

Racing Committee Minutes
September 9, 2010 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Veitch; Supervisors Barrett, Collyer, Richardson; Spencer Hellwig, Mgmt. Analyst; Charlie Wheeler, NYRA; Lisa Audi, Amanda Leece, Ed Lewi Associates; Press.

Chairman Veitch called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Collyer, seconded by Mr. Barrett the minutes of the July 8, 2010 meeting were approved unanimously.

Ms. Leece and Ms. Audi distributed a printout describing the 2010 Saratoga Racetrack activities and highlighted the following:

Ms. Leece said going into the 2010 meet there were some pressing issues that were expressed both from the Saratoga Business community and people at large about the new opening day and making people aware of that.

There was an extensive advertising and a publicity campaign that focused on the earlier opening day, which included a countdown which was advertised on-line, on Facebook and on digital billboards, TV, radio and newspapers.

What makes Saratoga so special is the events that are done and the ones that remain the mainstays, i.e. open house and the hat contest, with the hat contest entering it's 19th year. College Day was held again for its second year. Attendance was over 1,200 students this year, compared to 850 students in 2009, showing a 30% increase. Saratoga County Day was also well received by the local community.

Ms. Audi said there were three new events this year including a Galloping Grapes Wine Tasting event that drew 600 attendees; Friday the 13th/Halloween, which brought in hundreds of kids in costumes to the track; and San Gennaro Day, which was a popular new addition.

Ms. Leece said everyone is aware of what role the Travers Stakes plays from a national standpoint. Going into the meet, it was felt that there needed to be a renewed emphasis on it, by implementing events and promotions that would build momentum for the event weeks in advance. This was done through additional advertising and publicity efforts. Marketing efforts generated 90,000 fans to the track Friday through Sunday of Travers weekend.

One of the bigger initiatives leading up to the Travers was the Travers Eve Party through a partnership between NYRA and the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. The event generated traffic to downtown Saratoga on the eve of the Travers Stakes with jockey autograph signing and giveaways such as horse-shaped silly bands for kids and Mardi Gras beads for adults.

Ms. Leece said that NYRA was once again a major supporter of the Chamber of Commerce co-op advertising in the outlying markets through the “I Love NY” campaign. NYRA also sponsored the Chamber’s Hats Off and Final Stretch Festivals. For the second year, NYRA has underwritten a “Coupon Book” filled with offers from DBA members and was distributed Sunday, July 25th. Ending the season, through NYRA’s marketing efforts, more than 100,000 people attended the track over the Labor Day Weekend.

Ms. Audi outlined NYRA’s community activities as follows:

Ms. Audi said Open House once again benefited more than 20 local non-profit organizations. The daily community booth provided an excellent opportunity for local non-profits to create awareness and fundraise. Two days were held for specific causes; Horse Retirement and Fabulous Fillies Day in support of breast cancer awareness. When possible, NYRA tied in charitable causes to theme days i.e., Veterans Day, and the annual Travers Festival that benefits local nonprofits.

Mr. Wheeler said there was an average attendance per day of 21,900 people at the track this year. The daily all sources handle was down 3.4%; however there were 3.9% less races, with nine races each day.

Mr. Wheeler said during the month of August, Saratoga Racecourse did 32% of all wagering in the United States, flat and harness tracks combined. Saratoga business outperformed the 7.3% decline in US wagering. The average daily attendance was down 7.4% on track and the handle was down 7.8% compared to the 36 day meet.

Mr. Wheeler said the total attendance this year was 878,000 versus 872,000 last year. The total on track handle was down .3%. The total all sources was up 2.5% with a daily average of \$13 million.

Mr. Richardson asked what the total handle was this year and how did it compare to last year? Mr. Wheeler said the total on track handle was \$114 million versus \$115 million last year.

Mr. Veitch said he has received some comments from people on how to improve Saratoga County Day at the races, i.e., better advertising of the day; better screening of residents for the free day; and more visibility and advertising of the town displays.

On a motion made by Mr. Barrett, seconded by Mr. Richardson the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom