

**SARATOGA RACE COURSE ADVISORY BOARD
C/O Saratoga Race Course
267 Union Avenue
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866**

**TESTIMONY OF CINDY HOLLOWOOD, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE HOLIDAY INN – SARATOGA SPRINGS
AND A MEMBER OF THE SARATOGA RACE COURSE ADVISORY BOARD**

SENATE COMMITTEE ON RACING, GAMING AND WAGERING

TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2017

My name is Cindy Hollowood, and I have been the General Manager of the Holiday Inn, in Saratoga Springs, New York, for 35 years. I am also a member of the Saratoga Race Course Local Advisory Board which is comprised of local representatives appointed by the City of Saratoga Springs, Saratoga County and the New York Racing Association.

This Local Advisory Board was created by State Legislation in 2008. The 15 members of the board are charged with acting as a proactive liaison between NYRA and the Saratoga community. It is also our mission and purpose to ensure that the concerns of the citizens of Saratoga Springs are taken into account when the future of the Saratoga Race Course is debated.

Let me thank you for inviting our board and myself to be a part of this forum today. Before I address some of our key concerns relative to the future of NYRA, I'd like to offer some context as the General Manager of the Holiday Inn.

Since our opening in 1964, we have benefitted from the premier racing that the New York Racing Association brings to the Saratoga Race Course. From those early years to present day, racing season room revenues account for more than 30% of our total annual room revenues. Since 2011, with an improved national economy and great racing cards, we have been able to improve our revenues and occupancy.

A review of summer business on racing dates the last couple of years as compared to non-racing dates in the month of July indicates that the hotel's occupancy is nearly 30% higher when racing is in Town. Our Bookmakers Restaurant also benefits from the travelers that racing season brings to our community with restaurant revenues 35% higher during the Summer Meet than the remainder of the year. In advance of the racing season, we receive track business with trainers and exercise riders staying with us, in April, while they train on the Oklahoma Track. We also do a considerable amount of business from events held on the race course grounds, like the Saratoga and Skidmore Horse Shows.

A review of data provided by our hotel trade association with regard to how the Capital and Saratoga region compares with the rest of Upstate New York, in occupancy and average daily rate, indicates that our region enjoyed a nearly 5% higher occupancy and a \$20 higher ADR than the rest of Upstate New York. My business represents roughly 7% of all lodging properties in Saratoga County. We collected \$355,000 in occupancy taxes in 2015 of which 35% came from racing season dates.

As a result of the great influx of business, we are able to add to our staffing. Every summer, we employ 15 season workers, mostly students and retirees. We have been fortunate to employ generations of families – children and parents of our full time staff. Many of the jobs created because of racing in the Saratoga Region pay at or well above the \$15 per hour level. These jobs pay for college tuition, supplement seniors incomes and allow families to afford their first homes or pay for their daughter's dream wedding.

We recently spent \$1.3 million making improvements to our property and hired all Saratoga County contractors. If you visited our property today, you'd see we're in the middle to another upgrade again using local contractors. This would not have been possible without the profits we enjoy from our racing season revenues.

The Saratoga Race Course Local Advisory Board, at our May 2016 meeting, voted to support the Legislature's bipartisan effort to reprivatize NYRA as a not for profit corporation. The Advisory Board firmly believes that only through the promised reprivatization can the future of Thoroughbred horse racing in New York be preserved and improved. The Board is convinced that this step is also necessary for the enhancement of the historic Saratoga Race Course, one of Sports Illustrated's ten best sporting venues in the world.

We believe needed capital improvements and an enriched fan experience, as well as the maintenance and sustainability of the aging physical plant at Saratoga can only be achieved by reprivatization. If the next generation of racing fans is to be encouraged and attracted, we are convinced that the bipartisan bill that passed last year to return NYRA to the private sector must move forward expeditiously this year.