

Racings Committee Minutes
August 10, 2020 – 3:30 p.m.

Present: Chairman Smith; Committee Members Eric Connolly, Tara Gaston, John Lant, Matt Veitch; Supervisor Tara Gaston and Chairman of the Board Preston Allen; Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Skip Carlson, Saratoga Casino Hotel.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Lant, seconded by Mr. Veitch, the minutes of the May 12, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. Lant, seconded by Mr. Veitch, to authorize a resolution supporting the Saratoga Casino re-opening plan and urging the Governor to allow the Casino to reopen. Unanimous.

Mr. Carlson distributed the policy and procedural plan for the reopening of Saratoga Casino Hotel, and a handout detailing the local aspects and impact of the Casino. Both handouts are attached to these minutes. Mr. Carlson said that there are 1,900 casinos currently open in the United States. Mr. Carlson believes that the only casinos that are not open are the commercial casinos in NYS. The Native American Indians have been operating their casino Turning Stone for approximately 8 weeks now and Mr. Carlson said that it shows there has not been a negative effect on the communities it operates in. Mr. Carlson said that safety is their number one priority. They have purchased MERV filters. They are currently operating with indoor dining at Mortons and the mezzanine. Everyone that comes in for the racing program gets their temperature checked, have to wear a mask and comply with social distancing. Mr. Carlson said that they are also prepared to have id's scanned so that they will know who is in the casino daily. They can tell who came into the casino, where they were, who they sat next to if there is any Covid positive. Mr. Carlson said that they have 400 employees that have been furloughed for the better part of 5 months. They were able to cover their health insurance however that has now run out. Mr. Carlson said that they have been operating live harness racing for approximately 5-6 weeks. The purses were lowered by 40% and they have live racing 3 days a week instead of 4 days. 90% of the purses are earned through Casino revenues. Right now, without additional casino revenue they anticipate the purse account will be depleted by the middle of October and they will not be able to race. Since the Casino opened in 2004 they have contributed one billion dollars to NYS Education, that has been zero in the past 5 months. Mr. Carlson estimates that 90% of the people that come to the casino are from a 60 mile radius. Mr. Smith asked what percentage of the workforce would be reinstated if the Casino reopened. Mr. Carlson said that the casinos in NJ are operating at 25%, they are hoping that they could operate at 50%. They will be limited in the amount of food and beverage that can be offered. Vapor cannot be reopened as a nightclub since dancing is currently prohibited at wedding functions. Mr. Carlson anticipates that the business will not return to full capacity until a vaccine is available. Mr. Carlson is estimating that 50-60% of employees would come back. Ms. Gaston thanked Mr. Carlson for the very detailed and well thought out safety plan. It clearly shows where they thought about where concerns were, where risks were, and considering both the workers and the population that will come. Ms. Gaston said that she is fully in support of this.

Mr. Lant agreed. Mr. Carlson said that they were fully prepared to open when Phase 4 opened but did not hear any news. Mr. Carlson said that he will also be asking the City of Saratoga Springs City Council for their support.

Mr. Carlson thanked the Committee and said that the Casino would not be in existence if it were not for the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors.

On a motion by Mr. Veitch, seconded by Mr. Lant, meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board