

January 9, 2012

Floral Park does not want a casino or casino gaming at Belmont Park. The Village Board, its Mayor and Trustees, does not want a casino or casino gaming at Belmont Park. Any assertion to the contrary is completely wrong.

Since becoming Floral Park's mayor in April of last year, I have made issues relating to Belmont Park's relationship with Floral Park a top priority. I have listened to the concerns of you, my constituents, relating to our neighboring Belmont Park. In my official and personal discussions with our elected representatives, from Hempstead to Mineola as well as from Albany and even our nation's capital, I have told them of Floral Park's deep concerns as a hosting community of Belmont Park, especially relating to its potential site as a gaming casino.

Floral Park has once again come together as a community and has reached an overwhelming consensus relating to Belmont Park. Some may say we have given too much attention to Belmont Park, while others still remain dissatisfied and say we have focused too little attention on Belmont Park! I can proudly tell everyone, however, I have worked diligently as mayor to avoid having a casino at Belmont Park, and that remains a top priority for this new year of 2012.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, in his recent State of the State Address, is making the passage of a Constitutional amendment to allow casino gaming in the State of New York one of his top priorities in the new year. Governor Cuomo said it is "*not a question of whether we should have gaming in New York – the facts are we already do. Native Americans have five casinos in New York and we have nine racinos at our racetracks. We don't fully realize it, regulate it, or capitalize on it, but we do have gaming. In fact, New York State now has 29,000 electronic gaming machines – more than Atlantic City and more than any state in the Northeast or Midwest.*" Governor Andrew Cuomo wants to, "*take a comprehensive approach to casino gaming*" and he wants to "*take the first step this year.*"

I will make one new year's prediction; any hosting community that supports a constitutional amendment to permit casino gaming may very well be signing its own ticket to downfall and ruin.

Governor Cuomo is also calling for the building of the nation's largest convention center, over 3.8 million square feet, at the Aqueduct Racetrack in Ozone Park, Queens. Governor Cuomo's administration is pursuing a joint venture with the Genting Organization, a gaming development company, to provide \$4 billion in private investment, which will develop up to 3,000 hotel rooms in addition to the new convention space. It has been reported that if a constitutional amendment is passed, there will be a full casino at Aqueduct. That may actually be good news for Belmont Park, because a portion of all gambling at Aqueduct must be set aside by NYRA for capital improvements at all three of its locations; Belmont, Saratoga and Aqueduct. For years, we have been anxiously awaiting for NYRA to announce its plans to

preserve and improve Belmont Park, especially to address its inadequate and obsolete water recharge basins which have caused needless flooding to its Floral Park neighbors' homes.

The new year therefore promises to be a very fluid and challenging one for Floral Park's leaders. Fortunately, our Task Force on the Preservation and Improvement of Belmont Park is entering its fifth year of existence and since 2007 its members have provided their Floral Park neighbors with the leadership and experience needed to successfully navigate the waves of challenges relating to Belmont Park. I have also reached out to all my predecessors, including Steve Corbett who I recently asked to become a member of our task force. I look forward to again working with him alongside me to make sure Floral Park remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Floral Park has enjoyed a peaceful neighborly coexistence with Belmont Park for over a century and we have invested too much in our relationship to allow the short term focus in Albany to ruin our long term neighborly relationship. Keeping Belmont Park a world class thoroughbred venue is the want, need and desire of its closest neighbor, the Village of Floral Park.