



# Racing Fan Advisory Council

## 2015 Report and Recommendations

Submitted July 28, 2016 by:

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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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M. Kelly Young, Deputy Director of Public Policy, New York Farm Bureau

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## Introduction

Dear Commissioners:

Pursuant to the Racing and Wagering Board's 2011 Resolution establishing the Racing Fan Advisory Council, I am pleased to present you with the Council's 2015 Annual Report of recommendations for your consideration.

The Racing Fan Advisory Council has been working hard over the past several years to construct a comprehensive cross section of current racing fans, identify sources of possible new fans, and discover those things that would make the sport more attractive and enjoyable for fans.

We have had significant outreach events over the past to gauge attitudes and ideas from existing fans. We also collaborated from our specific areas of expertise to outline ideas to better serve the fan base and expand the sport.

The Council has repeatedly emphasized that Belmont Stakes Day almost always enjoys the highest attendance for any single day of racing in New York State. Therefore, that day provides a very significant opportunity to draw new fans to the sport and to expose them to the excitement and fun that is a part of a day at the track. Several members of the Council attended the 2015 Belmont Stakes, and we are happy to report that NYRA ensured that racing fans had an improved experience at the 2015 Belmont Stakes.

This Report contains a mere snapshot of the ideas heard from fans during the last several years, including input from a 2015 Fan Forum held at Saratoga Race Course. The Report and Recommendations contain realistic measures that can bring about positive change in the industry, but are by no means comprehensive.

As our mission continues into 2016, we will strive to identify fan concerns and map out additional recommendations to bring more fans to the sport of horseracing. However, we need some form of financial resources to successfully accomplish our mission (see page 5). Therefore, we look forward to assistance on how the Council can access the funding needed to help us in our efforts to bring the fans' voice to the regulatory process.

On behalf of my colleagues, Michael Amo, Kelly Young, Allan Carter and Michael Mills, I thank you for the opportunity to serve the horseracing industry and the State of New York in this unique and important role.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick M. Connors".

Patrick Connors, Chairman  
New York Racing Fan Advisory Council

## About the Racing Fan Advisory Council

The New York State Racing and Wagering Board (now the New York State Gaming Commission) formally announced the creation of the New York Racing Fan Advisory Council in September 2011 to provide input and advice to the Board on horse racing and wagering matters in New York State. The Council is examining the “total racing experience” and reporting findings to the Board. The Council consists of individuals steeped in both Thoroughbred and Harness racing, as well as off-track betting enterprises. The members are long-term horse racing fans, selected on their involvement, interest, knowledge and devotion to the sport.

Members include:

**Chair: Patrick M. Connors, Professor of Law, Albany Law School:** Professor Connors has been an avid fan of horse racing for over 25 years and has made several presentations at Albany Law’s annual Saratoga Institute on Racing and Gaming Law. He has been a law professor for 25 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 presentations on legal issues across the country. Professor Connors resides in Saratoga Springs, graduated from Georgetown University and obtained his law degree at St. John’s University School of Law.

**Vice-Chair: 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 healthcare 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, Deputy Director of Public Policy, 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.

**Michael C. Mills, Village Administrator, Village of Elmsford (Westchester County):** Mr. Mills fell in love with horse racing in 1973 when he attended the Whitney Handicap at Saratoga at the age of ten and witnessed the great Secretariat run and has been an avid fan of racing ever since. A 1986 graduate of the University of Louisville, Mr. Mills has spent the past 23 years working in the field of local government management for the Villages of Elmsford, Ellenville, and the City of Kingston. Mr. Mills has served on several civic committees, boards, and task forces, including the Tappan Zee Bridge I-287 Mass Transit Task Force.

No members of the Racing Fan Advisory Council are current Gaming Commission employees, lobbyists, officers of any racetrack, OTB or any nonprofit that represents breeders or horsemen. Three members were appointed by the former Racing and Wagering Board Chairman and two were appointed by the chairs of the Senate Committee on Racing, Gaming and Wagering and the Assembly Committee on Racing and Wagering. 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 the fan base related to the sport of horse racing by:

- Recommending procedures to ensure that the opinion of the fan is a central part of the regulation of horse racing and advising the Board on issues related to horse racing 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 horse racing in New York.
- Recommending changes to the rules of the Board and to the laws affecting horse racing.
- 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 Horse Racing in New York State**

Horse racing 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, not New York City, by the Dutch.

### **Economic Impact of Horse Racing in New York State**

The impact of the horse industry on the State's economy was detailed in a [2012 New York Equine Industry Economic Impact Study](#). 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.

## Discussion and Recommendations

### Fan Access to Racing Participants

“Smell the hay” is a phrase used to describe the best way to convert the casual fan into a sustainable fan. The sustainable fan is the life-blood for the future of racing. Whether it is access to morning workouts, the paddock, or the track, the closer the fan can get to the sport, the better. Across the country some racetracks understand this premise better than others. Gulfstream Park in south Florida dedicated hundreds of seats surrounding the walking ring for the fan to watch the horses, trainers, owners and jockeys ramp-up for the races.

One of the most unique and beautiful attractions at Saratoga Race Course is its paddock. This area of the track is enjoyed by longtime fans and newcomers alike. The paddock provides the rare opportunity in today’s sports world for all fans to view the athletes from a distance of a few feet. Even casual fans and children enjoy the paddock routine, while seasoned handicappers regularly pay a visit to decide upon a wager.

Sadly, over the last decade, the average fan’s access to the paddock at Saratoga Race Course has been significantly diminished with the addition of a media tent, special events tent, and the reserved picnic table area. All block the view of the fan. While the The Post bar has been a welcome addition to the track, it has also reduced general fan access to the paddock area. Yet, it does at least afford access to the paddock to those who enter the bar area. The three other recent additions (media tent, special events tent, and the reserved picnic table area) have, however, significantly reduced the average racing fan’s access to the paddock.

The expansive paddock at Belmont Park could also be utilized more effectively. During some big races, it has been reported that the horses have not been paraded a full trip around the paddock before being led onto the track. This is disappointing to fans who have waited in the paddock for long periods of time to get an up-close view of the horses. Tracks should consider parading horses in the paddock for an additional viewing by the fans, rather than shortening or eliminating the trip in the paddock.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Significant reductions to the area of the paddock that can be accessed by the general fan population should be reexamined. The Council believes that the NYRA studio could be moved back several yards so as to allow fans room to access the easterly portion of paddock, while still situating the studio near the paddock. Moving the studio in this fashion will still allow for television viewers to see the paddock, while providing closer access to the fans in attendance. The Council also believes that NYRA should reconsider the location of the limited access tent at the southerly portion of the paddock. Would the people who have access to the tent, which often only has a limited number of people in it, truly miss their spot next to the paddock? Finally, the Council wonders if the reserve picnic tables need to occupy an area directly adjacent to the paddock. Could the reserve tables be located near the paddock, while still allowing the general fan population to directly access the northwestern portion of the paddock?

In sum, tracks should examine their paddocks, and paddock policies, to ascertain the best way to draw and entertain fans. Safety is, of course, paramount. Nonetheless, cutting off access to the general fan limits the allure of one of the most unique aspects of the sport.

### Admission and Reserved Ticket Policy

In an industry where the fan base is eroding at a rate of 4 percent per year, tracks should be looking for ways to attract new fans and generate revenue. Since pari-mutuel wagering is the main revenue stream for racing,

the sport must find ways to increase the wagering pools and to welcome wagering fans. Raising ancillary costs, like admission and reserved seating, undermines this goal. Across the country, many tracks are moving to no admission and reduced reserved seat prices. These policies are implemented because they help draw fans to the track that will spend their money on wagering.

A wagering fan arriving at the track with \$100 in disposable income will be discouraged from returning if half of that amount must be spent on parking, admission, seating and a program.

The Council is concerned that these costs may be increased, further alienating many racing fans. In describing a draft of the 2016 NYRA budget, a recent article noted that “Saratoga Race Course is expected to receive \$12.4 million in capital improvements next year, while new revenue is expected from spending by track patrons on food, beverages and racing programs....” ([“Saratoga Race Course likely to get \\$12.4M in upgrades.” Williams, Steven, The Daily Gazette, December 3, 2015](#)). The article states that “NYRA will look to get more money out of racing fans. The cost of programs at all three NYRA tracks — Saratoga, Belmont and Aqueduct — will rise by a dollar, according to the budget, but even more pricing increases are expected at Saratoga.” *Id.*

The principle behind the new NYRA at Saratoga ticket pricing policy, which includes admission to the track, may have merit in efficiency for some. However, for regular fans that hold season passes, the plan is flawed. The new policy, which is confusing to so many, is tantamount to eliminating a benefit. Many fans with season passes are frustrated to pay for admission to the track again with a ticket. These fans already have free racetrack admission. The fact that so many fans with season passes have paid twice for admission, and the lack of any clear explanation for fans to avoid the double charge, affect the core of the sport —the people who attend the races most often.

**RECOMMENDATION:** We recommend that NYRA establish clear procedures for fans buying seats to eliminate the cost of paying double admission. If a fan holding an admission pass to the track has paid for admission again with the purchase of a ticket, NYRA should refund, or at least credit, that latter admission charge. Technology is readily available in most other performance-driven programs and could be easily applied by NYRA. Through the free-admission benefit provided by a pass, tracks should be encouraging people to join our sport’s success story, not punish them for enthusiastically doing so.

All tracks should examine the costs imposed on fans for parking, admission, programs, and food and consider whether a reduction in these costs will increase fan satisfaction and help bring new fans back to the track. Furthermore, tracks should consider whether reduced costs on these items will ultimately lead to an increase in wagering handle.

### **Annual Saratoga Open House**

We believe NYRA should reconsider continuing the Saratoga Open House that was cancelled in 2015. The Open House creates an opportunity for new young fans to attend the track in a relaxed atmosphere without wagering and large crowds. NYRA in particular, and the sport in general, so desperately needs to develop young fans to the sport.

**RECOMMENDATION:** NYRA should reconsider continuing the Open House that was cancelled in 2015. In addition, tracks throughout the State should consider holding similar events to create positive outreach to the local community and develop new fans to the sport.

### **Morning Public Workouts**

NYRA should be recognized for opening up Belmont Park and Saratoga Race Course for morning workouts, including opening up American Pharoah's pre-Travers workout to the public. Not only did it give fans who could not attend the Travers a chance to see the Triple Crown winner in person, but it also demonstrated the strong allure of the sport of horse racing in its purest form. A reported crowd of 15,000 people attended American Pharoah's morning workout on August 28, 2015.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Tracks throughout the State should attempt to hold at least some morning programs where fans can come to see horses, trainers, jockeys and drivers in an informal atmosphere. These programs should be publicized in a manner that will attempt to bring new fans to the track to expose them to some of the interesting aspects of the sport, while giving them closer proximity to the sport's stars.

### **Bundling of Stakes**

It has long been the custom at race tracks to support major stakes days with an undercard that would contain several other graded stakes. However, we believe that NYRA needs to reconsider whether it has gone too far in bundling stakes on the same day, particularly on Belmont, Whitney and Travers days, at the expense of other racing dates. As one example of many, the oldest stakes race for 3-year-old fillies in the country, the Grade I Alabama, has only the ungraded Troy stakes on the undercard. Yet, the Whitney is accompanied by four other stakes on the same day, while the Travers has six.

Bundling so many graded stakes on a single day has somewhat diminished the rest of the Belmont and Saratoga meet. This is particularly pronounced on weekdays during the Saratoga meet and on many weekends during the Belmont Spring/Summer meet.

As a further example of scheduling problems, last year NYRA scheduled the Curlin, an overnight stakes for 3-year-olds going a mile and an eighth, on the day before the Jim Dandy, which is a Grade 2 with the same conditions. On the Sunday of that weekend, one day after the Jim Dandy, Monmouth Park ran the Grade 1 Haskell for 3-year olds. With three races run in three days having essentially the same conditions, the Jim Dandy suffered drawing only a field of four. It appears that the same scheduling problem will arise in 2016.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Tracks should reconsider whether reducing the number of stakes on "big days" would have a negligible effect on attendance or handle for those days, and whether other dates during the meet would see an increase in both areas. Tracks should also pay closer attention to scheduling of important races with the same conditions so as to help ensure fuller fields and to avoid conflicts.

### **Curtailing the Oklahoma Training Track Season**

At NYRA's December 2015 board meeting, it was suggested that NYRA might curtail the time that the Oklahoma Training Track is open. The Council believes this would be a mistake. Many connections in the sport, i.e., trainers, jockeys and owners, consider the Oklahoma track to be the best facility of its kind in the country, and therefore stay at the track as long as it is open, usually from April until November. In addition, its use is a boost to the local economy of the Capital Region, and is still a tourist attraction even during the main track's off season.

**RECOMMENDATION:** NYRA should not shorten the length of the Oklahoma Training Track season. NYRA should consider the horse population and the effect shortening the season would have on the horses available for races held within the State. Furthermore, NYRA should consider promoting visits to the

Oklahoma Training Track by fans on a daily basis while the horses are in training.

### **Racetrack Structural Changes**

As physical plants at racetracks deteriorate, many are undertaking major renovation projects. In a competitive market where new stadiums and casinos are opening each year, this is a necessity. For example, a few years ago Gulfstream Park razed the entire grandstand and built a new facility. Many people believe that Gulfstream Park is now more popular than it was prior to the renovation.

Although planning for the renovations at Saratoga Race Course has been in the works for a long time, the proposed project will impact fans in many ways and lacks sufficient discussion on how the changes will improve the fan experience and draw new fans to the sport. Rebuilding the physical plant at Saratoga is important, but rebuilding the fan base is critical to the survival of the sport in New York.

The Racing Fan Advisory Council has reviewed the proposed plans and has submitted comments on them to the Franchise Oversight Board and the NYS Office of General Services for review. The following are some of the points made in those submissions:

1. The redesign of the paddock, walking ring and jockey quarters, although nicely done, seems to add distance between the fans and athletes of the sport, both human and equine. Doing so will eliminate one of the special aspects of the Saratoga experience, marginalize the current fan, and not serve to attract new fans.
2. The Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS)'s focus on parking is not sufficiently rigorous. It admits that the redesign will cause the elimination of on track parking by nearly 1,000 spaces. To mitigate this the DGEIS offers over-flow options and the speculation that off-track private parking lots will expand to meet the demand. Given the neighborhood layout surrounding the track, this appears to be a faulty assumption that must be revisited. Furthermore, the parking offered at these off-track private parking lots, which appear to fall outside of any formal regulation, can often be expensive and diminish the fan's visit to the track.
3. The DGEIS does not address the "net availability" of picnic tables for fans using the backyard and picnic areas. Many of the improvements, e.g., Top of the Stretch Club, beer garden, and picnic tables in the paddock area suggest fewer picnic areas and tables in other parts of the track. The picnic areas attract new and younger fans who are the future of the sport. On weekends, it is becoming nearly impossible to get a picnic table in the "free area".
4. The addition of a new entrance from Lincoln Avenue may serve to better distribute access to the race course, but shifting traffic egress to Nelson Avenue, a two lane local street, will only compound the problem for fans leaving the track after the races. The DGEIS with limited data assumes that the traffic will not increase. The traffic study needs to be revisited.
5. The DGEIS mentions a change in pari-mutuel use. New areas in the grandstand and clubhouse may have decreased "teller assisted" areas where fans will have access only to electronic mutual stations and Wi-Fi enabled mobile devices. The shift in fan use of advanced technology for wagering is understood, but there needs to be more data presented on the value of this proposal, which compares present and projected use for fan wagering. A fan education component in the use of the newer technology must be part of the strategy.

6. Aside from listing national, state and local approvals required, the DGEIS is silent on the role the City of Saratoga Springs might have in the build-out of this proposed project. Many local fans attend the meet with guests, while local businesses and the municipality enrich it. The City of Saratoga Springs, representing its residents and local businesses, should have a more defined role. In this way the flavor and vision of the city in which the track resides can be overlaid on the project. Failure to do so is not in the best interests of fans, local citizens or businesses.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The next step in the process for the developer under the New York State SEQRA is to respond to all issues raised at public hearings and in written comments. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (“FEIS”) should address the Council’s concerns and provide mitigation measures. In addition, any time a New York track proposes renovation, it should be required to obtain formal fan input, or at the very least seek that input. The Racing Fan Advisory Council can assist in communicating the desires of the fans to ensure that any track renovations actually improve the fan experience.

### **Off-Track Betting (“OTB”) - Time to Rethink the Model**

On Dec. 7, 2010, New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation closed. Reportedly, OTB was the largest bookmaker in the country during its 40 year run. There were 54 OTB parlors remaining at the time of the 2010 closure and more than 150 at OTB’s height of operations in the 1980’s.

As a result of the closures, racing fans in the five boroughs have very few places to go to watch and wager on horse racing. While the race track experience is impossible to duplicate off-track, there are many reasons that racing fans enjoy congregating in alternative venues to follow the sport. The Capital OTB facility in Albany on Central Avenue is a fine example of how an off-track venue can work well. Fans can congregate there on weekends to enjoy a full afternoon of racing, or simply visit the facility for lunch during the week to watch a few races. The facility is clean and the televisions and wagering options are plentiful.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Council believes it is time for interested groups from the world of Thoroughbred and harness racing to meet and attempt to collaborate with New York City and other municipal entities to bring back a better type of off-track betting facility. This will require that the interested parties negotiate and compromise to reach a positive solution. Given the population of horse racing fans in New York City, there is most certainly a market for this type of product. These facilities could not only help maintain interest in the sport, but if done right could help to cultivate new fans. Moreover, such facilities could lead to the creation of a significant number of jobs.

### **2015: The Better Belmont Stakes Day**

Following the difficult Belmont Stakes Day experienced by many in 2014, the RFAC communicated to NYRA several recommendations for implementation in 2015. Many of the RFAC’s recommendations were incorporated into NYRA’s planning and preparation for Belmont Stakes Day 2015 and proved to be successful. Following Belmont Stakes Day 2015, the RFAC wrote to NYRA to comment on the successes.

The following was contained in the letter to NYRA dated June 30, 2015:

*As representatives of New York’s diverse array of racing fans, we write to forward our comments regarding the 2015 Belmont Stakes Day experience. In sum, the fans who witnessed history being made with American Pharoah capturing the first Triple Crown in 37 years had a significantly better overall experience than on the 2014 Belmont Stakes Day. We greatly appreciate that you met with us to discuss our concerns after the 2014 Belmont Stakes and that NYRA took many of our suggestions*

*seriously and implemented several of them.*

*Last year, we had an obligation to share the substantial feedback we were hearing from New York's fans in relation to the 2014 Belmont Stakes experience. It is evident that NYRA listened to those concerns and put in place measures to ensure guests visiting Belmont Park on June 6, 2015 had an improved fan experience. We are encouraged by the responsiveness and attention to detail that NYRA brought to this year's event in comparison with the 2014 experience. Most notably, the ingress and egress to Belmont Park was well-managed. Crowd and traffic control were well-coordinated and public transportation operated far more efficiently than in 2014. Additionally, the Council was pleased to see an increased number of amenities and concessions. We realize that these things did not improve by chance, and that the improvements to the fan experience were a direct result of NYRA's increased planning and attention.*

*As we have noted previously, Belmont Stakes Day is, for many fans, their first visit to a racetrack, or only visit during the year. It is an excellent opportunity to highlight and showcase so many positive aspects of horse racing in New York to entice fans to return to a race track at a future date. To that end, the Racing Fan Advisory Council has several ideas it would like to share with you regarding how to make next year's Belmont Stakes an even better experience for racing fans.*

*Congratulations again on helping to make Belmont Stakes Day 2015 a part of New York's storied horse racing legacy.*

**RECOMMENDATION:** NYRA should continue to closely examine the Belmont Stakes program to ensure that it delivers a quality product to the fan at a reasonable price. With American Pharoah's Triple Crown success, crowds at the Belmont Stakes will likely decrease. NYRA should adjust its pricing for the event so that it can be a showcase for new fans, who will return to the track on future days.

## **Summarized Recommendations**

FAN ACCESS TO RACING PARTICIPANTS: Tracks should examine their paddocks, and paddock policies, to ascertain the best way to draw and entertain fans. Safety is, of course, paramount. Nonetheless, cutting off access to the general fan for the benefit of a few limits the allure of one of the most unique aspects of the sport.

ADMISSION AND RESERVED TICKET POLICY: We recommend that NYRA establish clear procedures for fans buying seats to eliminate the cost of paying double admission. All tracks should examine the costs imposed on fans for parking, admission, programs, and food and consider whether a reduction in these costs will increase fan satisfaction and help bring new fans back to the track. Furthermore, tracks should consider whether reduced costs on these items will ultimately lead to an increase in wagering handle.

ANNUAL SARATOGA OPEN HOUSE: NYRA should reconsider continuing the Open House that was cancelled in 2015. In addition, tracks throughout the State should consider holding similar events to create positive outreach to the local community and develop new fans to the sport.

MORNING PUBLIC WORKOUTS: Tracks throughout the State should attempt to hold at least some morning programs where fans can come to see horses, trainers, jockeys and drivers in an informal atmosphere. These programs should be publicized in a manner that will attempt to bring new fans to the track to expose them to some of the interesting aspects of the sport, while giving them closer proximity to the sport's stars.

BUNDLING OF STAKES: Tracks should reconsider whether reducing the number of stakes on "big days" would have a negligible effect on attendance or handle for those days, and whether other dates during the meet would see an increase in both areas. Tracks should also pay closer attention to scheduling of important races with the same conditions so as to help ensure fuller fields and to avoid conflicts.

CURTAILING THE OKLAHOMA TRAINING TRACK SEASON: NYRA should not shorten the length of the Oklahoma Training Track season. NYRA should consider the horse population and the effect shortening the season would have on the horses available for races held within the State. Furthermore, NYRA should consider promoting visits to the Oklahoma Training Track by fans on a daily basis while the horses are in training.

RACETRACK STRUCTURAL CHANGES: The next step in the process for the developer under New York State SEQRA is to respond to all issues raised at public hearings and in written comments. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) should address the RFAC's concerns and provide mitigation measures.

OFF-TRACK BETTING ("OTB") – TIME TO RETHINK THE MODEL: The Council believes it is time for interested groups from the world of Thoroughbred and harness racing to attempt to collaborate with New York City and other municipal entities to bring back a better type of off-track betting facility.

2015: THE BETTER BELMONT STAKES DAY: NYRA should continue to closely examine the Belmont Stakes program to ensure that it delivers a quality product to the fan at a reasonable price. With American Pharoah's Triple Crown success, crowds at the Belmont Stakes will likely decrease. NYRA should adjust its pricing for the event so that it can be a showcase for new fans, who will return to the track on future days.