

## THE STATE HORSE RACING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

**JANUARY 25, 2022**

*A public business meeting of The State Horse Racing Commission was held at the following date, place and time: In-Person PDA Room 309 and Via Telephonic Conference Call on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 1:00 P.M.*

*Commissioners in attendance: Chairperson Redding, Darryl Breniser, Salvatore DeBunda, Dr. John Egloff, Thomas Ellis, Russell Jones, Robert Lark, C. Edward Rogers and Dr. Corinne Sweeney. Also present were Commission Counsel Jorge Augusto and Marija Kuren. Michelle Ruddy was not in attendance.*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

A quorum of the Commission being present, Chairperson Redding called the meeting to order. Chairperson Redding noted that the meeting was properly advertised in accordance with the Sunshine Law. By way of notice, the Commission conducted an executive session to engage in quasi-judicial deliberation to be adjudicated at the public meeting and engaged in attorney client privilege communication.

Chairperson Redding welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **PUBLIC MEETING**

**1.) MINUTES OF THE November 30, 2021 Meeting** as emailed to the Commissioners for their review in advance of the meeting.

**Motion By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Second By:** Commissioner Lark  
**Decision:** Passed by unanimous vote.

**2.) MINUTES OF THE December 14, 2021 Meeting** as emailed to the Commissioners for their review in advance of the meeting.

**Motion By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Second By:** Commissioner Rogers  
**Decision:** Passed by unanimous vote.

### **PRESENTATIONS**

**3.) RACING FUND NOVEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT** – presented by Tracee Gotwalt. Ms. Gotwalt provided a detailed financial analysis of the State Racing Fund, Commission and Testing Revenues and Expenses, Promotional Expenditures, a Comparative to FY 20/21 and an overview of the Breed-specific funds for the month of December.

**4.) PTHA Marketing Presentation-** presented by Bruce Casella & Baldini Communications. Mr. Casella provided a review of the 2021 year at Parx. Handle was up 71% over 2019 pre-pandemic; the PA Derby was the best in its history with a handle of 13.2 million dollars wagered and all major Philadelphia news stations covered the event. In looking ahead to 2022, Mr. Casella stated that based on historical data, Parx recognized the importance of major race dates and has added 6 Saturdays to replace 6 Wednesdays. These Saturdays will line up with major Thoroughbred race dates. Parx will continue to advertise live racing and work with local media to promote racing at Parx and the state marketing funds are vital to that effort. Mike Baldini provided an overview of plans for 2022. He stressed the importance of being flexible and adaptable with upcoming marketing efforts. He highlighted the importance of digital marketing efforts. He provided insight into the importance of legacy media. Mr. Ross provided the Commission with Parx's Social Media snapshot for 2021 and the plans for 2022. He stated the main targeted demographic was 35-44-year-old males.

**5.) PHHA Marketing Presentation-**presented by Mike Harant & Rachel Olszewski. Mr. Harant provided a review of 2021 for both Pocono's and Harrah's. He stated Harrah's had its best overall handle in its history and Pocono had an excellent year with its first million-dollar handle day since 2018. Ms. Olszewski reviewed the 2021 state marketing efforts focusing on the Track Master's free PP's. This effort was rewarded by increased wagering at both Pocono and Harrah's. The goal for 2022 would be to continue with this program. In addition, the plan is to continue with the "PA Harness Week" program hosted by Jessica Otten and Heather Vitale. The program has provided interaction with fans and increased viewership. Two major promotional days for 2022 will be Harrah's Stakes Day in May and the Sun Stakes at Pocono in August. Ms. Olszewski referenced the power point presentation to provide data to support the plans for 2022.

**6.) PA Commission Equine Safety & Welfare Action Plan (see attached)-**presented by Thomas Chuckas. Mr. Chuckas outlined the origins of the Thoroughbred Action Plan, the working group, its members and the principles the plan is based upon. The Commission firmly believes a collaborative effort by the industry participants, tracks, horsemen, Commission and practicing veterinarians is imperative in mitigating and resolving equine fatalities and injuries. All parties have a role to play and success is dependent upon this philosophy. Mr. Chuckas presented the list of actions and advised the Commission that this is a living breathing document that will be constantly reviewed, updated and modified to incorporate best practices. Some Action Plan items will begin implementation March 1, 2022. Mr. Chuckas advised that certain other items in the plan will take longer to implement and will not begin on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Bureau Director Chuckas presented the items of the Action Plan. Chairman Redding, Commissioners Ellis, Sweeney and DeBunda voiced their support for the plan and stressed the importance of these actions for the Thoroughbred Horse Racing Industry in Pennsylvania.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS**

### **7.) Motion to approve the Simulcast Calendars for February 2022 for Harrah's Philadelphia, Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs and The Meadows.**

**Motion By:** Commissioner Breniser  
**Second By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Decision:** Passed by unanimous vote.

### **8.) Motion to approve the Simulcast Calendars for February 2022 for Parx, Penn National and Presque Isle Downs.**

**Motion By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Second By:** Commissioner Sweeney  
**Decision:** Passed by unanimous vote.

### **9.) Motion to approve the PA Commission Equine Safety & Welfare Action Plan presented in item #6 under Presentations.**

**Motion By:** Commissioner Sweeney  
**Second By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Decision:** Motion passed. Commissioner Breniser & Commissioner Egloff abstained.

## **ADJUDICATIONS**

### **10.) Motion to affirm the Stewards ruling in the matter of Michael Dowdall, Appeal No. 19141CD.**

**Motion By:** Commissioner Rogers  
**Second By:** Commissioner Breniser  
**Decision:** Passed by unanimous vote.

### **11.) Motion to affirm Stewards ruling in the matter of Douglas Dietrich, Appeal No. 21017PN is affirmed in part. The penalty imposed by Ruling No. 21017PN is hereby modified and reduced to a one-year suspension.**

**Motion By:** Commissioner Ellis  
**Second By:** Commissioner Jones  
**Decision:** Motion passed. Commissioner Breniser abstained.

## **INDUSTRY REPORTS**

### **12.) General Reports**

Director Salerno indicated Director Chuckas had one item to address.

Director Chuckas addressed the issue of jockey Mychel Sanchez at Parx. He advised that he was contacted by an ADW provider (Fan Duel) with concerns regarding an account that was held in Mr. Sanchez's name. The Bureau Director advised that the Commission commenced an investigation. In a few races, Mr. Sanchez was found to have placed wagers on horses in the race other than the horse he rode. The investigation revealed no evidence of race fixing, conspiracy or any unusual wagering or betting patterns. The Stewards came to the conclusion that Mr. Sanchez made an error and has a personal problem. Based on the evidence, the Stewards believe in allowing people with problems the opportunity to seek help and receive a second chance to get their lives back in order. There will be no additional chances. This is a one-time opportunity to resolve his personal issues.

Director Salerno recognized the following Industry participants for their reports:

- Scott Lishia, Meadows, updated the Commission on the Meadows weather related issues and the efforts of the track crew on maintaining the racing surface. He stated the Meadows has carded 10 races per day as part of the agreement with MSOA and hoping to begin carding 11 races next week. Finally, he spoke about their efforts on Tik Tok and social media to attract customers.
- Kim Hankins, MSOA, complimented the Meadows and the track crew for their outstanding efforts during this winter's bad weather.
- Mike Zullinger, Mohegan Sun Pocono Downs, advised the Commission that Pocono will open on February 12<sup>th</sup> and preparations are proceeding. Pocono is looking to have another successful year.
- Joe Wilson, Parx, spoke about losing a race day due to the weather and complimented the efforts of the track crew in maintaining the racing surface during the winter. Mr. Wilson notified the Commission that Parx's new race book/sports book is scheduled to open February 9<sup>th</sup> with test days on February 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Barry Brown, Harrah's Philadelphia, reviewed the 2021 race season and it was their best year in terms of total handle.
- Jeff Matty, PTHA, introduced himself to the Commission as the new Executive Director. The PTHA is working with Parx on the 2022 Stakes schedule. In addition, Mr. Matty is looking forward to working with all the industry participants.
- Mike Harant, PHHA, advised the Commission that the USTA Fair Banquet was held at Bedford Springs this weekend. The event was well received and well attended. In addition, Mr. Harant noted Pocono is scheduled to open February 12<sup>th</sup> and Harrah's April 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Matt Ennis, PID, reported that planning is in process for the 2022 live race season. At the February meeting, Mr. Ennis will be submitting PID's request for approval of the 2022 live racing calendar.
- Brian Sanfratello, PHBA, provided a handout showing the transfer of revenue to the breeding fund. This year's fund of \$15.4 plus the \$3.1 carryover from 2021 for a total of \$18.5 is an increase over 2020. He spoke about the 2022 stallion directory and the boarding farm directory. There directories are

mailed to breeders, provided on-line at the PHBA website and available through TDN Daily and the Paulick Report.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dr. Langlois complimented the Commission on the Equine Safety & Welfare Actions. He requested that Commission ensure that the penalties are severe if an individual breaks the rules. The second request is to ask the Commission to advertise for an Equine Medical Director. Finally, Dr. Langlois requested the Commission announce Out of Competition testing numbers.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairperson Redding announced that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 22, 2022. The Meeting location is to be determined.

- Executive Session 11:00 A.M.
- Regular Session 1:00 P.M.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Chuckas Jr.  
Bureau Director  
Bureau of Thoroughbred Horse Racing

Anthony Salerno  
Bureau Director  
Bureau of Standardbred Racing