

Racing Committee Minutes  
May 12, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Smith; Committee Members Tara Gaston, Todd Kusnierz, John Lant, Darren O'Connor, Matt Veitch; Supervisors Alan Grattidge, Ed Kinowski and Chairman of the Board Preston Allen; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Pamela Wright, Clerk of the Board.

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

**On a motion made by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. O'Connor, the minutes of the February 11, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.**

**A motion was made by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Ms. Gaston, to authorize a resolution supporting Saratoga's Thoroughbred Racing meet in 2020. Unanimous.**

Copies of a draft letter from Assemblywoman Woerner to Governor Cuomo were distributed. Mr. Smith said that Ms. Woerner's office requested that Mr. Smith also sign this letter. Ms. Gaston said that the general act of taking care of animals has been essential this entire time, and NYRA have been maintaining those services. Ms. Gaston said that NYRA are trying to push to be able to at least race and have betting, possibly without fans. Ms. Gaston said that in her first reading of the letter, she does not know why Saratoga would join this particular letter as it is regarding Belmont and is not in Saratoga's jurisdiction. She understands how this impacts Saratoga however feels that it is improper for Saratoga to write a letter for actions concerning Nassau County. Ms. Gaston said that she would not be opposed to a letter drafted not as pointed towards Belmont and discussing the concerns of people coming from outside the area or country. Mr. Smith said that approximately 6 officials have signed onto this letter including Senator Jordan, the Mayor and himself, and there has been a lot of support for it. Mr. Smith said that school is starting in early September and how much different will it be in the beginning of August. Mr. Smith said that obviously they would like to see people back in Saratoga as it was like a ghost town the last time he drove through the city. Mr. Kinowski said that it is important how they open back up. Mr. Smith said that he believes they should at least start spectator less, otherwise there is no chance of anything opening this season. Mr. Veitch said that he is in support of the letter, or a similar letter, as they need to start somewhere. Ms. Gaston expressed concern over advocating for an area opening that has not met the wickets, and will not advocate for a group coming from an area that is far more ridden than Saratoga, to start opening up. Mr. Kusnierz said that the version of the letter he has does not have the other signatures on it and said that when he received the email and spoke with Senator Jordan, she was not aware of it. Mr. Smith said that the letter he viewed yesterday did have Senator Jordan's support, a final version with all signatures was being worked on. Mr. Kusnierz that to Ms. Gaston's point, anything they sign onto should be geared more towards Saratoga County. Mr. Veitch said that he would be in support of something rewritten in a way that was more Saratoga centered. Mr. O'Connor suggested an independent letter from the Board referencing Assemblywoman Woerner's letter. The committee agreed. Mr. Smith said that he was approached to sign the letter as Chairman of the Racing committee. After discussion it was decided that a separate resolution would be drafted to be brought forward and sent from the entire

Board. Mr. Cooke said that he can work with Mr. Dorsey to draft a resolution. Ms. Gaston asked if it could be sent to the committee via email ahead of time to give time for any changes prior to presentation to the entire Board.

Ms. Gaston inquired if there were any concerns regarding the Casino. Mr. Veitch said that he spoke recently with Skip Carlson about the Saratoga Casino Hotel Foundation. Mr. Veitch said that it would be nice if Harness racing could start up again as this is an industry that is struggling also. Mr. Veitch said that he has not heard much about this specifically but can follow up.

Mr. O'Connor inquired about the revenue generated from the track. Mr. Veitch said that admissions tax is the number one revenue stream from the track. Mr. Cooke said that historically it has been \$700K however last year NYRA made some changes on how they are recording some of the tax. Last year, the County received approximately \$450K. Mr. Veitch said that the admissions tax is split between the County and the City. Revenue losses would also be due to hotel stays, restaurants, sales taxes. Ms. Gaston said that they have also already had a number of concerts at SPAC cancelled.

**On a motion by Ms. Gaston, seconded by Mr. Lant, meeting was adjourned unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Therese Connolly  
Deputy Clerk of the Board