

Long Island Regional Planning Council

LIRPC Meeting – May 15, 2024 Zoom Virtual Meeting Summary Minutes

LIPRC Members Present

John D. Cameron, Jr., Chair
Michael White, Vice Chair
Jeff Kraut, Treasurer
Theresa Sanders, Secretary
Nancy Engelhardt
Jeff Guillot
Mayor Barbara Donno
Mayor Robert Kennedy
Supervisor Ed Wehrheim

Staff and Guests Present

Richard V. Guardino, Jr., Executive Director
Elizabeth Cole, Deputy Executive Director
Missy Leder, Executive Assistant
Rachel Titus, Program Coordinator

Michael Dubb

Alan Belniak
Katherine Heaviside
Mark Smith

Joe O'Grady
David Sabatino
Denise A. Ford
Alain Tingue
Lindsay Ekizian
K McLean
M Mulrenan
Dennis Siry
Emily Rohr
Stacy Black
Yolanda Felder
Grace Amofo
Maybe Byrne
Kathy Guillermo
Alexander Prego
Elaine Philips
Robert Brodsky
Wendy Goldstein
Elizabeth Papa
Kristen Reynolds

Greg Blower
Michael Papierno
Gary Marra
Charles Flagg
Jesus Torres
Samantha Cools
John Tax, Jr.
Mike McCarthy
Jaclyn Hakes
Patrick O'Hara
Dorothy Gilbert
Natalie Wright
Sara Covelli
Andrew Windsor
Michael Smith
Donna Nogid
Patti Bourne
Sal Gill
Jaime Holander
J Jaramillo

Meeting Commenced:

John D. Cameron, Jr., opened the meeting at approximately 10am.

John Cameron:

Good morning and welcome to our first LIRPC meeting in the new year.

Thank you for joining. Our Executive Director, Rich Guardino, will now conduct a roll call.

Rich Guardino:

Welcome, everyone. Thank you all for being with us this morning.

Roll Call

John D. Cameron, Jr., Chair
Michael White, Vice Chair
Jeff Kraut, Treasurer
Theresa Sanders, Secretary
Nancy Engelhardt
Jeff Guillot
Mayor Barbara Donno
Mayor Robert Kennedy
Supervisor Ed Wehrheim

John Cameron:

As we do with all our meetings, we will start off with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Kennedy:

Pledge of Allegiance

Alan Belniak:

Thank you for joining us this morning. My name is Alan Belniak with VHB. I am here to help support this meeting today. After some opening remarks and some orders of business, we'll have a presentation. After that, the comment and question opportunities are given to members of the LIRPC. After the members of the LIRPC, we will turn to the public to ask questions and share comments in one of two ways. You can use the Q&A function below. If you move your mouse to the lower section of zoom, the Q&A button will pop up and you can type in your comment, and I will read it aloud. Alternatively, you can use the raise hand feature, which is also below. That sends a signal to us that you'd like to speak or comment. I'll call out your name, send a command for you to unmute your microphone and you'll then have a couple of seconds to share your comment or question. Please note, this meeting is being recorded. With that, I'll turn it back over to John and Rich.

Adoption of the Minutes from the February 15, 2024 Meeting.

All in Favor: So moved.

Rich Guardino:

Resolution 2024-108 authorizes an agreement with CDM Smith for consulting services on nitrogen loading in Nassau counties, towns, cities and villages. CDM Smith prepared the Suffolk County subwatersheds plan as part of the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan. Following the development of the plan, CDM Smith submitted a proposal to the Council using the nitrogen loads in the plan to estimate components of nitrogen loading to groundwater for each of the 10 towns and 32 villages in Suffolk County. The Council passed a resolution authorizing an agreement with CDM Smith on nitrogen loading estimates in Suffolk County. Following the plan, CDM Smith has submitted a proposal to the Council for similar work in Nassau County. The proposal includes using nitrogen loads from the Nassau County nine element watershed plan to develop municipality specific tables summarizing the percentages of nitrogen loading contributed by on-site wastewater disposal, fertilizer, atmospheric deposition, and sewage treatment plant discharges to groundwater and surface water for each of the three towns, 2 cities and 64 villages in Nassau County. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation recommends CDM Smith as uniquely qualified to develop a uniform and consistent estimate of nitrogen loading for all the island. This resolution authorizes an agreement with CDM Smith, with costs not to exceed \$63,325.

Michael White:

John, I just have a quick question, not on this as I think it's absolutely the right direction and I have no problems with the resolution. But I think when we were last discussing this, there were some issues with the flow of funds from the state and the LINAP grant. I wonder if that's moved forward.

Richard Guardino:

Yes, it has moved forward. It's been a somewhat excruciating process, Michael, but I think we're at the tail end of it. We're just waiting for the approval from the New York State Comptroller. By law, they must give us an approval by next Tuesday. So hopefully, we'll have that, and we'll have our final agreement in place, and we'll be able to proceed with our various obligations and contracts to a number of consultants.

Motion to Accept Resolution 2024-108: Jeff Kraut

Seconded: Barbara Donno

All in Favor: So moved.

Rich Guardino:

Resolution 2024-109 authorizes grants totaling \$10,000 to implement proposals submitted by schools in the 2024 Long Island Water Quality STEM Challenge program. Twenty-one final project proposals were received from fourteen different schools representing the highest number of submissions in the five years of holding the competition. The Selection Committee decided upon five winning proposals and with these funds, the students will be able to assemble and build their proposals at their schools.

Motion to Accept Resolution 2024-109: Jeff Kraut

Seconded: Barbara Donno

All in Favor: So moved.

Rich Guardino:

It's my privilege to introduce Michael Dubb. He is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Beechwood Organization, the largest development of residential single-family and multi-family housing in New York State and ranks at the forefront of privately owned and award-winning residential builders nationwide. Mr. Dubb has been a member of the Board of Directors of the New York Racing Association (NYRA) for 15 years. He is the Chair of the Development Committee for NYRA. He has led the effort to create better living conditions for backstretch workers, including the construction and renovation of several dormitories at Belmont Park and Saratoga Racetrack. Mr. Dubb is a lifelong Director and former two-time President of the Long Island Builders Institute and former board member of the Long Island Housing Partnership, and we're privileged to have him here with us this morning and he will be talking about the "New Belmont."

PRESENTATION

Michael Dubb:

Good morning.

There are three areas I want to cover today: the history of Belmont, the plans for the "New Belmont" and the entire area around Belmont, and the economic benefits of the "New Belmont."

To start at the beginning, in 1902, the original Belmont Park was started by people like August Belmont and William Whitney. At that time, it was 600 acres of land. Now, it is a little over 400 acres of land. The original Belmont Park functioned until 1963. In 1964, a new Belmont Park was built. That is the structure that stands there today (which is actually in the midst of demolition). That existing structure is 1.2 million square feet and will be replaced by a state-of-the-art structure that's 275,000 square feet, which is right sized for the area.

I was a fan of horse racing, and I got involved at a serious level in the late 1990s when I became aware that the children of the backstretch workers were sleeping in cars. These people who took care of the horses and worked at minimum wage couldn't provide good childcare. I offered to build and donate a daycare center. The 9,000 square foot daycare center has served hundreds and hundreds of kids. So, I got involved in it from a bit of an emotional level and I found it very rewarding. As I got further involved, I noticed that the living conditions weren't very good, so I advocated and pushed for better housing, but I wasn't getting far. In 2008, I was appointed to the New York Racing Association Board. The history of the New York Racing Association Board is interesting. There was a great debate, and threat of litigation, between the state of New York and the existing NYRA board about who owned the land. The 600 acres turned into 400 acres. The NYRA Board thought they owned the land, and the state thought that they

owned the land. In 2012, the settlement was reached and the NYRA Board agreed to give the state the land in exchange for a 25-year franchise award which would allow NYRA to operate the three racetracks in New York; Aqueduct, Belmont, and Saratoga. Please keep in mind NYRA is a nonprofit run by people who care about the industry. As a Board we didn't want to see the state take over the operation of racing because we felt we could do it better. This was a protracted back and forth and at the same time this was occurring, there were ongoing discussions about revenue from VLT machines and operating the VLTs at the track and what percentage would go to racing and what the purpose of the VLT money would be. The long and short of it is that in Nassau County, nobody wanted these VLT machines at Belmont. So, our VLT machines wound up at the Aqueduct Racetrack. Nobody wanted them anywhere in Nassau County. But racing gets the revenue from the VLTs. So, the discussion was what is racing doing with that revenue. I'm mentioning this because this is how the new Belmont is being paid for. The state owns the land and NYRA operates it under a franchise agreement. A certain amount of VLT revenue comes in, but the vast majority of VLT revenue goes to the State for education and tax revenue. A small percent, I don't remember the exact number, but I'm going to say between 5% and 7% of it goes to racing and of that 5-7%, we are required to invest it back into what we call capex, which is capital improvements. So, we take the percentage that has to go into capex and that is what is paying for the new Belmont Park. The balance of the funds goes into what we call purse money which is money used towards paying the horses prize money. The purse money is used by the horse owners to pay the bills to keep their horses and basically put the show on.

We take in approximately \$30 million dollars a year in capex which has to be reinvested in the site. The price tag for the new Belmont Park is \$455 million and we have a low interest 20-year loan from ESD. The money is guaranteed from the VLT revenue to pay that \$455 million back. This is not a handout from the State, so to speak. It's money that's going to be paid back. We have started to build the new Belmont Park.

The history of how Belmont came to be built is interesting. I am the only Long Island member on the Board of 17. The Board consists of six state appointees, 2 Governor, 2 State Senate, 2 Assembly and then one representative from the New York State Breeders Association (which is an economic engine), and the other one represents the New York Thoroughbred Owners Association. There are also nine members appointed from what we call old NYRA, which is the Board that was around from the early 1900s and who continues to reappoint their own people. I am a State Senate appointee. I've been appointed by all the State Senate leaders, both Democrat and Republican, since I was appointed to the Board in 2008.

The history of how the beginning of the Belmont development came about is that we had 400 acres of the most underutilized acres on Long Island when I got on the Board. I always wanted to figure out how we could further enhance the property. I became friendly with Charles Wang, when I bought his land and built Country Pointe in Plainview. We were having lunch one day and he indicated to me that the Islanders were very unhappy in Brooklyn, and they were looking to go to Citi Field and build an arena in the parking lot. I suggested Belmont Park to him, really because I wanted the Islanders on Long Island. We got in his car, drove to Belmont and drove around the property and we identified areas where an arena could be built. Next, we brought out Scott Malkin, who was interested in the site. Next became the process of getting the government to be aware that the Islanders were interested in coming. A new RFP had to be issued, we went through the RFP process, and we got the Islanders there.

There's also retail development, which I'll fill everybody in on when I get to the slides, but let's go back to where we are today. Obviously when Belmont was built in the 1960s, there were no other forms of gambling so the typical attendance at racetracks like Belmont or Roosevelt Raceway was 25-45,000

people a day. Times have changed and now the original 1.2 million square foot building is obsolete. We need to replace it with something that is right sized. We have new building design that I'm going to show you. Keep in mind the face of gambling has changed also. Everybody bets on their phones now and sports betting is legal. The competition for gambling dollars is high. We have a lot of people who bet on horses, but they just don't come to the track. They sit home and watch it on their TV and bet on their telephones. So, one of our goals is to get people back to the track and create a great experience there.

I'll take you through the slideshow. What you're looking at, obviously, is an aerial view of Belmont Park. It's broken up into three different areas. This is the grandstand and when you go from one end to the other, it's 1,200 feet long. It is in the process of being demolished. This is the existing racetrack, and I'll take you through them on another slide. Obviously, over here is the Cross Island and this is Hempstead Turnpike. Originally when I took Charles to see Belmont, the land included 37 acres that I'm running the cursor over just south of Hempstead Turnpike. This is where I thought the arena would go. The Islanders wanted to put the arena here. So, the arena is here and there is a newly constructed train station. Back here is an old existing train station. The LIRR has been upgraded, so people will be able to get to Belmont from both the east and the west. This 37-acre area is owned by the state and as part of the overall development has been leased to Scott Malkin, the owner of the Islanders.

One of the reasons it didn't get much publicity and much press in its infancy is it's on state owned land, so it didn't have to go through local zoning. When you build on state owned land, you're exempt from local zoning. All the approvals were done through the state. Scott is building a 340,000-foot shopping village of high-end discount stores. Scott has done this in multiple places around the world including London, Paris, Munich, Shanghai. It's quite a shopping experience. With sales taxes generated and construction jobs, it is its own economic charger for the region, and it improves the overall experience of maybe going shopping, taking in a game, maybe taking in the races. We really have taken the 400 acres and livened them up.

Back on the aerial map, I'll take you around the rest of the site. This is a parking garage that's constructed on the south side of Hempstead Turnpike. I think it holds 7,000 cars. This area here is all the barns and this is what we call the training track. Horses train on this track. We can go under the training track and utilize all the land which we do for parking. On the north end is additional parking. We've also unlocked this infield area. Normally in a racetrack your infield area is kind of locked off. This is a rendering from the south looking north. This is what you'll see when you enter the new Belmont Park. Hempstead Turnpike is to the south and the racetrack surfaces are to the north. It's multi-level and I'll take you through what's in each of these levels.

This is another view from the south. This area here is what we call the paddock. This is where the saddles are put on horses that are going to race and they go through a tunnel here onto the racetrack. We've kind of created an open-air pedestrian area around it for people to see the horses as they're getting saddled. This is a view looking from the northwest at the new Belmont track. As you can see, it's a fairly modern building. And I should say, the building you're seeing right here, we will be able to construct ancillary buildings for big events like Belmont Stakes Day and Breeders' Cups. Some of you may know what the Breeders Cup is and some of you may not. The Breeder's Cup is a once-a-year sporting championship day for horse races in the fall of all different calibers and divisions. They run for big money, and they come from around the world and whatever region gets the race receives a tremendous economic benefit. We haven't been able to host it at Belmont for almost 20 years, because we're obsolete. It's been in Kentucky and California primarily. But we have been told upon completion that in 2026, we will be hosting the Breeders Cup. This will bring tremendous revenue to the area, by

way of hotels and restaurants, and so forth. The general calculation is about \$100 million in economic benefit from a Breeders Cup. This building here is not a permanent structure but was done to show what temporary structures can be built.

This slide is kind of important. Here we have the dirt track. It's the only mile and a half dirt track in North America. Belmont Stakes is run on this dirt track. These two tracks are being rebuilt. These are turf courses, because more and more horses are running on turf and turf is generally considered a little safer for the horses than dirt. So, we built two turf courses. American Racing is heading to more of this grass racing. This course here in the middle, the smallest of them, is what we call a synthetic course. The racing community has been studying what would be the safest surface to race on and the answer is synthetic. It's a surface made of rubber pellets, and it is the safest surface for horses to race on. So, we're installing a synthetic surface. Belmont will be the only track in the world to have synthetic turf and dirt, which will really make us an internationally sought after location.

Next let's look at the infield here. We wanted to unlock these 45 acres to unblock it for public use. So, as we rebuilt these surfaces, we put tunnels under the surface so that we can get people and cars from the parking lots to the north and the area to the south in. Here are the two tunnels that lead you to the infield surface. We will open this up for community use. We're going to work with UBS on what we can do from a music point of view when the track isn't being used. The possibilities are endless.

To the south here is Hempstead Turnpike and Cross Island North with some parking here. Again, this shows there are four different tracks; dirt, turf, synthetic, and this is obviously the infield and what this shows here is kind of the existing Belmont track. You can see here there's several horseshoes that get you onto Hempstead Turnpike and onto the Cross Island from the parking lot. Hempstead Turnpike isn't the only way out.

Let's go to the next slide. This shows more in terms of the future development. This is the new building. This is the new paddock area. This is the new backyard. This area where the existing grandstand will be open for use and we're calling it the Activation Park. We're creating more green space. If any of you have ever been to Saratoga, you know the backyard at Saratoga is highly sought after and people want to spend the day. There are activities for people when they bring their kids. We have a lot of food trucks. We get crowds of 20-30,000 people at Saratoga and we'd like to bring this back here at certain times of the year.

I'm just going to go backwards. The state owns the Aqueduct Racetrack and when construction is done there everything moves to Nassau County full time. So, Nassau County will recognize all the economic benefit of New York racing downstate now, except for when it's upstate.

So, let's go to the next slide. This is from an architect. This is the first floor of the building, and the racetrack is out here. The first floor hosts some specialty dining, some retail circulation and what we call the apron where people stand and watch the races. The racetrack is out here so the paddock is back here. This is the underneath area the horses go to get here. We're on the second level now which we call hospitality and basically these will equate to load seating at a ballpark. The seats are out front here, there is more dining, and kind of a lounge area for a paddock. We call this area the Players Club, almost like a casino, racetracks have what we call High Rollers. Casinos call them whales. We obviously want to encourage their business because their business means revenue. This is a separate area for them. There is another area to view racing called the Track View Club.

Let's go to the next slide. We're on the fourth floor. The third floor is primarily open indoor space for patrons to hang out at. Now we get into what any new arena that's been designed has which are suites and luxury suites. The thing about these luxury suites is when you're in them, you'll be able to see the horses getting saddled back here and people who bet like to watch the horses. They'll be able to watch them on the track. There is also a high-end restaurant.

On the next slide, you see our rooftop area, which is just a lounge. This area would be where somebody is calling the race. There are some facilities in here. The race caller would sit in here and we have something called stewards who watch the race get run making sure that the jockeys are not bumping into each other.

This next slide shows a picture from the infield of Belmont Park taken this past Saturday. This is from the north looking south. This is the old grandstand in the midst of demolition, and this is one of the constructed tunnels that runs from what will be the new area out to the infield.

Now we get to the economic benefits. It's a \$455 million price tag. The 110 acres of developable land is basically Aqueduct. The state kind of gets a bonus because we go away. We will operate racing until 2035 through our franchise with the state. When we go away, Aqueduct is getting 110 acres. It is a positive for the state and because it is near Kennedy airport they'll develop it in some way that I'm sure will monetize it nicely. We by virtue of those tunnels I talked about, pick up another 45 acres of use. We think we've improved the overall situation from what it was to what we have now. As I mentioned earlier, now it's NYRA financed through state supported debt, but we will pay it back through the VLTs. From the construction, we anticipate a \$45 million one time, state and local tax revenue. The state gets a billion which is what we value it at from us walking away from Aqueduct. And then we think, with tax revenue and everything else it's about \$110 million value from the activities at the new Belmont Park.

So, let's go to the next slide. Again, from construction, we create a billion-dollar one-time economic impact, 3,700 temporary jobs as previously mentioned. And then we believe we drive many more people to the area, not to mention what UBS and Scott Malkin's mall will do. So again, this kind of tells you what we think the economic impact is on a yearly basis - the permanent jobs, we create the money spent for salaries and income. And then this is, total state and local tax revenues. So that takes me through my presentation. I know it was a lot, it is lot to absorb, and I bounced around. If there are any questions, I am happy to take them and if I think of anything I forgot, I'll come back to it.

John Cameron:

Thank you, Michael. That was an extremely informative presentation. One, which I think a lot of people have been looking forward. The project creates major economic development here for Long Island and it's important for Long Island, Nassau County and the region. We know Belmont is a national treasure and one which Long Island really prides itself on. I would like to salute you and NYRA for what you've done. Your leadership here on the NYRA Board has been very important. I'd like to open to questions from the Council first.

Supervisor Wehrheim:

What is your targeted completion date?

Michael Dubb:

That's a great question. The target is to be completed in time to be ready for the Breeders Cup in the fall of 2026. We hope we can have the Belmont Stakes in the spring of 2026. I think that remains to be seen, but we feel the Breeders Cup is reasonable.

Theresa Sanders:

Thank you for such a great presentation. Can you explain a little bit more about the community outreach effort and the workforce development efforts?

Michael Dubb:

I should have. We formed a Belmont Advisory Committee with stakeholders from the area including Floral Park and Elmont. It was a mix of all people. Candidly, they're very, very happy with the development. The entire job is built on prevailing wage and union. Within that there is an apprentice program to get more people involved in reconstruction. Our dialogue, not only with the community, but the local politicians from the area has been ongoing and quite extensive. It is interesting.

John Cameron:

Michael, for any major development project on Long Island, typically the number one issue is traffic. We're in a densely populated area here and now along the Cross Island there is UBS arena, a retail mall, and now people see that the new Belmont is being constructed there. I'm sure your consultants are thinking about parking and scheduling concurrent events. I would assume you're not going to be running a race day at the same time you're running a major concert or an Islander game at UBS. So maybe explain how your consultants are looking at the traffic and parking issues?

Michael Dubb:

That's always a great question no matter what I do. Scott built that space. We have surface parking as I showed on the map and one of the things we can do with that infield space on big event days is open it up for parking. So, parking doesn't seem to be an issue. It's important to note when Belmont was built back in the 60s and 70s, you typically had 35-40,000 people. Now, we're building a building that is really geared for 5-10,000 people, except for the few big race days like Breeders Cup which we won't get every year. Obviously, nothing would go on at UBS on big race days. Everybody does traffic studies. I was obviously quite concerned about the traffic when UBS opened. Obviously, it's slow at times, but it is nothing like the stories you hear about the Meadowlands. There are several, I call them horseshoes, between the south side and the north side that get you out of the parking lots onto the Cross Island without having to ever hit Hempstead Turnpike. So, I think we're in good shape. The thing that remains to be seen is what happens at the holiday season with traffic from the Cross Island to the new retail village that Mr. Malkin is building.

John Cameron:

Can you speak to the scheduling of events. You mentioned the holidays. I think we all know what it is like to be around Long Island near a mall or shopping area during the holidays. There are anomalies and they are still issues that have to be dealt with, but what about the scheduling of events. Do you know your racing schedule? Do you have racing year-round?

Michael Dubb:

That's a great question. Thoroughbred racing goes on year-round. Before the new construction of Belmont, racing at Belmont was in September, October, and into early November and then in the spring, basically May and June. We go up to Saratoga for July and August and in the wintertime, we were at Aqueduct. In the wintertime, there's much less racing. It would be Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or

occasionally four days a week. There are 200 racing days a year and 40 of them take place in Saratoga. So that leaves 160 racing days, and these are primarily the weekends. We close it down before Christmas for about two weeks and we also shut it down for about 10 days in the in the fall and the spring, to give the horses a rest and give the employees a chance to get a breather. Except for Belmont Stakes Day, the traffic does not seem to be an issue.

John Cameron:

The challenge may be on the railroad at that time, because everybody wants to avoid the traffic, so they take the railroad instead.

Michael Dubb:

John, I should have brought that up. There is a newly constructed railroad station. I think they put several \$100 million into the construction of it. It's a beautiful facility, and a lot of people, particularly on big race days, now take the train.

John Cameron:

I think your point about taking a couple of weeks off around the holidays is very significant because everybody knows that's a peak traffic period. I'm sure UBS will schedule accordingly. I'm sure they will be looking at this because while there are three major economic generators, they also could be traffic generators.

Richard Guardino:

Michael, can you tell us a little bit more about some of the amenities at the track? You mentioned restaurants and retail? Who are you looking to bring in there?

Michael Dubb:

We want to create a fun environment and have some restaurants at the high end and some at the not so high end. We want to create lounge areas. The retail destination will be across the street. Back to one of the slides there is an area we call Activation Park that is intended to kind of a marry us to UBS for people to be able to go to a game and maybe take in few races. Our backyard is going to be geared for kids and family.

Alan Belniak:

At this time, I'd like to remind the audience that you can use the raise hand function in the lower tray of Zoom controls or use the Q&A function inside Zoom. The first question entered into the Zoom Q&A is from David who asks, "Do you think there will be demand for additional hotel accommodations?"

Michael Dubb:

David is spot on, and I failed to mention it. There is land allocated on the UBS site for a future hotel. We are talking with UBS to see if we can leverage the location of the hotel where hotel guests might be able to have a view of the racetrack. I think it's a question of just a time till you see a hotel on that property.

Alan Belniak:

Okay, thank you for that, Michael. The first raised hand we have is Elaine Phillips. Elaine, if you'd like to unmute your microphone, you can ask your question.

John Cameron:

I should point out Elaine Phillips is the Nassau County Comptroller.

Elaine Phillips:

Michael, great presentation. On behalf of Nassau County, thank you. What you are doing is exactly what we're trying to do here at the government level. Bruce says Nassau is open for business and this is a prime example of that. You mentioned the figure of \$110 million per year of state and local revenue. I'm assuming that does not include any revenue that UBS or the shopping village will generate. Is that accurate?

Michael Dubb:

That that is 100% accurate. Candidly, I don't know what the presentation and the economic generation of UBS or the retail village is. The slides I used were from a study we did and used in our presentation to the state. It was strictly Belmont Park. I want to add, in my time as a Board member, Comptroller Phillips was State Senator Phillips and she was a tremendous supporter not only of New York racing, but also of the daycare center at Belmont Park, which obviously is near and dear to me. Thank you, for everything Comptroller.

Elaine Phillips:

You are very welcome. It's a pleasure. I will also share with the group that I had the opportunity to visit one of the shopping villages, the one in England, about an hour outside of London, and it's phenomenal. This is a very upscale shopping experience, and it will generate jobs. It's pretty exciting. Do you know when that's going to be completed?

Michael Dubb:

I've been hearing that it was to open this summer.

Alan Belniak:

The next question is from Kristin who asks, "For the shopping center and the raceway, what is the marketing strategy? Who will be leading that effort? Discover Long Island would love to be in the loop for our global audience."

Michael Dubb:

That's a great question. I'm going to say this tongue in cheek. I'm just a dumb builder. I'm not involved in the marketing strategies much. I know NYRA has a marketing department. They're hard at work on it. I think you'll be hearing more about the marketing strategy as this comes along. I certainly will relay the interest of Discover Long Island to the marketing people at NYRA.

Alan Belniak:

We have a typed question from Denise Ford. "I like the Activation area, which is modeled on the picnic area in Saratoga. Will the picnic areas that we're available along the track be reinstalled?"

Michael Dubb:

Yes. Not everybody wants to be inside. There will be areas outside along the racetrack where families can watch the races, and we're excited about it.

Alan Belniak:

Great. Thank you. The next one is from Grace who asks, "Are there any opportunities for community members to be involved via employment opportunities?"

Michael Dubb:

I can tell you that the local politicians were very adamant on that. There are job fairs planned. That was an important part of the community outreach. The stakeholders were very concerned about that.

Alan Belniak:

Excellent. Thank you for that. Denise Ford asks a follow up question, "Will the shopping village be accessible from Belmont Park?"

Michael Dubb:

Right now, there's a tunnel that runs under Hempstead Turnpike from Belmont, so you can walk under that tunnel. It's a vehicular tunnel and so, yes, you can use that tunnel to get to the other side. There is talk of an overhead, pedestrian bridge across Hempstead Turnpike and I believe that's being researched by all the involved parties.

Alan Belniak:

Great, thank you. This is from Yolanda Felder, "Great presentation, love Beachwood properties. Will there be restaurants?"

Michael Dubb:

Absolutely. They are shown in the slide deck from very high end to everyday restaurants. The plan is to offer all kinds of food experiences because as we know, that's an important driver.

Alan Belniak:

Great. Another question just popped in from Patrick who asks, "Has there been any discussion about the Long Island Railroad reactivating or providing daily service to the spur station immediately next to Belmont Park? The new Elmont station is a very long walk from the grandstand and shopping village."

Michael Dubb:

So, there is a new train station at Belmont Park that was built, but I don't know the activation and the schedule of it. I don't know if it's only used at game time, but there is a new spur and operation. You can now get there from the east without having to go to Jamaica. I don't candidly know enough about the daily schedule. It's a good point, I should just have some knowledge of it.

Alan Belniak:

Thanks for that. John, I don't see any more hands raised or any more questions. So, with that, I'll flip it back to you.

John Cameron:

Thanks, Alan. Michael, on behalf of the Council, thank you very much for an outstanding presentation on a project which is highly significant for Long Island, important for the region and has national significance. I'm going to speak to the Council here. As the Council knows, we have a designation that we consider for major projects of regional significance. I think based on this presentation, there's several of the boxes that this project checks. I'd like to hear from Council member as I think this project is one which is meritorious of designation of a Project of Regional Significance.

Jeff Kraut:

I'd agree with you. It's these types of projects, which revitalize our underused properties and create a destination for our communities, that are just wonderful. If anybody has done Sunday brunch at

Belmont, it's a great place to take the family. I've taken my kids there since they were little every year for racing. It's good to see private and state investment in this space. I would agree with you this would be a Project of Regional Significance.

Theresa Sanders:

I agree, John. Particularly from the economic development view and the community enhancement, this project is going to revitalize that particular area, and other vendors and homeowners will benefit.

Ed Wehrheim:

John, I would agree as well. On a much smaller scale in Smithtown, we have been redeveloping underutilized sites, closed businesses and heavy industry plants. It works out very well. The revitalization efforts seem to be very successful. This is much larger scale, but I would agree on its regional significance.

John Cameron:

Absolutely. I agree. As we all know, one challenge we have here as Long Islanders is the limited acreage around that is untapped. To take acreage and make it more efficient and create economic development while also increasing the quality of life for residents in the country is a major plus for a development project.

Motion to Designate Belmont as a Project of Regional Significance: Jeff Kraut

Seconded: Nancy Engelhardt

All in Favor: So moved.

John Cameron:

Michael, you've done such a good job that you're one of a select few projects in the last 20 years that the Regional Planning Council has designated as a project of regional significance. Thank you for all you've done and congratulations.

Michael Dubb:

John, as I mentioned earlier. I am the only Long Islander on a Board of 17 and I have taken very seriously the responsibility of wearing both a NYRA hat and a Long Island hat and it's been very gratifying for me to see these things come to fruition from when it was just 400 underutilized acres. I can tell you that the Islanders took it very personally. I was working very hard with Randy Marshall from Newsday, who was doing editorials in support of it. We were working hard to get the Islanders here. I'm just so happy that we got the Islanders here and we've been able to unlock the potential and bring this racetrack into this century without having to demolish it or close it for the good of Long Island. I thank you for listening to me. If anybody has any questions or afterthoughts, send me an email.

John Cameron:

Great. Thank you, Michael, personally, for your commitment over the last 16 years or so moving this project to become a reality. Thanks for what you've done for the region and for Long Island.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

John Cameron:

As I normally do, I'll spend a few minutes reflecting on some major issues that affect us, globally, nationally, and locally. Just when you think things couldn't get any crazier, our colleges decide to conduct camp-ins, graduation demonstrations and walkouts, takeover of campus buildings, and shut

down in-class sessions, and unfortunately harass Jewish students. While October 7th was an outright act of barbarism, it appears that all college students are either improperly taught by supportive faculty or chose to get their news from select bias outlets. The war in Gaza has caused additional political divide. New York City and surrounding areas including Long Island have the largest population of Jews outside Israel. Israel has for decades been America's strongest ally in the Middle East and, frankly, one the largest of its type in the world. Unfortunately, it appears that politics have reared its ugly head in the funding of Israel's war effort. Hopefully cooler heads will prevail, and our country will back its long-standing ally. The war in the Ukraine seems to have taken a backseat in the media lately with all the attention focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict. This issue will no doubt be a major topic of discussion, not only in the upcoming presidential election, but also in our local congressional races. The felony trial of former President Donald Trump in New York has also dominated the news and raised serious concerns for many Americans on the politicization of the Justice Department which could also have a major impact on the presidential election. In New York State, the legislature has passed its annual budget. Though the migrant issue has resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in costs which have caused the state to reduce its funding to local school districts. Governor Hochul has embarked upon a major initiative to create major affordable housing in the state, particularly in the downstate area, which includes Long Island. Long Island towns have pushed back on state mandates, preferring a more collaborative approach that respects local zoning. The state continues to be one of the leading states seeing a massive migration of its population to lower taxed areas. Long Island shares in this syndrome, losing many of its high wage earners to southern states. You may recall that a few meetings ago we presented a report prepared by PFM, which not only indicated a deficit of tax funds of over \$20 billion per year to Washington DC, but also a \$14 billion in balance of payments to Albany, a deficit which has doubled over the past 10-year period. If we are to address our high tax burden, we need to grow our commercial tax base. If skilled jobs are not present, we will not have the need for all the housing that will be built. As members of the Long Island Regional Planning Council, we are dedicating our personal time to work to make Long Island the place we want it to be, a place to raise a family and have it prosper for our children and grandchildren. Together, it is possible and apart, it is not. The choice is ours.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Rich Guardino:

Well said, John. As I mentioned earlier, there were five winning teams in the Long Island Water Quality Challenge. They include Island Trees Memorial Middle School, Sewanhaka High School, Walt Whitman High School, West Hempstead secondary school and Elmont Memorial High School. The winning schools selected will be accepting the optional grant award to implement their projects on school grounds. This Friday, we're going to have the first award ceremony at West Hempstead secondary school, where we'll present the students and the faculty with a check and an award. We're looking forward to the spring season and visiting these various schools. The students have done a terrific job. That completes my report.

John Cameron:

That is great, Rich. Thank you. Council, any new business you'd like to discuss? We've had some good studies taking place behind the scenes and we will be presenting results in the next couple of months. One is the economic impact of storm surge and floods. As we have said here in the past, the question isn't, if we get Sandy 2, it's when we get Sandy 2. We've had LiRo doing some work for us. If you recall, they've done some analysis looking at our maritime business and marine zoning, etc. Now we have them looking at the impacts in Nassau County of flooding up to Sunrise Highway, and in Suffolk County going up to Montauk Highway, looking at the impact on commercial areas. They've been doing some excellent work here. Rich, we may be presenting some of the findings at the next meeting.

Rich Guardino:

Yes, absolutely. They're working hard on the project, and we should have a draft relatively soon.

John Cameron:

Great. Any other questions comments from the Council? If not, Alan, comments from the public?

Alan Belniak:

Just one more call now for the public, you can use the raise hand button down below or the Q&A feature. We'll just give a moment to see if anyone uses that. John, I don't see anything new, so back to you.

John Cameron:

With that being said, I'd like to thank you all for attending. Thanks again to Michael Dubb for an outstanding presentation. We wish them nothing but success on an important project for Long Island, one that is an important Project of Regional Significance. I wish you all a wonderful summer. Enjoy yourselves and everybody stay well.

With that, we will close the meeting for today. Thank you everyone.

Motion to adjourn. So moved. All in favor.