

**September 26, 2011**

We continue to relate our 2007 Statement of Principles not to a State controlled VLT operation but rather a Shinnecock controlled Indian full gaming casino. This week we further examine our relationship with NYRA and an equitable future relationship with Belmont Park.

***BE AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR, AND BE A PART OF, YOUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES***

*VIII. The facilities must continue to be an economic engine generating jobs and business for the communities in which each is located. It must be ensured that local residents and businesses are protected from any adverse economic impact as a result of activities at the facilities. Local residents should be given preference when hiring at the facilities and local businesses be given preferred status, including as suppliers, vendors and service providers. Creating an overall business and service center should be considered, with the goal of generating additional revenue streams to benefit the surrounding communities.*

***BE A PART OF, INSTEAD OF APART FROM, YOUR NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES***

*IX. The facilities should become an integral presence within the communities in which each is located. This includes the support of and the participation in active civic and volunteer life as a pillar of the neighboring communities in which the facility exists. This includes the support and participation in annual community events and the inclusion of the local communities in events taking place at each facility, including but not limited to, world renowned thoroughbred horse racing events taking place at the facilities and recreational areas to groups and organizations in the surrounding communities.*

Floral Park has steadily forged a stronger bond with its Belmont Park neighbors over the past several years. For example, NYRA President Charles Hayward graciously accepted Floral Park's invitation to participate in our public hearing discussing Belmont Park during which he took that opportunity to publically announce support of our Statement of Principles. Floral Park understands that Belmont Park is a vital component of our local economy, with the potential to bring even more jobs and revenues now that the State of New York has taken control over the 435 acre property from NYRA. In many ways, Governor Andrew Cuomo has an even greater moral responsibility to protect the interests of his constituents surrounding Belmont Park than any of his predecessors, who could pass the buck to NYRA when it previously controlled Belmont Park. One thing that is now clear, however, is that whatever goes on at Belmont Park is the responsibility of our elected representatives in Albany and no longer merely a group of thoroughbred horse owners.

Should legalized gambling facilities be expanded at Belmont Park, it is important that the local community gets our fair share of the economic benefits that may be generated. This includes not just during the initial construction phase, but also in the revenue stream of thousands of permanent jobs that may be created for years to come should the Shinnecock Indian Nation be allowed to develop a full scale casino and hotel facility at Belmont Park; Floral Park's long standing relationship with NYRA should be expanded to include the Shinnecock Indian Nation's presence at Belmont Park too. Just as NYRA has made strides to become more involved in the civic, business and social fabric of Floral Park, the Shinnecock Nation or any other new tenant at Belmont Park must be required to embrace their new neighbors rather than take advantage of us or, worse, just ignore us.

The State of New York has a once in a generation opportunity to make Belmont Park the cornerstone of a renaissance and rejuvenation of western Nassau County that could propel our community into the rest of the century with a solid and stable economic base. All of our elected

representatives, especially those in Albany, need to seriously consider any proposed changes at Belmont Park and to conduct a comprehensive due diligence review, in order to ensure that promises of quick and short term revenue infusions from Belmont Park are not done at the expense of the surrounding communities. Floral Park has demonstrated that it takes its relationship with its next door neighbor at Belmont Park seriously and it expects the same commitment from anyone else who else wants to become new neighbors with us. It is important that any new neighbors at Belmont Park make a sincere commitment to take care of Floral Park, rather than leaving Floral Park with no other choice but it protect its interests any way it can in order to keep Floral Park a great place to live and raise a family. Floral Park has always been a good neighbor of Belmont Park and we deserve the same in return!

## **September 19, 2011**

September 11<sup>th</sup> defines us as New Yorkers. Our village commemorated that day this year as we have every year since that first sorrowful anniversary. The Floral Park Fire Department assembled in their dress blue Class A uniform, marched and stood at silent attention at Headquarters as at 8:46, then again at 9:03 a single fire bell tolled, echoed by the majestic Methodist Church bells, marking each impact of the Towers. In the afternoon, an ecumenical service of remembrance was celebrated at the Methodist Church. In the early evening a closing ceremony was held at Reliance Firehouse on Holland Avenue; honoring all who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of others. The service, like all that day, was well attended by members of our Fire Department, surrounding fire departments, representatives and EMS personnel from New York Presbyterian Hospital and many Floral Park friends and neighbors. This quiet reflective service is punctuated by bagpipe, readings of Psalms and contemplative silence. The service's brevity and dramatic calm promotes an introspective mood and concludes the Village's ceremonies of this most difficult and painful day.

You have read about requests to the Port Authority by members of our fire department in acquiring a piece of steel from the World Trade Center. While only being received on April 27, 2011, that relic steel beam is now located at the Village Hall Lawn and is being incorporated into a lasting monument. While the monument is yet unfinished, residents now approach the steel. Most approach with a sense of awe and with halting reverence. I have seen the pain etched on faces as they gaze at the relic steel; reflecting on the day, on friends, on dreams unfulfilled. Others have shed tears or are drawn to share their memories with others. This relic steel is a fitting tribute to the shared loss we experience as New Yorkers and as Americans.

There are those who say, we should just move on, put it behind us. But I say, we must remember that on Sept 11, 2001, our freedom, indeed our American way of life was attacked. We were attacked by fanatics, nurtured in an environment intolerant of those freedoms: cowardly hijacking technology and ingenuity beyond their imagination or capacity to produce. We were attacked by evil. Evil whenever it is confronted must be identified, isolated, condemned and eradicated. It is a moral fallacy to try and qualify evil as good. It is the antithesis of the foundation of our country. We defeat evil by good. The capacity of Americans to provide financial and charitable expressions of compassion and hope are realized in the lives of our fellow Americans and by peoples all around the world.

We have all heard the expression, if we do not learn from history; we are condemned to repeat it. The 9-11 Relic Steel Memorial provides us the opportunity to teach generations that hatred and evil exist. But we may also tell them that while the Towers may have fallen that day, evil did not bring down our nation, our hearts or our American way of life. It is good to commemorate those lives lost that tragic day. We must never forget.

**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.

## **September 2, 2011**

As I write this message, it is Thursday afternoon September 1<sup>st</sup>. Full power restoration appears to have been accomplished throughout the Village as LIPA crews installed new feeder lines energizing the last homes without power in the West End. There were outages extending from several hours to several days in every area of the Village. By Sunday evening nearly 20% of the Village was without power. At the outset of Irene, our singular focus was the safety of our residents. While most of us were asleep Sunday morning, our Police and Public Works crews were dispatched and operating in 40-50 mph wind driven rain, assessing damage and addressing the needs to keep us safe. As night became day, roads needed to be secured and others cleared of debris for emergency vehicles. Trees resting upon homes, blocking roads or affecting electric service needed to be removed. Fifteen trees were felled during the storm. Additional trees will be removed in the coming days. We anticipate total tree losses due to Tropical Storm Irene to number between 35-40. Most importantly, however, there were no injuries to our neighbors, police officers, public works crews or volunteers. One minor injury was sustained to a member of our fire department. All in all we fared well with this storm.

It was fortuitous that the magnitude of Irene fell before it hit Long Island. But, that our Village has rebounded so completely is the residue of planning and preparations. Our Emergency Operations planning commenced several days prior, when reports of Irene were still projections. We met each day with all department heads discussing scenarios and responses. These meetings proved invaluable as scenarios became reality and preparation steadied nerves. DPW Superintendent Steve Siwinski and Supervisor Richie Albertson listened to and participated in NOAA webconferences, preparing the village and readying our crews. Police Commissioner McAllister briefed his department. The response of our sergeants, officers and dispatchers was professional and compassionate. SCHSD Superintendent Dr. Ralph Ferrie offered any assistance he could. We thanked him and took him up on his offer and Recreation Superintendent Kurt Meyfohr readied an emergency shelter at FP Memorial in the event any home became inhabitable due to damage in the middle of the storm. He solicited volunteers; members of the Rec Staff and Rec Committee, to staff the shelter. Our FFPD Chiefs Vinnie Modica and Brian Naughton were instrumental in acquiring much needed supplies for the shelter and Headquarters and who, along with our greatest volunteers, the members of our Fire Department, were on standby at Headquarters and our outlying fire houses throughout Irene. Our Emergency Operations were coordinated by VFP Administrator Pat Farrell, Clerk Susan Walsh, Co-Chair of Emergency Management and former Mayor Kevin Greene who was a rock throughout the night monitoring operations, coordinating communications along with Trustee Dom Longobardi, ex-Chief Joe O'Grady and PC McAllister. Our website, local news and local weather was manned, coordinated and monitored by our 4VS's Jim Green and Veronica Venturi. About 2 am as Irene began to express her fury, our DPW crews were now called upon in earnest and they were outstanding.

There was no flooding in the Village. DPW began planning weeks ago by vigilantly maintaining our storm sewers and drains, our tree department trimming and keeping our great tree resources healthy, our mechanics keeping the trucks, pay loaders, mechanical tools and all rolling equipment in optimal operating condition.

The value of a full service village was not only illustrated during Irene, but by how we look today. That is something about which we may be justifiably proud! What makes Floral Park great

was exemplified and embodied by the spirit of our employees and our volunteers that night and since. The actions of many, but especially our everyday heroes, our DPW crews, continue to this day. They have logged hundreds of hours clearing and cleaning the village, while still attending to refuse, recycling and maintenance. Along with Steve Siwinski and Rich Albertson the exceptional efforts of Supervisors Mike Naylor and Russ Mazzola and their crews should be applauded.

But I especially wish to thank my fellow Floral Parkers for your response to the storm. We, as residents, took the predictions and forecasts seriously and responsibly prepared. I heard again and again how neighbors checked in with neighbors, shared electricity and offered assistance to those without power. It was great seeing how we support each other. As the Village worked to expedite electric restoration or tree removal, your patience and understanding was gratifying. Seeing neighbors helping neighbors or sharing storm stories as we together cleared our streets of debris reinforces why Floral Park is a great place to live!