

Racing and Gaming Committee Minutes
July 5, 2018 – 2:30 p.m.

Present: Chairman Art Johnson; Supervisors Jack Lawler, Matt Veitch, Sandra Winney and Chairman of the Board Ed Kinowski; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; William McCarthy, NYRA; Skip Carlson, Saratoga Casino Hotel; Todd Shimkus, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Mrs. Winney the minutes of the February 1, 2018 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. William McCarthy from NYRA. Mr. McCarthy gave a brief update on the 2018 Saratoga meet. The upcoming meet will begin on Friday July 20, 2018. There will be 69 graded stakes races worth \$18.8M in purses which includes the \$1.2M Whitney on Saturday August 4, and \$1.25M Travers on Saturday August 25. Travers Day will include 7 graded stakes races, 6 of which will be grade 1 races. Opening weekend will include 5 graded stakes races led by the Grade 1 Diana. NYRA has entered into a partnership with Saratoga Casino to have a double with the Diana at the Saratoga Racetrack and the Gerrity at the Harness Track.

This summer marks the 3rd season of the TV Broadcast Saratoga Live which originates from the track and reaches over 75M households each day. Fox Sports 2 also broadcasts Saratoga Live.

They will also have an expanded version of the Saratoga Postcards programming, whereby they go to break and focus on certain landmarks in Saratoga to help increase tourism and economic development in the area. Mr. McCarthy said that they began with the Saratoga Springs City area, and welcome any suggestions to expand the programming to other areas in the County.

Mr. McCarthy said that they continue to see a strong interest in season passes. Passes are available for sale in over 150 Stewarts Shops throughout the Capital Region and can also be purchased online at NYRA.com. The season passes also provide a 10% discount on some local stores and restaurants. The Community booth at the racetrack hosts a non for profit each day of the meet.

Regarding capital improvements, new copper roofing was installed between the Easygoer and the Garden Terrace. The Stretch is a new area at the end of the grandstand and is currently under construction. It is expected to be completed by opening day. The new three story building at the end of the clubhouse is expected to be completed for the 2019 meet.

Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. Skip Carlson from the Saratoga Casino Hotel. Mr. Carlson gave a brief overview on their business. Mr. Carlson said that they had a bad January and February mostly due to inclement weather and were down 25%, however June was only down 2% which cuts the YTD gross gaming revenue to 12%, they are hoping to cut this to below 8% for the entire year. Food and Beverage revenue is only down 4%. From the Hotel standpoint, they are at 81% occupancy. Racing is up 1%. Tuesday night Fireworks were brought back this year and was a success.

Mr. Carlson said that it's a competitive market and is only going to get tougher. They now have competition in the Catskills with a \$1.2B casino and a new \$850M casino scheduled to open in Springfield in August. Mr. Carlson said that Yonkers Raceway was recently sold to MGM for \$860M. A brief discussion took place regarding table games and sports wagering. Mr. Carlson said that a constitutional amendment would be needed in order to allow table games. Mr. Lawler complimented Mr. Carlson on the service and staff in Morton's Restaurant and the Saratoga Casino.

Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. Shimkus from the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Shimkus said that they are putting together a campaign to bring the 13th Triple Crown Winner Justify to Saratoga Springs. They are working with Ed Mitzen and his team as they did in the past with American Pharoah. The unveiling of this year's campaign will be at Gaffneys in Saratoga Springs on Thursday July 12 at 5pm. They are working on video and social media posts.

Mr. Shimkus said that they decided last year to cancel the hats off and final stretch festivals for a variety of reasons however they have created a new event called the Call to Post and it will be a series of events on Thursday July 19 beginning with a breakfast event at the National Museum of Racing. Events will include tours of local breeding barns and horseracing fan of the year event from Thoroughfan. Mr. Shimkus said that if any chamber members have special events going on, music, specials etc. they can be included in the Call to Post chamber promotion.

On a motion made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mr. Veitch the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board