

# Racing & Gaming 10-7-2021

## **SPEAKERS**

Ed Kinowski, Sandra Winney, Bill Peck, Jeff Cannizzo, Benny Zlotnick, Several Supervisors, Theodore Kusnierz

### **Benny Zlotnick**

Welcome everyone. We've taken attendance and thanks to the Chairman of the Board, we do have a quorum. So, our first motion will be approval of the minutes of May 6, 2021 meeting.

### **Sandra Winney**

I'll make that motion, Ben.

### **Benny Zlotnick**

Thank you, Sandy.

### **Bill Peck**

I can second it. Seconded by Bill.

### **Benny Zlotnick**

Thank you. All in favor?

### **Several Supervisors**

Aye.

### **Benny Zlotnick**

Okay, thank you. Our only item on the agenda today is a review of the 2021 racing season with Jeff Cannizzo from the, from NYRA. So, Jeff, you want to turn your, press your button there so the microphones on. There you go, floor is yours.

### **Jeff Cannizzo**

Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for bringing NYRA here to talk about the great meat that we had this past summer. I have some prepared remarks. I'll give you some highlights, talk about handle and our economics racing, our television show Saratoga Live, some hospitality and community outreach involved this past summer. But to start with the meets highlights, the 40 day summer meet at Saratoga race course generated all sources wagering handle of more than \$800 million dollars for the first time in its history. It's a record, it was a record year. It was fantastic. This figure's 100 million more than the previous record set in 2019. One hundred million more, put that in perspective. Average daily handle eclipsed \$20 million for the first time ever, and it makes history so average daily, 20 million. Paid attendance totaled 1,046,478 attendees marking the sixth consecutive season of more than 100 million in paid attendance at Saratoga Race Course. That excludes 2020 of course when fans weren't

permitted due to COVID. Saratoga gain more national exposure than ever before with more than 220 hours of live programming that originated from Saratoga Race Course and was part of our daily Saratoga Live broadcast. NYRA was honored to welcome New York Governor Kathy Hochul to Saratoga Race Course on run happy Travers Day. NYRA continued to invest in Saratoga as a world class sporting venue with the debut of two new hospitality airs this season, the Spa Verandas and the Top of the Stretch, along with the new Tailgate at the Turn facility, NYRA paid tribute to the work of our frontline and essential workers with a day dedicated to honor local health care heroes and our first responders. So again, just to recap some of the specifics of those highlights, our handle for 2021 was \$815 million, which was a 15% increase from 2019. We conducted 416 live races with an average field size of 7.7. 45 races were taken off the turf due to weather this year. As I mentioned Saratoga Live is our national television broadcast, where we did 220 hours broadcast from Saratoga live on Fox Sports throughout the meet. It's the most extensive and comprehensive coverage that we've ever done since we've introduced our television show back in 2016. 1.1 million viewers tuned in across the country to watch the Travers on Fox making it the event's highest ratings since 2015 when American Pharoah won the Triple Crown that season and appeared at the Travers. In 2021, the season also welcomed the addition of SNY as a regional broadcaster for Saratoga Live. The new hospitality areas, fans enjoyed these two new areas the Spa Verandas and the Top of the Stretch along with the Tailgate at the Turn. The Spa Verandas and the Top of the Stretch replaced the former reserved picnic area with six partially covered sections featuring modern amenities. They were a big hit and pretty much sold out the entire season. The Tailgate at the Turn section offered to drive up picnic area for the first time with the first turn of the track itself very popular and proved to be a success as well. We also expanded our popular Cutwater Stretch with an additional 15 new lounge style boxes which was in Section T of the grandstand, Ss the beginning of the grandstand itself. That area has proved, the Top of the Stretch, to be very successful and very popular for a new demographic of younger fans and a casual atmosphere so we expanded upon that. NYRA Bets, which is our advanced deposit wagering or online wagering platform for the second consecutive year and more than 12,000 bet cards distributed and sold in partnership with Steward Shops here locally, which has been a success, tremendous success. And lastly, from a community outreach perspective, again, we paid tribute to our frontline and central workers from the region by dedicating an honoring them days at the track. We had a season long NYRA hometown hero program, which was held in partnership with CDPHP, honoring those who had gone above and beyond during the pandemic, including nurses, law enforcement officers, and vaccine site officials. Our charitable program under NYRA stewardship requires that every owner competing at our NYRA tracks donates \$10 to the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance, which raises funds for organizations that conduct aftercare and provide homes for retired racehorses. As a result of this, the 3,253 starts recorded during the meet collected a donation amount of \$32,530 for those charity organizations for aftercare. And our horsemen paid, donated 1.5% of the purchase price of every horse claimed out of an NYRA track to the Take the Lead program. And during that summer meet that accounted for another \$18,690 to the Thoroughbred Aftercare and Take the Lead program for retired race horses. So, in a nutshell, it was an extremely successful meet. And we were very, very happy to have fans back at the track and to help contribute to the takeoff of the economy locally here in Saratoga.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Thank you very much. It sounds like it was a pretty successful season for you guys. I know. I made a couple contributions. So, part of that \$800 million, a very small part, is mine. Anything from you guys on the phone?

**Sandra Winney**

I think it's great. I think I want to commend them for all that they did to bring the economy back and for the sacrifice work they did for the COVID. This is really great news for Saratoga County. I'm impressed.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Thanks, Sandy.

**Bill Peck**

Chairman, this is Bill Peck. I want to commend NYRA for the success. Obviously a smashing season here in Saratoga as the best racecourse in America. And we heard all the great successes now thinking about the future, what things would NYRA like to improve on or do better looking forward?

**Jeff Cannizzo**

Good question. Good question. So, thank you both for the comments, we certainly appreciate it. There was a lot of hard work put into this past meet for sure to make it this success that it was. I think building on that going forward, there's further capital projects that NYRA is going to undertake to improve the property itself and improve some of the facilities. So, I think by our investment back into Saratoga, and the racecourse, we're gonna see, hopefully, see, those numbers continue to grow. And, you know, the, the reality of it is, is that the weather wasn't exactly perfect for us this summer, you know, it seemed like, once a week, we had rain.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Wednesdays.

**Jeff Cannizzo**

You know, Wednesdays. I'm not sure how many Sundays it didn't rain. So, it's kind of interesting to think about if we didn't have that little bit of rain that occurred every week, how we surely would have even shattered the number that we already shattered this year. So, I think that, you know, we're very optimistic that as we continue to invest in Saratoga it's going to continue to give back to the community, and economically and grow going forward.

**Benny Zlotnick**

If there's anything that the County can do, you know, and bring it to this committee, then we can pass it on, but it's anything that you think, you know, over the course of the winter that the County can do to help out with this, just feel free to reach out to us and we'll pass along your thoughts to the board.

**Jeff Cannizzo**

Thank you very much, and we absolutely will continue to keep that dialogue open going forward.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Great. Thank you.

**Theodore Kusnierz**

Chairman.

**Theodore Kusnierz**

If I may, just briefly I want to thank Jeff and President, CEO, Dave O'Rourke for a meeting with us a couple weeks ago at the track to discuss how best Saratoga County can partner with NYRA. We know, we're each well aware of the contributions, both locally for specifically for the City of Saratoga Springs, as well as the County as a whole, the economic engine and the business that having a historical track in our back yard generates for the County and if there's anything that along the way that you find you need assistance from the County, you know, please don't hesitate to reach out. And, once again, thank you for taking the time to meet with the County. So, thank you.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Yes, sir.

**Jeff Cannizzo**

Thank you.

**Ed Kinowski**

Mr. Chairman. Can you hear me?

**Benny Zlotnick**

Yes, sir.

**Ed Kinowski**

Yeah, Supervisor Kinowski. I didn't want to chime in, you know, and disrupt the beginning of the thing. I called in but it appeared nobody could hear me, I guess. So, I just left it alone. So, thank you very much. I just wanted to be recognized that I was part of the meeting and heard all and it's fantastic. Thank you very much.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Thank you, Ed. Any other business to come before this committee? Seeing none, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

**Ed Kinowski**

I'll make that motion.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Thanks, Ed.

**Bill Peck**

Bill.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Okay. All in favor?

**Several Supervisors**

Aye.

**Benny Zlotnick**

Thank you very much.

**Bill Peck**

Thank you. Thank you, NYRA.