

August 22, 2011

Public safety is one area where Floral Park has exerted its rights as a community. The quality of life we enjoy is a function of the sense of security we feel. This week's principle from our 2007 Statement of Principles addresses safety and security. Safety and security may be the area of greatest concern, an area where the most negative impacts may be realized by the development of an Indian casino at Belmont Park.

SAFETY AND SECURITY IS A NECESSITY NOT A LUXURY

VI. The safety and security for the facilities and their neighboring communities must be maintained and increased. Safety includes the safe inflow of traffic to and from the facilities whether the sites are hosting an event or conducting ongoing operations. Security should include use of state of the art technology, including requiring proper identification of all persons permitted in the non-public areas at the facilities. In addition, as these facilities have already been designated as staging areas should an emergency or natural disaster take place, there must be state of art readiness and facilities in place.

Floral Park is proud to be one of the few full service villages in Nassau County that maintains its own full time police force. This commitment to public safety is a cornerstone of our community remaining a great place to live and raise a family. The potential introduction of a 24/7/365 full scale casino at Belmont Park will no doubt have a significant impact on our public safety resources. I have asked our Police Commissioner Stephen McAllister and his staff to consider the impact the Shinnecock casino at Belmont Park could have on Floral Park. The preliminary analysis is quite disturbing. In particular, according to a study authored by Grinols and Mustard, while the crime rates near casinos may initially remain comparable to historical crime patterns, after about 3 or 4 years, after the initial novelty of the excitement created by any new casino facility subsides, there appears to be a steady increase in crime, and the types of crime committed are quite different than what was taking place before the presence of a casino. The data suggests that casinos create crime and not merely move crime from one area to another. Now bear in mind that the areas where many casinos have been built were either in dire shape or desolate even before the casinos were introduced, so what a casino at Belmont Park could bring to our community in the way of criminal activity may not be predicted based upon the experiences of places like Atlantic City, Detroit or even rural Connecticut. One thing is for sure, however, introducing tens of thousands of additional visitors to any area will result in increased traffic, accidents and crime.

We also have the benefit of reviewing the comprehensive report prepared by the community leaders of Palmer, Massachusetts, a community of 12,500 that has been considering the introduction of an Indian casino into their community. They studied various issues, including public safety, and concluded that their police department needed to be dramatically expanded and additional public safety facilities needed to be built in order to accommodate an Indian casino in their area. While the Shinnecoaks would surely have security to protect their own property and visitors while at Belmont Park itself; will or can the Shinnecoaks also protect their neighbors and their homes once their visitors leave the secure confines of Belmont Park? Given that the Shinnecoaks casino will be open and may be serving alcohol all hours day and night, will our roads see an influx of after hour patrons from all over the metropolitan area? Will those same

all night revelers also be leaving Belmont Park about the same time our school children will be going to school in the morning? Having a DUI check point near Floral Park Memorial High School is not something our local police department should have to consider, but if so, our local taxpayers should not have to foot the bill to protect the community from unlawful activity emanating from Belmont Park! Will Floral Parkers be left with no choice but to depend on the benevolent protection of the Shinnecocks, the State of New York or Nassau County rather than the current peace of mind we enjoy with our own police department? Is that fair?

The studies suggest that casinos have a significant impact on the local community and bring “more work for police, courts and more filled jail cells.” (Miller and Schwartz 1998). As one community leader in Palmer has suggested “there needs to be some mechanism to ensure the host community does not end up as becoming a net loser in the process” and to “have a host agreement in place that will cover ALL the expense...so that no burden is placed on the citizens to cover any expenses associated with a casino.” (See Palmer Citizen’s Casino Impact Study Committee Report dated April 13, 2009).

We assume the Shinnecocks will install state of the art security at Belmont Park. Floral Park must be assured that we will maintain and perhaps even enhance the safety and security of our community in a similar manner as a result of a casino at Belmont Park. We don’t want to find, like the citizens in New Orleans after Katrina did, that what was thought to be the community’s dream facility, their Superdome, turns out to be a nightmare of shallow promises and unfulfilled expectations.

August 15, 2011

Recently, the taxpayers of Nassau County unequivocally said NO to the Coliseum referendum, a proposal with more questions than answers. Too often we, the taxpayers and underwriters of these legislative follies, are left with jaws agape and wallets emptied when the details of these 'good ideas' are exposed. This week's principle from our 2007 Statement of Principles deals with the importance details and rules are for a fair race.

PLAY BY THE SAME RULES AND 'PONY UP' A FAIR SHARE

V. These facilities are NOT an island, but are an integral part of the communities in which they are located. They should be subject to the SAME rules as their neighbors, including zoning, employment, housing codes, regulations and police oversight. The facilities should therefore contribute their FAIR SHARE for the services and infrastructure their surrounding communities make available to the facilities. This includes amounts for police, fire and sanitation services, either through actual property taxes or a similar amount even if a tax exempt status is present. An iron-clad Payment In Lieu Of Taxes [PILOT] agreement guaranteeing such a revenue stream to surrounding local political subdivisions, including the central high school and elementary school districts, should be completed.

The potential of the Shinnecocks taking control over some, if not all, of the 435 acre Belmont Park property raises a host of concerns; especially the impact a federally recognized sovereign Indian Nation could have on the surrounding community. While the State of New York has had a great deal of control over what takes place at Aqueduct and Saratoga, NYRA's two other thoroughbred racing facilities, if it cedes control of any part of Belmont Park to the Shinnecocks, what takes place there could be beyond the control of the State of New York, and even, the federal government in some important respects.

The Town of Hempstead has had an important say over what takes place at the 77 acre Nassau Hub and Coliseum, as evidenced by Hempstead's dramatic downsizing of the proposed "Lighthouse Project" advocated by the owner of the New York Islanders. Whether the Town of Hempstead or even Nassau County could assert jurisdiction over property under control of the Shinnecocks is a serious concern. Whether the Shinnecocks, operating a hotel with hundreds of rooms supporting a full scale casino rivaling Foxwoods Casino, will have to play by the same set of rules that the New York Islanders have been since 1972, seems to be an issue of fairness for everyone impacted by whatever takes place at Belmont Park.

We all know the Shinnecocks have strongly resisted the State of New York's attempts to collect their fair share of our tobacco taxes. Wouldn't it be ironic if the State of New York now allows the Shinnecocks to open yet another outlet to sell tobacco products at Belmont Park! Will tobacco smoking, which is prohibited inside all our public buildings, now be allowed at the Shinnecocks gaming facilities at Belmont Park? What if one of their workers at Belmont Park gets lung cancer from being exposed to tobacco smoke in the Shinnecocks' facilities, will such a worker be allowed to sue or seek worker's compensation? The tobacco related issues alone illustrate the game changing nature of interjecting a sovereign Indian Nation like the Shinnecocks into the equation at Belmont Park.

We have discussed the potential strains on our local infrastructure and one way to relieve our concerns would be for payments to be made on behalf of the operations at Belmont Park that would represent their fair share of those services. We must not be subject to the changing winds in Albany to be sure that we receive our fair share of what takes place at Belmont Park. Our local school districts and our local taxpayers have already been shortchanged by Albany, and there is certainly no current iron clad agreements in place which assures us that Belmont Park begins contributing its fair share to our local communities as was done in the past. Why Belmont Park's horse owners and gambling interests should get paid first, while our school children and local taxpayers get taken care of last, is simply unfair. It must be the other way around, before anyone else tries to get their piece of the action at Belmont Park.

August 8, 2011

The differences between an Indian Nation Casino and a state-operated VLT Racino are manifestly apparent discussing the fourth principle; funding revenue streams for education. Fairness, the foundation upon which we developed the 2007 Statement of Principles, should encompass all communities and extend to all, especially our children.

EDUCATION FUNDS MADE HERE MUST STAY HERE - FIRST IV

Since Video Lottery Terminals (VLT) will be permitted by the State of New York at one or more facilities, there must be irrevocable commitment that the communities that are neighboring these three facilities receive a dedicated stream of revenue earmarked for educational institutions within their communities, prior to any additional funds being distributed to educational institutions outside those neighboring communities. One way to ensure the neighboring communities get at least their fair share of state aid to local school districts is to require that their state to local districts be at least what the overall state average is in any given year.

The primary purpose for allowing the use of VLTs within New York State is to generate revenue specifically targeted for educational uses. While VLTs have been allowed to operate at Aqueduct as a result of special legislation passed in the aftermath of 9-11-01, now, almost 10 years have passed without one dollar being fed into a slot machine at Aqueduct; primarily due to the State of New York's inept and scandal-plagued process of selecting a VLT operator at Aqueduct. The promised one million dollars a day windfall for education has yet to be realized from Aqueduct. That billions of dollars of potential revenue for education have been lost the past decade is truly a stinging indictment of the wasteful and bumbling ways of Albany. We hope those days of stagnation have passed with the election of this new legislature and governor.

The unique competitive advantage of allowing the Shinnecocks to operate a full scale casino at Belmont Park is that, as a federally recognized sovereign Indian Nation, their casino can offer all types of legalized gambling, including card and table gaming, rather than just VLTs. The Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun Casinos, operated by separate federally recognized sovereign Indian nations in Connecticut, share 25 percent of their slot machine revenue with the state, however, unlike Massachusetts, its table gaming revenues have not been shared with Connecticut's government. Last year Foxwoods had \$649 million in total slot revenues and \$267 million from its gaming tables; while neighboring Mohegan Sun realized \$736 million in total slot revenue and \$291 million in gaming revenues. Connecticut received \$162 million from Foxwoods and another \$184 million from Mohegan Sun last year alone, under its current 'slots only' arrangement.

Now much is yet to be negotiated and determined about how additional revenues generated at Belmont Park are to be shared among the various stake holders, but the Village of Floral Park, as a major hosting community, deserves and must be a fully participating and sharing stake holder. As we understand the current proposal being discussed among the Shinnecock Indian Nation, the State of New York and representatives from Nassau County, is that the State of New York will receive 25 percent of the 'slots only' revenues, a quarter of which, or 6.25 percent, will be set aside for Nassau County. Since Nassau County provides the Elmont community with its police protection and other vital services, we are sure that Nassau County officials have done their "due

diligence” to determine that 6.25 percent of the ‘slots only’ revenue is a fair amount of compensation for all its constituents that depend upon Nassau County for those vital services.

In addition, the horse racing interests represented by NYRA, which are already assured a dedicated VLT revenue stream from Aqueduct, are in for a similar dedicated amount from any new gambling operations at Belmont Park. While the State of New York and Nassau County will be handsomely rewarded through the potential revenues that will flow through Belmont Park, the Village of Floral Park deserves to be on equal footing or at least on a comparable scale with what the horse racing interests have been given from projected revenues. We hope the Shinnecocks will never promise to assist millionaire horse owners without first taking care of their new neighbors within the local community.

If the State of New York only allows VLT gambling to take place at Belmont Park, then Belmont Park would be no different than Aqueduct and all revenue will have to be dedicated solely for educational purposes. By allowing the Shinnecocks to operate a casino at Belmont Park, with slots and gaming tables, however, the State of New York and Nassau County will be free to use any revenues generated from Belmont Park with no strings attached. Unless the Shinnecock Nation dedicates at least some fair share of its revenues directly with the Village of Floral Park, they may walk away from the table without sharing one dime with its hosting community. Does that sound fair and equitable?

Given that the Shinnecocks no doubt appreciate that the Floral Park community may have developed a healthy mistrust for Albany keeping its promises, especially when it comes to the empty promises the surrounding communities have heard for so long concerning Belmont Park, having a direct working relationship with the Village of Floral Park on their casino proposal makes sense for everyone. While the State of New York recently took complete ownership over the 435-acre Belmont Park site, for example, it did not provide ironclad guarantees to continue payments of Belmont Park’s local property taxes, especially to the Elmont and Sewanahaka School Districts. Did anyone in the Elmont School District notice a large increase in taxes caused, at least in part, to the fact that one of its largest taxpayers, Belmont Park, which contributed an estimated 6 percent share of its tax base, suddenly disappeared from its tax rolls when the State of New York came into control of Belmont Park? Since Sewanahaka Central High School District is comprised of five school districts, including Floral Park-Bellerose, we have all lost out on Belmont Park’s traditional property tax revenues. Belmont Park previously contributed an estimated 2 percent of the Sewanahaka school district’s overall tax revenue. Because the State of New York has not been providing a dedicated stream to the local school districts hosting Belmont Park, it has left the local communities understandably mistrusting of Albany suddenly doing the right thing. One thing is clear however, the Shinnecocks need the Village of Floral Park and not the other way around!

August 1, 2011

Continuing our analysis of an Indian Casino at Belmont Park using our Statement of Principles from 2007, we focus on the third principle; infrastructure. Nothing has been the same since Belmont Park-NYRA altered the natural contours and drainage piping subsequent to its renovation in 1964-67. Flooding in Floral Park and Elmont is not a natural occurrence; it is the consequence of unexamined development.

PLAN AND PROVIDE NEW STATE OF THE ART INFRASTRUCTURE

III. In order to achieve that goal, there must be a plan in place for a state of the art infrastructure and facilities worthy of being called the nation's premier venues for thoroughbred racing and a source of community pride. Such modernization of the infrastructure must encompass and be projected into the surrounding neighborhoods in which such world class entertainment facilities are situated. This includes a complete updated inventory and evaluation for updating of roads, state of the art water, sewer, water recharge basins and electrical systems both within and surrounding these facilities. From user friendly sidewalks and lighting to new estate fencing, the facilities must be able to compete with and be comparable to the support already provided or committed to other major entertainment facilities in the State of New York such as the new Major League Baseball facilities at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, the new Citi Field in Flushing Meadows Queens and the new National Basketball Association venue in Brooklyn.

Much has been written about the urgent need to replace the outdated and apparently obsolete Nassau County Veterans Memorial Coliseum, which opened in 1972! Surely Belmont Park, which is over 100 years old and had its last major overhaul in the early 1960's, is long past due for similar renovations. While NYRA is moving ahead with a \$100 million updating of its Saratoga facilities and the new \$300 million VLT Resorts World at Aqueduct is scheduled to be open this fall, there has been no similar commitments made to update the infrastructure at Belmont Park. We have heard nothing from the State of New York about when it will begin rectifying the serious infrastructure deficiencies emanating in and around its Belmont Park property, even though the State of New York now has singular ownership and control over the 435 acre Belmont Park site.

We all understand the frustration our neighbors closest to Belmont Park have experienced due to the flooding and water damage caused by the inadequate infrastructure that is now in place at, or impacted by Belmont Park. We also all recently experienced the third world inconvenience of having to boil our drinking water primarily as the result of troubling water tests indicating contamination by either human or animal waste at a location not far from Belmont Park. Is there any doubt that the adding of the Shinnecock's grand plans of a 24/7/365 casino, comparable to the 14 million visitors a year Foxwoods Casino, will potentially bring our already fragile infrastructure to its breaking point? How many boiled water alerts from the Western Nassau County Water Authority or local flooding alerts from Nassau County OEM will the local communities experience as a result of the exponential increase of year round visitors envisioned with the Shinnecock's casino at Belmont Park?

In order to avoid any further inconvenience to the communities surrounding Belmont Park, the first thing on the governor's agenda concerning Belmont Park must be completing the long overdue overhaul and updating of all its infrastructure. The updating of roads, state of the art water, sewer, storm water drainage piping, storm water recharge basins and electrical systems both within and surrounding these Belmont Park facilities is a necessity and an absolute prerequisite BEFORE one slot machine is played or one pair of dice is tossed at Belmont Park. Having some new soccer fields or a new sports bar built may be a nice accommodation for a small segment of the community, but far more important is the fact that everyone in our neighboring communities deserves to be able to turn on their lights, drink their tap water or flush their toilet without worrying about the effects a new megaproject at Belmont Park will put on our already stressed local infrastructure.

Such mitigation and updating completed before any expansion at Belmont Park is a necessity and not a luxury.