

Racing Committee Minutes  
December 2, 2013 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Veitch; Supervisors Barrett, Richardson, Southworth, Wood, Yepsen, and Grattidge; Todd Shimkus, Saratoga Springs Chamber of Commerce; Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Peter Martin, County Clerk; Michele Madigan, Saratoga Springs Finance Commissioner; Colin Klepetar, SAVE; Press.

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

**On a motion made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Barrett the minutes of the November 7, 2013 meeting were approved unanimously.**

Mr. Veitch said the New York State Assembly Committee on Racing and Wagering is holding a public hearing on December 3, 2013 at 12:00 p.m. in Hearing Room “C” at the Legislative Office Building. This is an open hearing for anyone who would like to present testimony to the committee regarding horse racing in New York State.

Mr. Veitch stated that it had been reported that the committee canceled a vote on Casino Gambling, which is not true. At the last committee meeting it was the committee’s decision to not vote on anything.

Mr. Veitch said last year on December 18, 2012 the committee did pass supporting the Casino and Raceway as a location for one of the seven potential Casinos’ through resolution 258-12. The City of Saratoga Springs also passed a resolution on that same day at the City Council Meeting. The reason this was done was to protect the county’s interests and economic and job benefits that a full Casino would bring to the community. It was also done to preserve the harness horse racing, and jobs associated with the track that are already there. Mr. Veitch said at this time there are no plans to amend or rescind the resolution from 2012, and it stands as the county’s official action, at this point, regarding casino gambling.

Mr. Veitch said at the last committee meeting it was agreed to wait for the process to take shape. There is a Casino Citing Committee that has to be appointed by the State that has not been formed yet; the Request for Proposal still needs to be issued; and applications for the sites still need to be submitted for the sites to be chosen. Mr. Veitch said it looks like Saratoga Casino and Raceway is going to submit an application.

Mr. Veitch said by delaying a vote, it gives the county the opportunity to have a community dialogue on the pros and cons of having a site at the Saratoga Casino and Raceway. This will help to form a better proposal by all sides involved moving forward. He said it is good to have wide open discussions to see what the concerns of the community are.

Mr. Veitch said he has concerns about the Rensselaer site that has been proposed. He said having a Casino in Rensselaer creates direct competition with both the Saratoga Casino and

Raceway and the Saratoga Race Course, both for fans and the associated tax revenue that is generated.

Mr. Veitch said the Saratoga Springs Chamber of Commerce is going to be conducting a forum on December 16, 2013. He said there is an online survey that is out on the Chamber's website, Saratoga Convention and Tourism website, and Facebook with a deadline of December 6<sup>th</sup>. Currently, there are over 100 people that have responded to the survey. Every question that is posted on the survey will be shared with all the panels on December 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. There will be a facilitated panel of local experts who can talk about all the facts, issues and concerns which include the impact on thoroughbred racing, harness racing, public safety, handling, and downtown. A video will be taken and then put on line unedited, so that anyone who cannot make the forum can watch it and learn the facts of how this project could impact the county both positively and negatively.

Mrs. Southworth said there are a lot of residents in the county that voted "no" to the casino gambling referendum. She asked if there was going to be any other outreach other than posting on the website to try to interact directly with people in the southern part of the county.

Mr. Shimkus said the Chamber has been following the survey results and they are coming in from around the county. He said there are some people from outlying counties that plan to come to the forum as Saratoga County is the only county community forum that he is aware of in the entire capital region that is talking about this issue and presenting it in a way that talks about the impacts on the communities. The forum is open to everyone and will be held at the City Center in Saratoga Springs with seating for 1,000 people. He said there may be standing room only. Mrs. Southworth asked if the panels were just from Saratoga Springs. Mr. Shimkus said, no, the panelists are from different areas depending on their expertise.

Mrs. Southworth said the residents are the ones who have spoken and said they don't want it. Unless you can change that perception and what their feelings were, when they voted, they voted no, so it is important to reach them.

Mr. Richardson said he doesn't believe that a lot of the people that voted no in the November election knew what the parameters were and what was going to happen.

Mr. Veitch said there needs to be community discussion to learn the facts and the passionate side of it, of whether we want it or not. Mr. Veitch cautioned by stating that the vote and the referendum against gambling, is not exactly a vote against Casinos' in Saratoga County. He said unfortunately, that is what has to be figured out and the State has not provided much direction to help with that process.

Mr. Barrett said it was interesting to look at the areas that were considered "ideal areas" for Casino Gambling before the vote, and did those areas vote for Casino Gambling or against it; figuring that if it passed, it might be in their backyard. He said he thought that in a lot of

instances they voted against it, including Saratoga. There is some correlation to be drawn from there, he said.

Ms. Madigan said that she believes that the vote was based on a constitutional amendment, a statewide referendum on Casino Gambling. She said she believes that there were plenty of people who voted with that in mind and not whether or not it is going to come to their city or town. She said she thought that was an entirely separate vote, and it is unfortunate that it was taken out of our control, but it was clearly a vote on a referendum for statewide gambling, a constitutional amendment. She said she knows plenty of people who have said that they don't want it in their backyard, but plenty that voted against it because they just didn't want gambling statewide. Now that it is here, the question is, do we want it in our backyard or someone else's.

Mr. Klepetar from SAVE Saratoga said the organization already has over 1500 signatures from Saratoga Springs and Warren County residents. After going door to door and speaking with residents in Saratoga they have found that many people in Saratoga do not want Casino Gambling in Saratoga Springs. He said they have gathered research from other race tracks that have had casino gambling showing the history of what has happened. A presentation to the Board of Supervisors is being planned.

Mr. Veitch thanked the committee for their support throughout the year.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Sansom