

**September 12, 2011**

We continue to again discuss our 2007 Belmont Task Force Statement of Principles. These principles are based on fairness and equity. Recent press releases regarding NYRA's Saratoga Race Course and that NYRA property's development makes our seventh principle, being a good neighbor to your neighbors more timely than ever before.

***BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR TO YOUR NEIGHBORS***

*VII. The neighboring communities that have existed in peaceful co-existence with these facilities for decades should have their right to the quiet enjoyment of their neighborhoods respected and continued to be maintained. Those areas that are natural park like settings must continue to be maintained. There must be a comprehensive facilities management plan addressing both modernization and preservation plans and must include design guidelines, based upon generally acceptable community standards, to be used in the development of individual capital and maintenance projects. Any proposed material change in the nature or time of operations at the facilities must be fully disclosed and reviewed with the neighboring communities prior to such a change.*

Belmont Park and its surrounding communities have peacefully coexisted as neighbors for many years. Floral Park residents from Poppy Place to Plainfield Avenue, and all the streets in between, share the longest uninterrupted residential border with Belmont Park. Many Floral Park residents' homes are just a short distance from the active areas of Belmont Park. Such as the various tracks and service roads used throughout the year, as well as the parking fields, which recently have been allowed to become a makeshift tractor trailer feed station and a dumpster storage repository next to our school children's play yard behind the Floral Park-Bellerose School. While most of Elmont's border with Belmont Park is buffered by up to six lanes plus sidewalks and turning lanes on Hempstead Turnpike or are next to an occasionally used parking area. Many Floral Park residents can literally hear the galloping of horses and the vocal calls of the jockeys every morning on the practice tracks or on the main track during race days. Therefore maintaining a sufficient buffer zone near neighboring homes and schools is something the State of New York cannot delegate to someone else, be it the current tenant NYRA, or even the proposed Shinnecock casino operations. Whether it is an attractive natural buffer or a series of football, baseball or even soccer fields, a sufficient buffer zone needs to be incorporated in any planned changes at Belmont Park.

Ironically, just this month in Saratoga, NYRA announced a menu of 21 potential capital improvement projects for its Saratoga Race Course "designed to secure the historic nature of the race track while enhancing the facilities and overall fan experience" according to NYRA's September 1<sup>st</sup> press release. {See: <http://www.nyra.com/saratoga/stories/Sep012011b.shtml#>}. NYRA notes that the various Saratoga projects "will be open for public comment and feedback from the community in order to assess priority and implementation" over the next 5 to 10 years. NYRA President and CEO Charles Hayward has stated that "NYRA is deeply committed to preserving the historic fabric of Saratoga Race Course while implementing a capital improvement strategy that will allow

Saratoga to grow and flourish for years to come.” The funding for the capital improvement projects will come from NYRA’s four percent share of revenues from the 4500 VLT machines and 500 electronic gaming tables being installed at Aqueduct Racetrack, which is estimated will provide NYRA about \$27.6 million annually, which is more than Floral Park’s entire annual budget this year! Imagine if gambling at Belmont Park could provide Floral Park’s taxpayers with a comparable amount of what NYRA and its thoroughbred horse owners are already in line to get from VLT machines at Aqueduct!

Why Belmont Park, which is home to NYRA’s jewel of the Triple Crown, is getting distant third place treatment after Saratoga or even Aqueduct is outrageous! While NYRA is willing to solicit community feedback on its ambitious plans at Saratoga while NYRA and the State of New York all but ignore its Belmont Park neighbors is unbelievable! Floral Park has put its cards on the table with its Statements of Principles since 2007, it seems that NYRA and the State of New York pay more attention to those in Saratoga or even the Shinnecock reservation in Southampton than they do about Belmont Park’s neighbors right here in western Nassau County. NYRA’s announcement seeking public comment and feedback to determine the next steps in Saratoga should be a blueprint to do the same at Belmont Park, with or without the involvement of the Shinnecock Indian Nation! The first thing that must change at Belmont Park, however, is the need for those in Albany to warmly bring Belmont Park’s neighbors with them into the winner’s circle instead of leaving them out in the cold back in the starting gate.