

New York State Racing Fan Advisory Council

2012 Report and Recommendations

Submitted December 31, 2012 by:

Chair: Patrick M. Connors, Professor of Law, Albany Law School

Vice Chair: Michael F. Amo, Chair and Co-Founder, ThoroFan

Allan Carter, Historian, The National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame

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December 31, 2012

New York State Racing and Wagering Board
Chairman John D. Sabini
Member Charles Diamond
Member Daniel Hogan

Dear Chairman Sabini, Members Diamond and Hogan,

Pursuant to the Racing and Wagering Board's 2011 directive establishing the Racing Fan Advisory Council, I am pleased to present you with the Council's inaugural report of recommendations for your consideration.

The Racing Fan Advisory Council has been working hard over the past year to identify a comprehensive cross section of who the current racing fan is, who the possible new fans are, and what he/she wishes to see to make the sport more attractive and enjoyable.

We have held several public events over the past year to gauge attitudes and ideas from existing fans. We also collaborated on our specific areas of expertise to outline ideas to better market and expand the sport.

This initial report is a mere snapshot of the ideas proposed. We believe it is a series of realistic measures that can bring about positive change to the industry. As our mission continues into the next year, we will continue to identify and map out more comprehensive recommendations to bring more fans to the sport of horseracing.

On behalf of my colleagues, Michael Amo, Kelly Young and Allan Carter, I thank you for the opportunity to serve the horseracing industry and the state of New York.

Sincerely,

Patrick Connors
Chairman
New York Racing Fan Advisory Council

About the Racing Fan Advisory Council

The New York State Racing and Wagering Board formally announced the creation of the New York Racing Fan Advisory Council in September 2011 to provide input and advice to the Board on horseracing and wagering matters in New York State. The council is examining the “total racing experience” and reporting its findings to the Board.

The council consists of individuals steeped in Thoroughbred and harness racing, as well as off-track betting enterprises. The members are long-term horseracing fans, selected on their involvement, interest, knowledge and devotion to the sport. The members include:

- Chair: Patrick M. Connors, Professor of Law, Albany Law School: Professor Connors has been an avid fan of horseracing since 1989 and has made several presentations at Albany Law’s annual Saratoga Institute on Racing and Gaming Law. He has been a law professor for 20 years at both Syracuse University College of Law and Albany Law School. A prolifically published scholar, he has been an active member of several New York State Bar Association Committees and has given dozens of legal presentations across the state. Professor Connors resides in Saratoga Springs, graduated from Georgetown University and obtained his law degree at St. John’s University School of Law.
- Michael F. Amo, Chair and Co-Founder, Thoroughbred Racing Fan Association, Inc. (ThoroFan): Mr. Amo has been a Thoroughbred horseracing enthusiast for over 30 years. He was first introduced to the sport by a friend who took him to the 1978 Belmont Stakes and soon began traveling the country attending racing meets as his regular vacation away from a career as a hospital administrator. Mr. Amo has served on the Board of several not-for-profit organizations and is co-owner of a health care consulting business, as well as a published author. A Central Valley resident, Mr. Amo also serves as an Orange County legislator.
- Allan Carter, Historian, The National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame: Since 2003, Mr. Carter has worked at the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame. For more than 20 years prior, Mr. Carter was a legal librarian at the New York State Library. Mr. Carter served in the U.S. Army from 1963 to 1967 and worked as a technical writer at Knolls Atomic Power Plant. A Glens Falls native, Mr. Carter resides in Saratoga Springs and received a Master’s Degree in Library Science from SUNY Albany.
- M. Kelly Young, Associate Director of National Affairs, New York Farm Bureau: Ms. Young has been an active participant in the world of harness racing since 1995, when she worked as an office assistant at the Goshen Historic Track during the summer. Ms. Young is a member of the Saratoga Harness Hall of Fame’s Board of Directors and a former Executive Director of the Harness Horse Breeders of New York State. She has written several award-winning articles on Standardbred racing. An Albany resident, Ms. Young has a B.A. in Biology from Boston University.

No members are current Racing and Wagering Board employees, lobbyists, officers of any racetrack, OTB or any non-profit that represents breeders or horsemen. Three members are appointed by the Racing and Wagering Board Chairman and two are appointed by the chairs of the Senate Committee on Racing, Gaming and Wagering and the Assembly Committee on

Racing and Wagering. A fifth member, to be appointed by the New York State Assembly, will be named at a later date. Each member serves a five-year unpaid term.

Mission of the Racing Fan Advisory Council: As outlined via directive from the Racing and Wagering Board, the Racing Fan Advisory Council's mission is to grow of the fan base related to the sport of horseracing by:

- Recommending procedures to ensure that the opinion of the fan is a central part of the regulation of horseracing and advising the Board on issues related to horseracing and wagering
- Advising the Board on appropriate actions to encourage fan attendance and wagering at the state's Thoroughbred and harness racetracks and the state's off-track betting corporations
- Visiting Board-controlled racetracks and facilities during race times, workouts, and during hours when members of the media are permitted to be present at the facilities
- Advising the Board on the creation and development of an "I LOVE NY Racing" promotion
- Giving an annual, non-monetary award to both a thoroughbred and standardbred breeding farm in New York State that has worked to promote horseracing in New York
- Recommending changes to the rules of the Board and to the laws affecting horseracing
- Preparing an annual report to the Board regarding the operation of the state's Thoroughbred and harness racetracks and the state's off-track betting corporations

History of Horseracing in New York State: Horseracing in New York began when the state was a Dutch and British Colony. The first Thoroughbred race track in America was built by British Colonial Governor Richard Nicoll in 1664 in what was then called Hempstead Plains, approximately where Garden City, Long Island is today. New York's harness racing legacy goes back even farther, having been established in New Amsterdam, now New York City, by the Dutch.

Economic Impact of Horseracing in New York State: The impact of the horse industry on the State's economy was detailed in the 2012 New York Equine Industry Economic Impact Study (<http://www.nytbreeders.org/pdf/EquineStudy.pdf>). It estimated that the horse industry is a \$4.2 billion contributor to the State's economy. Saratoga Race Course, built in 1864, is the crown jewel of New York's horse industry. A study released by HR&A Advisors, Inc. in 2011 concluded that Saratoga Race Course contributes \$200 million annually to the nine-county Greater Capital Region.

Public Forums and Fan Outreach

In an attempt to reach out directly to racing fans and gather information about their concerns, the Council conducted three public forums during 2012 at Aqueduct, Saratoga Race Course and Yonkers Raceway. In addition, the Council staffed a table at the 2012 Belmont Stakes at which fans filled out surveys, submitted recommendations, and conversed with members of the Council about their concerns. These events not only allowed the Council to interact with racing fans, but to also witness the fan experience firsthand.

Aqueduct Racetrack Public Forum: On April 3, 2012, the Council conducted a public forum at Aqueduct Racetrack. During the program, representatives of The New York Racing Association, Inc. made presentations discussing changes at the track since the beginning of the construction of Resorts World Casino New York City. These presentations also included a discussion of proposed changes and scheduled improvements to Aqueduct, Belmont Park, and Saratoga Race Course. At the conclusion of the presentations, the Council conducted a question and answer session with the fans and the NYRA representatives. The NYRA representatives then took the Council members and fans on a tour of the facility and described changes and proposed changes to the physical plant at Aqueduct. All fans attending the forum received souvenirs from NYRA. Several concerns were raised by fans at the event, including:

- **Tellers:** Many noted that on track wagering was not convenient because of the lack of tellers at the tracks and the Belmont Cafe. The Council frequently heard this problem from many fans across the state, who overall prefer to place wagers with a person rather than through a machine or via telephone.
- **Signage:** Several fans also noted that signage for entry to the track via automobile or subway was poor, and that the address of the track should be revised for those using mobile devices for directions.
- **Access:** Access to and from the track to the subway, which is an important means of transportation to many fans, needs to be improved. During the Council's visit to the facility, it appeared that there was construction to the entrance to the subway. NYRA should ensure that these improvements provide easy access for the racing fan.
- **Physical Condition:** It was evident that the racing side of the Aqueduct facility is in great need of restoration and repair to accommodate fans. Several sections in the track side are run down, with some furniture and fixtures from the 1950s still in use. The contrast between the Resorts World side of the facility and the racing side is disturbing from a race fan's perspective.

If racing is ever to draw fans from the huge numbers of people flocking to Resorts World, the conditions on the racing side need to be improved and the facility must be more inviting.

The placement and quality of televisions throughout the facility needs to be improved. Several areas within the track would benefit from more televisions for the fans. In addition, many of the televisions in use were old and need to be upgraded.

There are positive aspects to the Aqueduct facility. The Equestrian Restaurant, one of the largest restaurants in New York City, provides an excellent view of the track in comfortable surroundings and the food is reasonably priced. The cleanliness of the facility at this level is

impressive, and NYRA should strive to raise the conditions of the other levels of the facility to be on par with this area.

The Resorts World side of the facility has breathed some new life into the area, but the track needs to take advantage of the influx of people and invite them to enjoy the sport of horseracing.

While Aqueduct and Resorts World are competing for entertainment dollars, the entities should explore a working relationship that may benefit both entities.

New York racing is conducted at Aqueduct for six months of the year and, while it does not have the same attendance as Saratoga, it does have a regular fan base. These fans should be recognized in some way during the year. Furthermore, the Council hopes that NYRA can ultimately encourage fans who attend races at Saratoga and Belmont Park to visit Aqueduct and experience races there.

Saratoga Race Course Public Forum: On August 30, 2012, the Council conducted a public forum at Saratoga Race Course after the conclusion of the day's racing. The forum was moderated by Daily Racing Form columnist David Grening, who has covered horseracing for 21 years, and attended by NYRA Vice President and Marketing Director, Rodnell Workman. Approximately 40 fans attended the forum and voiced their concerns on numerous issues. All fans attending the forum received souvenirs from NYRA. Among the issues raised by fans in attendance:

- **NYRA's Racing 101 Fan Hub:** This program was discussed, which offered casual fans the opportunity to receive personal, hands-on tutorials on the fundamentals and intricacies of wagering. Racing 101 is a positive addition to the fan experience at Saratoga. Many newcomers are intimidated by several aspects of wagering, but this program helps to introduce fans to some of the basic aspects of the sport and simple betting choices. NYRA also discussed its inaugural Social Media Day at Saratoga Race Course, which invited tech-savvy fans to meet in person and enjoy a day of special events at the track.
- **Number of Races:** Many fans expressed displeasure regarding the large number of races carded at Saratoga, and in particular the large number of maiden races. Many felt that post times after 6 PM made for too long a day at the track. In addition, many fans believed that the quality of racing at Saratoga had diminished significantly and that the large number of races was, in part, a factor in this regard. Several fans believed that a smaller number of races could result in a product of higher quality.
- **Equipment Changes:** Many fans noted the importance of the integrity of the game. Some fans were particularly troubled by late announcements of equipment changes and believe that these announcements should occur earlier. The possibility of penalizing a trainer or owner who repeatedly violates the rules in this area was also discussed. One fan suggested that the reason for a horse being scratched should be disclosed to the public.
- **Family Friendly Events:** Many fans noted that it would be helpful if there were more activities for children at the track, which would make for a better family experience. If children are engaged in fun activities, it makes it easier for parents to enjoy races.
- **Seating/Clubhouse:** Many people expressed dissatisfaction with the seating assignments and the availability of tickets at Saratoga. While the situation has improved somewhat, it

is still relatively difficult to purchase tickets for races at Saratoga. It is also frustrating for fans to see so many empty seats in the Clubhouse, when the best available seat at the track ticket office is at the top of the stretch. The Council believes that the fan experience can be significantly improved if tickets can somehow be exchanged so fans attending the races can use them. Also, due to the fact that many fans at Saratoga do not have seats, some suggested that more tables be made available throughout the facility for fans to use to handicap, eat and drink.

- **Wagering:** At Saratoga and at all other tracks visited by the Council, fans expressed a desire for more expanded wagering options. Fans also noted that many of the betting machines at Saratoga were not working properly, or were simply shut down, leading to long lines at windows with tellers. Fans noted that on Opening Day, windows did not open until 12:30, leaving insufficient time before the races to wager.
- **Security:** Some fans noted that the security at the track was somewhat slow to respond to unruly behavior, which can negatively affect the experience of other fans.
- **NYRA Reorganization:** Some fans asked if the Council was consulted on the State's reorganization plan for NYRA. It was not because the reorganization issue dealt with management concerns and fell beyond the purview of the Council's mission. At this event, some fans expressed concerns about the uncertainty of the State's plan for horseracing. The Council would welcome the opportunity to discuss its findings at a future NYRA Reorganization Board of Directors meeting, which recently appointed committees chairs. Accordingly, the Council encourages the NYRA Reorganization Board to form a Fan Outreach Committee to specifically address and consider fan concerns.

Yonkers Raceway Public Forum: On Nov. 10, the Council conducted a public forum at Yonkers Raceway prior to a racecard featuring the Messenger Stakes (\$400,000 purse), a Triple Crown event. Bob Galterio, Vice President of the Raceway and Frank Drucker, Publicity Director for Racing, also attended the forum and joined the Council members in listening to and responding to questions and recommendations from the 21 attendees. All fans attending the forum received a souvenir from the track. Issues discussed by fans included:

- **Post time synchronization:** Several fans requested that when Yonkers and the Meadowlands race on the same night, that it would be helpful if their post times did not overlap. Yonkers, however, explained that it has to stick to post times due to foreign wagering pools and while post times start off staggered, a delay can often move them closer together. Fans suggested that it may be productive for Yonkers management to reach out to Meadowlands management to discuss this issue. The fans also requested that the facility be opened earlier to accommodate simulcast wagering on other tracks. Fans noted that simulcast openings should be more closely coordinated with first post times at Aqueduct.
- **Web site:** Several different fans suggested more information on the Web site, including the opening times for simulcasting areas when there is no live racing and the posting of claiming information. Fans also requested an opportunity to submit suggestions/comments on the Yonkers Web site. There is a "Contact Form" on the Raceway's Web site, but perhaps it can be better highlighted for fans.
- **Player tracking/player rewards:** Similar to the casino end of the business, fans encouraged a player tracking system that would allow the track to send them information

about events and promotions (such as the fan forum), as well as reward them for their wagering loyalty. One attendee suggested that reward points could be used to purchase public transportation vouchers.

- **ABC Classification:** The return to this racing classification system has been announced at the Meadowlands and several fans spoke up to say they do not like this system as it is more unfair to the betting public than the current classification system.
- **Wagering:** This issue was discussed at length. Fans here wanted to see more live tellers, but also more education available for first-time users of automated teller machines. There was also a suggestion to offer all exotic bets on all races. The fans noted that the racing and purses are generally good.
- **Broadcast:** The quality of the Yonkers racing broadcast was complimented (it is one of the few captured in HD), but this quality is not always transmitted through the NYRA station because it does not have adequate technology for HD. Fans requested that the track explore the installation of an infield screen and also communicating more accurate split times during races. Fans also requested that more races from other tracks be broadcast at Yonkers, although some fans at the event felt there was a sufficient number, and that more high quality televisions be installed at the track.
- **Racing facilities:** Several suggestions from fans encouraged increasing the non-dining areas available to watch live racing, such as enclosing a portion of the apron area for more comfort during the winter. Fans generally asked for more areas to comfortably sit and handicap for live and simulcast races, but stressed that the apron area should not be obstructed as it offers a good view of the races. Mr. Galterio noted that the Raceway is currently expanding its facilities for the fans.
- **Events for fans:** A discussion of special events generated suggestions from several fans for racing seminars for both fans and new owners and more frequent events targeting fans (ie: family nights, dollar nights, fan appreciation nights) that are not necessarily in conjunction with a big race event. They felt these events on a more regular basis would encourage loyalty, make fans feel appreciated, and provide a more desirable environment for families and women—two desired demographics.
- **Advertising:** A suggestion was made for more racing advertisements during sports programming and news on the local television stations, perhaps featuring the winners of the day and other highlights at the track in order to keep current fans more engaged and to draw in new fans.
- **Transportation:** Several fans requested that there be more transportation options to the Raceway, especially from New York City. In addition, the Raceway's Web site should contain more specific information regarding public transportation options. Two Council members arrived at the Raceway in a cab, but the cab driver informed them that he was not permitted to drop them off in front of the Raceway facility. The Raceway should examine whether public transportation options can be improved for the fans.
- **Finish Line Placement:** Fans and track management both discussed the issue of the finish line at Yonkers, which is very close to the turn and something both parties dislike. According to track management, Racing and Wagering rules dictate that the judges must be on the finish line. Due to the location of the track's judges' booth, the finish line had to be where it is currently located.

The Council recommends that the Racing & Wagering Board review the placement of the finish line at Yonkers, given current video technology and available back-up technology, to see if a change in the finish line location is feasible. Moving the finish further up the stretch would benefit fans by allowing them to more accurately see the finish (instead of at an angle) and permit the starting gate to release the field earlier so horses can jockey for position more before heading into the first turn at the start of the race, ideally reducing the impact of post position.

The Racing and Wagering Board should also foster and facilitate a collaborative partnership among New York tracks, similar to how it coordinated an agreement on video streaming. The conglomerate of NY tracks would include NYRA tracks, Finger Lakes, and all Harness tracks in NY State and work together to market simulcasting measures and permit tracks in NY greater bargaining power for simulcast races and help make sure NY races are carried elsewhere (thus helping NY track handle).

Belmont Park: On June 9, 2012, Belmont Stakes Day, the Council staffed a table and spoke directly to fans to inform them about our work. Fans were asked to fill out surveys and, in return, received a NYRA Calendar. The fans who responded reported overall that they frequented racetracks around six times per year with Saratoga Race Course being the most visited. The Council did not ask for demographic information from the responders. The survey had three questions.

- What is your perception of the Racing Fan Experience in New York State?
- What topics/concerns related to Thoroughbred racing would you like the NYS Racing Fan Advisory Council to know?
- How often do you attend racing events in New York?

In general, racing in New York was rated favorably with Saratoga Race Course thought to be the best of all three NYRA tracks.

The most critical response was aimed at the culture of racing. One respondent felt NYRA needs to change the image that going to a racetrack is a degenerative activity. Its entertainment value needs to be emphasized more. To do so might help NYRA attract new and younger fans.

Constructive criticism was waged at NYRA's focus on big days of racing. Creating enjoyment of Thoroughbred racing on a more regular basis would benefit the sport and help grow the fan base.

A summary snapshot of the recommendations included:

- Promote a more positive attitude about racing in the media
 - Improve marketing at downstate tracks
 - Continue to improve Customer Service
 - Focus on increasing attendance as much as increasing handle
- Find ways to reward the regular customers—free admission, seating and bonuses
- Make on track facilities, services and products more affordable to the average fan.
- Publicize horses and jockeys more to gain fan interest.
- Review breakage rules at NYRA tracks
- Improve quality of races
- Allow “rolling” Grand Slam wagers in most races

- Never switch to poly-track surface
- Focus more on cooperation between tracks in scheduling races so fans get the maximum benefit
- Re-evaluate NY Bred race condition to make them fairer
- Have twilight races every Friday night throughout the summer

(Formal Recommendations Begin on Next Page)

Formal Recommendations of the Racing Fan Advisory Council

In reviewing the myriad feedback submitted by fans at forums, via correspondence and surveys in calendar year 2012, along with the members' own experiences and expertise, the Racing Fan Advisory Council proposes the following recommendations to be considered by the Racing and Wagering Board, track management and other industry professionals:

Takeout Rates: Since 2003, racetracks have been given the ability, with Racing and Wagering Board approval, to lower the takeout rates that they charge their bettors. Even though the non-NYRA tracks now receive the bulk of their revenues from video lottery terminals (VLTs), and VLTs at the non-NYRA tracks now supply 71 percent of the purses at these tracks, there have been few serious attempts made to help out the bettors. It is time for all the New York racetracks to undertake efforts to reduce the takeout on their customers.

Track Partnership: The Racing and Wagering Board should foster and facilitate a collaborative partnership among New York tracks, similar to how it coordinated an agreement on video streaming. The conglomerate of NY tracks would include NYRA tracks, Finger Lakes, and all Harness tracks in New York State. This would enable the parties to work together to market simulcasting measures and permit tracks greater bargaining power for simulcast races and help make sure New York races are carried elsewhere (thus helping New York track handle).

NYRA Reorganization: The NYRA Reorganization Board, which recently appointed committees chairs should form a Fan Outreach Committee to specifically address and consider fan concerns. The Council would welcome the opportunity to discuss its findings and foster a dialogue at a future NYRA Reorganization Board of Directors meeting.

Enhancing Belmont Stakes Day Fan Experience: Belmont Stakes Day typically features the highest attendance day of any track during the year, and has had some of the largest crowds to ever attend a sporting event in New York State. Belmont Stakes Day is, for many fans, their only visit to a race track during the year. Belmont Stakes Day is an excellent opportunity to highlight and showcase every positive aspect of horse racing to entice fans to come back to the track on other race days. The experience should be improved by lowering the prices of food, beverages and souvenirs, as opposed to raising prices for such items. NYRA should also consider allowing fans to bring food and beverages to the track on Belmont Stakes Day. If safety reasons prevent this, prices at the track for these items should be reasonable to ensure fans have a positive experience. Finally, NYRA should consider a promotion to draw those fans in attendance on Belmont Stakes Day to return to the races on another day.

Finish Line Placement at Yonkers: The Racing & Wagering Board should review the placement of the finish line at Yonkers, given current video technology and available back-up technology, to see if a change in the finish line location is feasible. Moving the finish further up the stretch would benefit fans by allowing them to more accurately see the finish (instead of at an angle) and permit the starting gate to release the field earlier so horses can jockey for position more before heading into the first turn at the start of the race, ideally reducing the impact of post position.

WiFi: Track operators should make WiFi available throughout the racing facilities so that fans can use tablets and other technology to download racing programs and access handicapping information at the tracks.

Track Televisions for Live and Simulcast Racing: Track operators should take an inventory of where TVs are located and ensure that sufficient TVs of adequate quality (HD, large screen) are available where patrons are located.

Web sites: Raceways should review their Web sites and determine what additional information would better serve their fans and make that available. A common theme heard at each track was a request by fans to find more information on the track's Web site, such as:

- Simulcast area hours and schedules
- Claims and equipment changes
- Beginner handicapping information
- Cancellation and refund policies
- Takeout rates
- Public transportation information

Simulcast Patron Accomodation: When tracks remain open for simulcasting after the conclusion of racing, steps should be taken to ensure that fans can easily exit the facility, access their automobiles and exit the parking lot.

Scratches & Equipment Changes: The Racing and Wagering Board should review its rules and regulations regarding scratches and equipment changes. Fans feel that lack of this knowledge in sufficient time undermines racing integrity. They would like to see equipment changes reported in ample time so bettors can consider this in their wagers (one suggestion was all changes in 24 hours after the race is drawn so they can be printed in the program) and that reasons for scratches be reported for Thoroughbred races as they are for harness races.

Automated Teller Machines/Customer Service: The issue of automated teller machines (SAMs) was brought up at each track. While it seems track management has encouraged SAM usage to speed up transactions and reduce the number of live tellers needed, there were complaints at each forum about a lack of sufficient live tellers. Some bettors prefer giving their bet to a person and recognize this is a matter of providing customer service. However, it was revealed that SAM use could be even better encouraged by having available staff nearby to fix machine problems and tutor new and struggling users until they feel comfortable with the technology. More hands-on help and more education available for SAMs would help transfer at least some patrons from always needing a live teller to utilizing the automated machines. At Saratoga Race Course, in particular, several fans complained about nonfunctioning machines.

Rewards Programs: Track operators should investigate possible implementation of rewards programs for patrons similar to casino rewards programs already in place. These would allow fans to feel appreciated and provide them with loyalty rewards to further encourage their attendance at the races. While NYRA does have an existing rewards program, it should be reexamined to ascertain how many fans it actually rewards. The Council believes that fans

should be rewarded not only for substantial wagering, but for regular attendance at the tracks and some degree of moderate wagering.

Fan Education: Track operators should take education of their fans seriously and offer seminars and other means for greater understanding of the sport and handicapping. Suggestions include “Racing 101” courses for beginners, handicapping aids and even new owner seminars.

Public Transportation: Public transportation is important for a segment of fans who otherwise would not be able to visit the track. Track operators should take a close look at all the means of transportation their patrons are using, ask if that can be made more accessible, and update this information on their Web site. At each forum, fans voiced concerns of hurdles faced by public transportation, to the surprise of track management. Track management should take public transportation to their tracks on a regular basis (monthly) to ascertain the fan experience.

Facility Upgrades: As specifically mentioned in the Aqueduct Public Forum section, the facilities for racing fans are inferior and outdated compared to those for the casino patrons – the difference is often very stark. Racing fans deserve comfortable areas with modern services to watch races and handicap so that they stay engaged in the sport.

Events & Entertainment: Consideration of the needs for entertainment of families and women – two important demographics for expanding the fan base – must also be considered when selecting and outfitting facilities and special attractions to supplement racing (e.g. family-friendly events). Raceways should plan more regular events to make racing enjoyable to the current and developing fan. Events in conjunction with a big racing event may bring fans out once or twice a year, but to make them more regular visitors, smaller events are encouraged. Fan appreciation nights, with betting, food and other event tie-ins could help encourage more regular attendance and help foster racing’s appeal to potential fans who have many other entertainment options.

Signage: Raceways should look again at outdoor and indoor signage for racing, as fans feel it is typically inadequate. For example, the customer service office at Belmont Park does not appear to have a sign on it.

Implementation of an “I LOVE NY Racing” promotion: New York State Department of Economic Development focuses on a number of “I Love New York” campaigns. The newest initiative, launched earlier this year by Governor Cuomo, expands the “I (heart) New York” campaign to include other activities (e.g. “I (camp) New York,” “I (fish) New York). It should be noted that advertising campaign unveiled for this initiative does indeed include a brief mention of horseracing. The Council believes the new initiative is readily adaptable for horseracing and should be implemented (“I (horserace) New York”).

With harness and Thoroughbred racing running year round across New York State there is a prime opportunity to introduce New Yorkers and tourists to horseracing as a form of entertainment. The local farms and agribusinesses that support horseracing could, also, be a focus of this tourism campaign.

The New York state Racing Fan Advisory Council recommends a collaborative effort between themselves and the Department of Economic Development to create an “I love New York Horseracing Campaign.”

Since this initiative would have many beneficiaries including race tracks, off-track betting corporations, farms and associated businesses, all should be consulted in how to best capture the industry in such a focused campaign.

The Racing Fan Advisory Council suggests that a small, fractional portion of revenue from wagering handle could be dedicated to develop and support the “I Love New York Horseracing” Campaign.

Resale or Reuse of Reserved Seat Tickets at NYRA Racetracks: Although most obvious during the Saratoga Race Course summer meet, NYRA should have a system in place whereby season or modified-season reserve seat ticketholders can return them for credit and resale to the public.

Currently, once a ticket is purchased it cannot be returned. Although Clubhouse reserved seats are usually sold out for the entire meet, on most weekdays and some weekends, there are many empty seats. When fans inquire about purchasing tickets on these days they usually are given seats at the extreme end of the grandstand, near the top of the stretch. Or they are told that no seats are available and they are directed to finding an open seat on the track apron or in the picnic area.

If a new fan could purchase prime clubhouse seats on most days for face value, their track experience would improve. With that positive experience, it is likely they would be more willing to return to racing and perhaps become a sustainable fan of the sport. This could be addressed in one of two ways:

- Direct NYRA to allow people to return to their box office reserved seats they are not going to use. Their NYRA ticket account could be credit for those returns. The returns would be put into inventory for resale to fans on a daily basis.
- Direct NYRA to provide a non-profit organization (501(c)(3)) with a ticket window in the box office where they could accept donated tickets and resell them. This would give fans access to better seats and support the work of selected non-profit(s). A fair and transparent process should be employed to select participating and worthwhile non-profits (e.g. responsible horse welfare or retirement organizations).

The Racing Fan Advisory Council recommends that the NYS Racing and Wagering Board direct NYRA as part of their operating license to implement one or both of the above approaches.

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