site selection committee leaned towards Grand Ballroom A&B (3,432 sq feet) as workable for the Genealogy Lab. (Andy Berg, of Solorlag, expressed some concern about that space limitation – and other options can still be explored). Grand Ballroom C could be used for Lag Meetings, or Hardanger, or any 3rd track lectures that might be scheduled. [We haven't yet figured out how we're going to schedule 5 separate lag group meetings – so Tre Lag's tradition of early morning meetings using one of the regular break-out rooms, won't, alone, solve that space need].

The site selection committee thought that the Royale Ballroom A& B would be used for break out sessions. We might use just Royale Ballroom A for the opening session (seats 225 theatre style) but, if that's of insufficient size, Danielle thought possibly we could use the full ballroom and that they could split the room afterwards while we're in break – though she was not sure that 30 minutes would be enough time for them to move the walls.

Vendor and Lag Tables – can be located in the hallway between the ballrooms (including around the corner). The hallways are not terribly wide, but sufficient I think. The location is great for conference flow. And the hallway can be locked off completely after hours for security.

Registration Desk. We didn't discuss it, but my preference would be to locate the registration desk in the hallway as well (because I prefer to be near the action while I'm manning the desk). But the front lobby is an option as well.

Hospitality Suite – The Breakfast Room at the hotel would be switched to our exclusive use as a Hospitality Suite starting at 11:00 AM each day (probably our need is just Thursday and Friday). It's a beautiful and spacious room with counter space, a sink, and plenty of seating. Danielle said they could bring in a refrigerator for our use. Downside: we would need to pack things away at the end of each day so that the space could be used for hotel guest breakfast space each morning (breakfast starts at 6 AM). There is no problem at all with us bringing our own goodies in. They have coffee pots in the front lobby

for all guests (just steps away from the hospitality suite) and they will keep those full for us (Robert did warn Danielle that Norwegians were coffee drinking fiends, and it didn't faze her). Their brewing pots are located in the hospitality suite and they refill the lobby pots from those brew pots.

Cash Bar on Friday night: \$75 set up fee. Tax on alcohol (attendees pay) 10.125%

They can provide box lunches for us for tours if we so choose. (plus tax and service fee I'm sure)

They do not have a piano

They do have a US flag. They might have a Canadian flag, but Danielle said she would check.

There were no immediately spotted ideal locations for taking group photos of the 5 lags. We didn't look too hard but, perhaps in the front lobby, with chairs to provide raised rows.

The number of 2022 Flere Lag attendees we might reasonably expect (reported previously to the full FLSSC based on analysis of the 2019 attendance at Tre Lag Stevne and the Romerikslaget/Solorlag Stevner), is in the 215-230 attendee range (summary info from that report [here](#)). Since the financial feasibility of the 2022 stevne hinges on attendance, that estimate is important to consider.

Conclusion: It was the consensus of the Site Selection Committee that the Rochester Best Western / Empire Event Center would work very well for Flere Lag Stevne 2022. *Contingent upon review and comment by Joy Shong of the one (and probably only) "big gulp" in the proposal (the \$2400 Event Space Fee) the committee would propose to go forward with a contract. Joy's got a better handle on budgets and the financial side of past Stevner than the rest of us have (speaking only for the Tre Lag contingent). Note that although we were not yet in a position to attempt to negotiate the proposed \$2,400 fee downwards at this first "look and see," that might yet be possible. (Or not!)*

Respectfully Submitted,

Flere Lag Stevne Site Selection Committee

Subsequent response from Joy Shong:

This looks good to me. The \$2400 should not be a problem. We just spread it out over the number of attendees. Even if we only get 200 people, it comes to \$12 per person. We won't have AV rental costs. I think Tre Lag had several places with room charges over \$1700. The lowest registration fee to attendees since 2008 was \$25 and the highest was \$51, and both of these were in the last 5 stevner. I don't think this charge will be an issue.

When we meet in the fall we should also consider using Royal Ballroom for genealogy since it is 3750 sq ft. That would put the three session rooms next to each other. Once we know what activities we want to have we can sort out the details.

Thank you for the good work. The detail is very helpful.