

From: Maura Kwiatkowski
To: Julie Castaneda; COB mail
Subject: FW: Rillito Park
Date: January 17, 2017 9:26:34 AM
Attachments: Rillito Response.docx

From: Alexa Kari Ravit [mailto:aravit@email.arizona.edu]

Sent: Sunday, January 15, 2017 2:53 PM

To: Nanette Slusser <Nanette.Slusser@pima.gov>; Carmine DeBonis <Carmine.DeBonis@pima.gov>; Chris Cawein <Chris.Cawein@pima.gov>; Martina Gonzales <Martina.Gonzales@pima.gov>; Juanita Garcia-Seiger <Juanita.Garcia-Seiger@pima.gov>; Robert Padilla <Robert.Padilla@pima.gov>; Mike Holmes <Mike.Holmes@pima.gov>; Tom Moulton <Tom.Moulton@pima.gov>; Aurora Hernandez <Aurora.Hernandez@pima.gov>; District1 <District1@pima.gov>; DIST2 <DIST.2@pima.gov>; District3 <District.3@pima.gov>; District4 <District4@pima.gov>; District5 <District5@pima.gov>; Maura Kwiatkowski <Maura.Kwiatkowski@pima.gov>; Lois Burlingham <Lois.Burlingham@pima.gov>; Amanda N. Colon-Sisco <Amanda.Colon-Sisco@pima.gov>; Lisa Matthews <Lisa.Matthews@pima.gov>; Jaye Wells <jwells@rillitoparkfoundation.org>; Russell True <rtrue@whitestallion.com>; Chandler Warden [REDACTED]; Manish Shah <mshah@mayatea.com>; Jeffrey John <JJohn@visittucson.org>; [REDACTED]

Cc: Mike Weiss [REDACTED]

Subject: Rillito Park

Hello,

My name is Alexa Ravit, and I am a graduate student in the University of Arizona's Race Track Industry Program. I was recently made aware of Mr. Ted Schmidt's comments in regards to the vote on whether or not to grant a lease extension to Rillito Racing, Inc. I would like to offer a response to these statements so that a complete and honest picture of Rillito Park Racetrack can be put forth. Please see my response attached. Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Alexa Ravit
Graduate Student
Race Track Industry Program
825 East 5th Street
Tucson, Arizona 85719
[REDACTED]

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Alexa Ravit
Race Track Industry Program

RECEIVED
JAN 17 2017 10:00 AM
[Signature]

To members of the board:

As the Pima County Board of Supervisors considers a vote on whether or not to grant Rillito Racing, Inc. a lease extension to continue hosting horse races, I believe it is important that all sides of the issue are considered. To this end, I would like to present the case for Rillito's importance to Tucson as a racing facility as well as refute arguments that have been made that incorrectly and unfairly diminish the impact that Rillito Park has had on the horse racing industry, the Tucson community, and the students in the University of Arizona's Race Track Industry Program (RTIP).

A Long and Significant History

Rillito Park's chute has been listed on the register of historic places for more than 30 years. However, a plaque does not do justice to the influence that this bullring track has had on horse racing. Besides introducing the chute system, Rillito has been associated with a multitude of innovations in horse racing, from the photo finish camera to the grading (classification) of races. It was also the launching pad for the career of one of the greatest trainers in horse racing history. Bob Baffert, trainer of Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, recorded his first victory at Rillito Park back in the 1970s. Downplaying the historic impact of Rillito because one wants to get rid of it for his own benefit does not make the track any less significant.

The Sport of Horse Racing

When one suggests that Rillito's horse racing meets are merely a means of facilitating drinking and gambling and promoting destructive behaviors, he is allowing his ignorance to shine through. First and foremost, horse racing is a sport that stars two of the most remarkable athletes on the planet. Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horses are 1,200 pounds of perfectly-chiseled muscle. Thoroughbreds can reach speeds of up to 40 miles per hour, and Quarter Horses can reach 50 miles per hour. The training regimens for racehorses rival those of any human athletes. Depending on the horse, timed workouts, swimming, and acupuncture sessions may all be incorporated into a horse's routine to optimize performance. The horses' partners are 110-pound men and women who deftly ride these animals at high speeds while perched on thin stirrups. Pound for pound, you will not find a tougher athlete than a jockey.

Entertainment for *ALL*

However, there is more to a day at the races than horses running in a circle. The pomp and circumstance of the afternoon includes dressing up, live music, socializing, and yes, drinking and gambling. A business needs to make money, and for horse racing, this is accomplished through gambling (handle) and concessions. Based on Mr. Schmidt's statements, you would think that Rillito Park becomes a cesspool of gambling addicts and alcoholics when race meets are held. This could not be further from the truth.

On a typical day at the races, you will find people of ALL ages, races, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses enjoying the afternoon. Children press against the paddock fences to look at the horses, cowboys dance to local bands, and retired Tucson residents relax in the clubhouse.

The races have something for *everyone*. On the other hand, the soccer leagues favor the wealthier families of Pima County. For the cost of one child to participate in the cheapest league through the Tucson Soccer Academy (Youth Academy: 6-week session for \$125), a family of four could go to the races six times (\$5 per person). It seems clear to me that a much larger demographic of people stand to enjoy a racetrack than additional soccer fields.

Certain interests have also claimed that horse racing is a dying sport. It is obvious that anyone who makes such a statement has never been to the races at Rillito Park. Each day during the race meet, the facility is packed with people who wait all year for the races and even reserve tables for the entire race meet. Attendees pack 10-deep around the paddock before each race and 20-deep at the rail to watch each race. You might not see American Pharoah running at Rillito, but based on the volume of cheers during the stretch runs, you would think that he was. I cannot stress enough how passionate Tucson residents are about Rillito Park Racetrack. I invite all of you to experience a day at Rillito so you can see for yourself how much people *love* this racetrack. I have followed horse racing for 14 years and have never experienced a loyalty from a customer base quite like this.

Safety and Welfare is a Priority

Another concern that has been brought up has been the safety of horse racing. Unfortunately, when it comes to any athletic activity, injuries do occur. Additionally, whenever money is involved in any facet of life, there will be shady characters involved who will conduct illicit activities to get ahead. However, I can say with great confidence that the vast majority of people in horse racing love their animals and take care of them to the best of their ability. Once again, I invite you to come with me to the backstretch to see trainers and grooms taking care of their horses. These animals are like their children. There are much easier ways to earn a living than to wake up at 4 a.m. 7 days a week, 365 days a year, rain or shine. People work in the racing industry because they love what they do and love the animals. Extending the lease for Rillito Racing, Inc. protects these men and women's livelihoods as well as the livelihoods of these racehorses.

Mr. Schmidt has mentioned that horses are given drugs to "mask pain and enhance performance." What he fails to mention is that racehorses are tested for prohibited substances after their races and that positive tests will result in monetary penalties and suspensions for the culpable parties. It is also wrong to compare a therapeutic medication such as Lasix (furosemide) to illegal performance-enhancing drugs that are expressly forbidden under all circumstances. Lasix is administered to prevent a medical condition (exercise-induced pulmonary hemorrhaging). It is no different than a human taking an Advil to prevent inflammation in advance of a hard workout. If an animal has a health issue, you treat it. The inhumane thing to do would be to not treat the issue. Therapeutic medications have a place in sports, and the line should never be blurred between beneficial medications and performance-enhancing drugs.

The Race Track Industry Program

I would be remiss if I did not discuss the main reason why I care so much about the continuation of racing at Rillito Park. The University of Arizona and its Race Track Industry Program are

located fewer than five miles from Rillito Park. I am in my second year of the RTIP's graduate program, and I will graduate this May. I was fortunate to work at Rillito last winter, but I will be gone after this school year. Why does it matter to me if the track is demolished? The answer is that being associated with Rillito Park has been one of the highlights of my career as a college student, both at Cornell University as an undergraduate and now as a graduate student at the University of Arizona.

I decided to enroll in the RTIP because of my passion for horse racing and my desire to join the industry. I felt that the RTIP would offer me the best opportunity to learn about racing while being able to network with industry professionals. The RTIP is responsible for two of the top trainers in Thoroughbred horse racing: Bob Baffert and Todd Pletcher. Its alumni saturate racing at every level from breeding to training to executive roles at racetracks across the country. If you want to maximize your chances of success in racing, the RTIP is the way to go.

For the 2015 winter meet, Mike Weiss, general manager of Rillito Park Racetrack, decided to partner up with the RTIP to put interested students to work at the track. We were placed in roles that ranged from admissions to taking entries for the races to operating the photo finish camera. During my first year working at the track last year, I was the director of social media. For me and many others, this was our first experience working at a racetrack. We were able to witness firsthand all of the moving pieces that are necessary for a racetrack to operate, and we were all integral pieces in Rillito's operation. Working at Rillito gave us the opportunity to apply knowledge taught in the classroom during the week to real-world situations on the weekends.

How many other academic programs in the country provide their students the opportunity to work in the field as they are learning in the classroom? Should the lease extension be approved, I am confident that the relationship between Rillito and the RTIP will become a popular selling point for students interested in the program. If we are going to discuss the economic impact of the racetrack, we must mention the impact that is made by each individual new student who enrolls in the program and moves to Tucson. To lose this learning "lab" for students would be a travesty, and I would hate for future students to be denied this amazing opportunity that I found invaluable to my racetrack education.

Conclusion

In summary, it is clear to me that Rillito Racing, Inc. must be granted a lease extension so that it can continue to host horse races now and in the future. Considering the plethora of recreational facilities that currently exist in Tucson, I see no reason why minor adjustments cannot be made so that Rillito Park can effectively function as a multi-use facility. The racetrack's history, beloved role in the community, and importance to the Race Track Industry Program cannot be ignored. With a lease extension, Rillito will be able to improve the facilities and become an even larger part of the Tucson culture. Please give Rillito Park Racetrack the chance to flourish. Please vote to grant the lease extension.

Respectfully,

Alexa Ravit

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