

In The Matter Of:
VIRGINIA RACING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING

Transcript of Proceedings
March 26, 2025

ORTEGA INTERNATIONAL REPORTING
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Min-U-Script® with Word Index

1 VIRGINIA:

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4 VIRGINIA RACING COMMISSION

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7 PUBLIC HEARING

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9

10 Wednesday, March 26, 2025

11

12 1:00 p.m.

13

14

15 When heard at:

16

17 State Corporation Commission

18 Tyler Building, Courtroom C

19 1300 East Main Street

20 Richmond, Virginia

21

22

23

24

25 Reported by:

 JUAN ORTEGA, CCR

1 A P P E A R A N C E S:

2

3 COMMISSION MEMBERS:

4 Stephanie B. Nixon, Chair

5 John F. Tanner, Jr., Vice Chair

6 Stuart C. Siegel

7 Bette Brand

8 Gillian Gordon-Moore
(Via videoconference)

9

10 COMMISSION STAFF:

11 Waqas Ahmed, Executive Secretary

12 Kimberly C. Mackey, Director of Operations

13 Aiden Turnage-Barney, Esq., Virginia Equine
Alliance

14 Frank Hopf, Director of Racing Operations
At Colonial Downs

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 March 26, 2025

3
4 CHAIR NIXON: Good morning.5 I would like to go ahead and call
6 the order of the March 26th, 2025,
7 meeting of the Commission.8 The first item on the agenda is
9 to take role.

10 Vice Chair Tanner.

11 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Present.

12 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand.

13 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Present.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
15 Gordon-Moore.16 MR. AHMED: Ms. Moore, you're on
17 mute.18 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
19 Siegel.

20 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Present.

21 CHAIR NIXON: Let the record
22 reflect that we have a quorum.23 Before we go on to the next item,
24 I'd like to make a few comments. The
25 Commission would like to congratulate

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Yolanda Lopez, who has served as the
3 Commission's veterinarian for the past
4 few years.

5 Dr. Lopez will be joining the
6 Kentucky Horse Racing and Gaming
7 Corporation and we wish her the best
8 of luck. Also, Jack Calton, the
9 presiding steward for our meet at
10 Colonial Downs, who will be retiring.
11 Jack has been a voice of reason at the
12 track for many years and we thank him
13 for his service to the VRC.

14 Next is the public comment
15 period. The Commission would like to
16 open the floor to members of the
17 public to provide a comment not to
18 exceed three minutes.

19 While the Commission may
20 sometimes address comments directly,
21 we cannot respond to each and every
22 question during this period. Please
23 keep your comments tailored to the
24 items on the agenda so that we can
25 move through the meeting efficiently.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 With that, please approach the
3 mic if you would like to make a
4 comment.

5 Okay. Next will be the
6 correction of minutes from the
7 December 3rd, 2024, meeting. I'd like
8 to enter a motion to amend the
9 approved minutes for its December 3rd,
10 2024, meeting.

11 Do I have a motion?

12 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

13 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Second.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
15 Tanner, Commissioner Siegel.

16 Director of Operations Kimberly
17 Mackey is assigned the floor.

18 MS. MACKEY: Good afternoon.

19 Can you all hear me?

20 CHAIR NIXON: Yes.

21 MS. MACKEY: Okay.

22 Madam Chair, we seek approval of
23 the minutes from the December 3rd
24 Commission meeting as amended.

25 CHAIR NIXON: Are there any

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 amendments from the Commission?

3 All commissioners in favor of the
4 amendments proposed by Director Mackey
5 please indicate by responding yes.6
7 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.8
9 CHAIR NIXON: Any commissioners
10 opposed?

11 Motion carried.

12 Next is the approval of the
13 minutes from the previous meeting of
14 the Commission.15 I'd like to entertain a motion to
16 approve the minutes drafted for its
17 previous meeting held on February
18 14th, 2025.

19 Do I have a motion?

20 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

21 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

22 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
23 Siegel, Commissioner Brand.24 Director Mackey is assigned the
25 floor.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. MACKEY: Madam Chair, we also
3 seek approval of the minutes from the
4 February 14th meeting.

5 CHAIR NIXON: Are there any
6 amendments from the Commission?

7 All commissioners in favor of
8 approving the minutes of the February
9 14th, 2024, meeting, please respond by
10 indicating yes.

11
12 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.

13
14 CHAIR NIXON: Any commissioners
15 opposed?

16 Motion carries.

17 Next is an update on our 2025
18 Virginia Derby. And I believe
19 representatives from HBPA and
20 Colonial Downs will be presenting.

21 MR. TURNAGE-BARNEY: Good
22 afternoon, Madam Chair and
23 Commissioners.

24 Slideshow?

25 MR. AHMED: Kimberly, do you have

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 the slideshow?

3 MS. MACKEY: No.

4 MR. AHMED: Hold on. I'll put it
5 up.

6 Can you start with your --

7 MR. TURNAGE-BARNEY: Yeah, sure.

8 So, you know, we had our three-day
9 meet at Colonial Downs --10 MR. AHMED: I'm sorry. Do you
11 need the slideshow?12 MR. TURNAGE-BARNEY: It kind of
13 lines up.

14 MR. AHMED: Okay. I apologize.

15 CHAIR NIXON: But you were going
16 to roll with the flow, weren't you?17 MR. AHMED: Just for the sake of
18 time, start going through it and we'll
19 catch up.

20 MR. TURNAGE-BARNEY: Sure.

21 All right. Yes, so we had the
22 three-day meet in March, 13th, 14th,
23 15th in Colonial Downs. The first day
24 of training was March -- so, yes, the
25 backside opened for training on 3/7.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 On the same day, we had the kitchen
3 open. You know, we opened the
4 backstretch about a week out before
5 the horses came in to race so they
6 could start in and come and train.

7 So we continue to offer our best
8 turned-out awards. So we gave \$15 in
9 the paddock to be our best turned-out
10 horse and groom -- \$50 to the best
11 turned-out groomed horse in the
12 paddock for every race. Including for
13 the big races, we bumped it to 100
14 bucks with support of the Thoroughbred
15 Aftercare Alliance.

16 Our chaplain, Chaplain Jay, was
17 on the backside of the track doing
18 prayers before all the big races in
19 the jockeys' room and driving around
20 in his golf cart to make sure
21 everybody staying on the backside was
22 taken care of.

23 We had a new racing secretary
24 come in from Churchill, Dan Bork.
25 Same deal with our starter,

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Scott Jordan, who came in from, also,
3 I believe CDI. A lot of our usual
4 crew was still down in Tampa with the
5 meet overlapping with when they were
6 racing in the spring.

7 We raced only on the dirt track.
8 You know, Colonial is very well known
9 for the Secretariat Turf Course. So
10 it's a cool opportunity to show the
11 quality of our dirt service. And all
12 the horsemen we talked to were very,
13 very keen on it and said that they had
14 no problems.

15 Yeah. And, you know, the last
16 day was March 15th, Virginia Derby.
17 Sold-out crowd. It was an excellent
18 day of racing. You know, I didn't
19 have many complaints at all from the
20 horsemen about the whole experience.
21 It was remarkable to see, you know,
22 Colonial Downs that fall and I thought
23 it was a great event.

24 CHAIR NIXON: All right.

25 MR. AHMED: I apologize. We were

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 not able to get that presentation on.

3 CHAIR NIXON: That's fine. How
4 about for Frank?

5 MR. AHMED: Mr. Frank, can you --

6 MR. HOPF: Yes.

7 Good afternoon, Madam Chair and
8 Commissioners.9 I do have to apologize. I was
10 working on the presentation and got
11 sidetracked this week with my son. So
12 I'll e-mail this over later today or
13 tomorrow morning. But I do have a --
14 I'll go over my presentation as well.15 As Aidan kind of alluded to, the
16 dirt track, obviously, as I mentioned
17 in previous meetings that we were --
18 we did spend some money and some time
19 adding material to the dirt track to
20 get it ready for not only March but
21 the summer meet as well. Seemed to
22 receive positive feedback, talked with
23 the horsemen throughout the week.24 Obviously, activity was heavy
25 during training but I think during

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 races and those who were on it prior
3 to the race -- three-day race meet
4 seemed pleased with the status of the
5 track and we'll continue to work the
6 track to make sure that it is as safe
7 and same cushion as we expect it to be
8 moving into the summertime.

9 Just kind of going over some of
10 the operations. The original plan for
11 the meet was a race-and-go-type meet.
12 Again, opened up March 6th. Training
13 started the 7th. Obviously, very
14 light because entries hadn't closed.
15 So we kind of knew it was going to be
16 kind of quiet out there, which it was.
17 But we'll take a look at that next
18 year, talking to the horsemen what the
19 next season will look like.

20 Barns 1 through 3 and the
21 receiving barns were utilized. We
22 provided shavings to all trainers and
23 horses that came to Colonial Downs
24 along with the ponies. So I think
25 that worked out pretty well. I'm not

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 aware of any issues there. I think
3 all trainers who shipped horses were
4 happy with that part of the operation.

5 For mutuels, obviously, the big
6 push was for March 15th. We added
7 over 30 machines for Saturday.

8 Clearly, we needed more. And talking
9 with United Tote on Saturday while the
10 day was going on, we know that we'll
11 add some more machines and make sure
12 that we've got more coverage based on
13 what we saw with the crowd for
14 Derby Day.

15 Food and beverage. Overall, I
16 think our food and beverage operation
17 performed well. Some areas were
18 better than others. There were some
19 logistical items with the footprint at
20 Colonial Downs with trying to get on
21 the service elevators, get some points
22 that caused some delays. So we're
23 going to take a look at those as we
24 move forward to make sure once food
25 got a little low or ran out and

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 locations that we were able to
3 replenish quicker than what we did.

4 We will have a new service
5 provider for the race and meet in the
6 summertime. So we are switching food
7 coverage concessionaires. So just
8 something for the group, you know,
9 again, overall with the crowd size,
10 obviously, still some areas of
11 improvement. But hopefully, we'll get
12 this park cleaned up a little bit
13 better for summer and, obviously, next
14 March.

15 Parking and traffic. Overall, I
16 think it went well based on the
17 volume. We coordinated with New Kent
18 Sheriff's Office to expedite egress
19 after racing. Based on what we were
20 told at peak exit, took about 35
21 minutes to get to 64 from
22 Colonial Downs. So, obviously, it was
23 a main focus of ours was to make sure
24 that people can get out of the parking
25 lot onto Kentland Trail and then onto

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 64/60. And what we did is the county
3 sheriffs removed the bollards and
4 allowed people to try to get out as
5 quickly as they could.

6 Again, we added onsite shuttles
7 to help people get from the back
8 parking lot over to the front
9 grandstand. So that seemed to be well
10 received as well.

11 Ticketing. We officially sold
12 out on March 11th, which did allow us
13 the message for three days letting
14 people know that there were no longer
15 tickets available at Colonial Downs.
16 So to try to save them a trip out to
17 New Kent to eliminate some confusion
18 or, you know, frustration with that.

19 Footprint. The new footprint
20 that we put out seemed to be
21 positively received. There was some
22 confusion on the third floor in GA
23 tickets. I think that was a function
24 of Ticketmaster and the labeling on
25 their phones. We added some seats, as

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 I mentioned, before to the day after
3 we went on sale originally. So
4 Ticketmaster kind of had a pivot and
5 added some different links to sell the
6 tickets. So that caused some
7 confusion. But I think that's all
8 been rectified for the summer already,
9 so that should not be an issue moving
10 forward.

11 We added the third entrance point
12 as well, which was on the east side of
13 the facility. I think that certainly
14 helped out what's kind of the parking
15 lot filled out to that direction. It
16 balanced out but I think that seemed
17 to go well to help out getting people
18 in and out as quickly as we could.

19 We also e-mailed a -- to all
20 ticket purchasers, kind of a
21 what-to-expect e-mail that kind of
22 gave out where to park, you know --
23 you know, get a wristband, and all --
24 all the stuff to expect for the map of
25 layouts with their seats. So we sent

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 two of those out the week of. So,
3 hopefully, that did help with some of
4 it -- just some of the structural
5 operational issues we've had in the
6 past. So, hopefully, that went okay.
7 Did not hear anything one way or the
8 other on that. So, hopefully, that
9 means it was better than expected.

10 Needed more merchandise and point
11 of sales. But, overall, that went
12 well. We did have live music. The
13 Deloreans, which is an '80s cover
14 band, which was playing in between
15 races and it certainly seemed to help
16 bring some crowd out once I realized
17 for \$5 GA, they could hear the
18 Deloreans playing. And I think
19 something came out for that as well.

20 So that was some of the
21 operations side on the marketing.
22 Certainly, we started to really ramp
23 up marketing in January, continued to
24 push some television interviews on CBS
25 6 and ABC 8, on-location shows and

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 videos with CBS 6. Again, I think
3 Virginia This Morning did a lot of
4 B-roll footage and showed that
5 broadcast I think Thursday or Friday,
6 the week of Virginia Derby week.

7 And then, obviously, we have a
8 large deal with CBS 6 with sports and
9 weather sponsorships throughout the
10 year, actually. ESPN Radio Richmond
11 did live call-ins every Thursday at
12 4:30 and also have them on site as
13 well as promoting the March meet along
14 with the summer.

15 Social media. Certainly put a
16 lot of focus, started early February,
17 probably a little later than we wanted
18 to, but we utilize a lot of our
19 partners in Richmond and Virginia
20 tourism that really helped push the
21 messaging that we were looking to send
22 out for the week of racing.

23 Digital print. Again, a variety
24 of search engines and targets and
25 stuff like that along with commercials

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 that we had with local partners and
3 cable ideas and that type of fun with
4 commercials.

5 Just looking at -- again, I know
6 you guys can't see this -- handle for
7 the three days was just over \$8.4
8 million. That consisted of 25 races
9 with starting starts per day of 6.08.
10 So, obviously, one thing that we want
11 to really focus on moving forward is
12 how do we increase starters.

13 Obviously, we had some scratches and,
14 you know, we're going to take a strong
15 look at that as we continue the March
16 meet in the future and how we can get
17 horses to stay here.

18 Obviously, we had a lot of
19 scratches in the stakes, especially
20 the Friday stakes. We lost -- I think
21 we went down to three in the end of
22 Boston. So we'll continue to work on
23 that. Again, attendance for the three
24 days was over -- just over 12,000.
25 Obviously, we were well over 8,000

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 people for Saturday on Virginia Derby
3 Day.

4 Obviously, weather was a little
5 cooler, a little cooler than what the
6 forecast was. I know it's still March
7 in Virginia but, you know, forecast
8 was a little different the first two
9 days but had over 1,400 on Thursday
10 and over 2,200 on Friday.

11 So I think as we continue, we'll
12 continue to push the Thursday and
13 Friday. I think this year, we really
14 focused on making sure Derby Day went
15 as well as it could. That was what a
16 lot of the messaging was, maybe not as
17 much on the 13th and 14th. But I
18 think we'll get that corrected as we
19 move forward.

20 As I mentioned, Virginia Derby
21 Day, the on-track handle was \$301,000
22 and the total off track was just over
23 6.5 million which ended up being, I
24 believe at least from the numbers we
25 could get since the reopening, top on

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 track, and the second highest handle
3 day at Colonial. So again, I did not
4 get the information prior to the 97th
5 season. But --

6 So overall, you know, I'm pleased
7 with it. I do have a couple of
8 pictures here that you guys can't see,
9 so there's no point describing those
10 to anyone. But overall, you know,
11 thank you to everyone who helped
12 support this day.

13 You know, I think overall we were
14 pleased with how it turned out.

15 Obviously, we caught -- caught some
16 breaks with weather and just the
17 racing itself went well. But, you
18 know, we're ready to move on to the
19 summer meet and happy to answer any
20 questions.

21 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners, do
22 you have any questions or comments for
23 HBPA or Mr. Hopf?

24 COMMISSIONER BRAND: I just had
25 one question. You said the 1,800 and

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 2,200 people were at the on site for
3 the 13th and 14th. What's an average
4 day?

5 I know this was not really
6 considered an average race day because
7 of tying in with the Derby, but what
8 would you say how that compares with
9 previous race days?

10 MR. TURNAGE-BARNEY: It's within
11 the range that I've seen the last
12 couple of years. You know, Friday, I
13 think, you know, we had a really nice
14 crowd. 1,609 was sold out. We had a
15 good turnout in the tracking club. We
16 had a lot of walk-ins for Thursday.
17 So certainly in line with what we see
18 on a typical suburb meet. But, again,
19 I think if we market a little bit more
20 of those two days, I think maybe we
21 would've seen a little bit stronger
22 numbers. So overall, I was pleased
23 with how those turned out.

24 CHAIR NIXON: Any other
25 commissioners?

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Thank you, guys. I'm sure that
3 was a great day. Really great day.

4 Thank you.

5 Next, we'll move into new
6 business, Item A. I would like to
7 entertain a motion to address the
8 Virginia Gold Cup Association's
9 limited license to conduct race
10 meetings in 2025.

11 Do I have a motion?

12 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

13 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

14 CHAIR NIXON:

15 Commissioner Tanner. And
16 Commissioner Brand second.

17 Executive Secretary Ahmed and
18 representatives of the applicant are
19 assigned the floor.

20 MR. AHMED: Thank you,
21 Madam Chair. I see that we have a lot
22 of representatives from the
23 Great Meadow Foundation Gold Cup as
24 well as our presiding steward,
25 Tad Zimmerman, is on the line.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 So I'll just ask them to
3 introduce themselves and present their
4 requests and applications.

5 I believe Peter Maybach is here
6 as well who will talk to us about the
7 condition of the turf.

8 DR. GRIFFIN: Good afternoon,
9 Madam Chair, Commissioners, Mr. Ahmed.

10 My name is Al Griffin. I'm
11 co-chair of the Virginia Gold Cup
12 Association as well as the director of
13 racing.

14 With me today from Gold Cup are
15 Tom Eshelman and Barbara Shannon.

16 Tad Zimmerman is here virtually.
17 He is a senior steward for the
18 National Steeplechase Association and
19 also a steward with the Virginia
20 Racing Commission.

21 To my left is Delaney Morrison.
22 He's a board member of Great Meadow.
23 And also Pete Maybach here who is a
24 turf consultant for Great Meadow.

25 The application before you today

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 includes the 100th running of the
3 Virginia Gold Cup to be held on May
4 3rd. Seven races, \$430,000 in purse
5 structure, and racing with 30,000 of
6 our best Virginia friends. The post
7 time is at 1:00 o'clock. The night
8 before, there's a gala that is
9 strictly a party to celebrate the
10 100th running and we look forward to
11 having you all there, too.

12 At this time, I'd like to
13 reintroduce Delaney Morrison who would
14 like to make a few comments.

15 MR. MORRISON: Thank you,
16 Dr. Griffin.

17 And good afternoon, ladies and
18 gentlemen, and thank you for your time
19 today and for everything that you all
20 do for the racing industry here in the
21 Commonwealth.

22 So just very briefly, so I have
23 the privilege of serving as Vice Chair
24 of the Great Meadow Foundation and
25 Chair of the Racing Committee. And I

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 just want to underline that it's --
3 our relationship with the Virginia
4 Gold Cup Association is very important
5 to us. We're also very excited to
6 have a new lease signed that covers
7 the next two years.

8 And we look forward to continuing
9 to strengthen that partnership as we
10 chart a path forward that benefits
11 everybody.

12 I'd like to give a quick couple
13 of comments on the course and then I
14 can pass it off to Pete Maybach for
15 any questions. But obviously, as we
16 all know, last summer gave us some
17 unprecedented drought conditions.

18 So We've been working in
19 overdrive since that time, drilling
20 two new wells to ensure that we never
21 find ourselves again in a position
22 where we are not able to water our
23 course.

24 Also purchased a new verti-drain
25 to address any potential compaction

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2 issues that could arise with our turf.
3 And last fall, again, under the
4 leadership of Pete Maybach of M&M
5 Consulting, we seeded twice in 100
6 pounds per acre. We applied ammonium
7 sulfate 100 pounds per acre to promote
8 tissue development, cell elongation,
9 and protein synthesis.

10 Then this winter we worked
11 alongside Logan Freeman, another
12 highly-recommended turf consultant
13 hired by the Virginia Gold Cup
14 Association to develop a joint plan
15 for the spring to guarantee that our
16 course would be in outstanding
17 conditions come May.

18 Following this plan, at the end
19 of February, we seeded the remaining
20 areas of the course, again, that could
21 benefit are aerified around the jumps
22 to address compaction, applied lime
23 soil where appropriate, ran the ring
24 roller to address heaving from the
25 frosted soil. And we just recently

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 finished fertilizing and, again,
3 running the verti-drain on the turns
4 and jumps.

5 So the entire course has now had
6 the airway aerification take place and
7 we anticipate mowing will begin next
8 week. So we continue to hope for
9 consistent rain. But the good news,
10 the irrigation wheels are fully
11 functional now and capable under
12 watering this morning. They will
13 continue to fire as needed right up to
14 and beyond race day.

15 So we are very confident that the
16 course will be in celebrated condition
17 come May for the 100th running of
18 Virginia Gold Cup in Fauquier County.
19 And I hope that you all throughout,
20 you know, reach out to us anytime you
21 might have questions or let us know
22 how we can support the vitality of the
23 equestrian industry here in Virginia.

24 So thank you.

25 Pete, do you want to add some to

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2 that?

3 MR. MAYBACH: Yes, just real
4 briefly.5 Good afternoon, Madam Chair and
6 Commissioners. I sit here because I
7 try and represent what is the safest
8 avenue for the horse and the rider.9 And I've got data dating back to the
10 development of the course from its
11 very onset to evaluate the soil
12 chemistry and the soil physical
13 properties and amend as needed.14 And everything that Delaney
15 mentioned to you was trying to enhance
16 safety for the horse and the rider. A
17 lot of that has to do with different
18 applications and then lowering height
19 and proper resistance under your feet.
20 When you walk on something soft, you
21 know it. When you walk on something
22 hard, you know it.23 And so, our sole focus with what
24 I do is to maintain horse and rider
25 safety. We have fantastic turf that

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 is coming along. We have a mixture of
3 old turf and new turf. I believe it
4 will be a show. Please come first
5 Saturday in May. I hope you can make
6 it.

7 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

8 Mr. Ahmed, do you have any
9 comments?

10 MR. AHMED: Yes, just briefly to
11 put it on the record. So, Gold Cup is
12 seeking the Commission's approval to
13 hold two steeplechase meets at
14 Great Meadow during 2025. These meets
15 will be held on May 3rd and October
16 27th of 2025.

17 The NSA, National Steeplechase
18 Association, has submitted a letter
19 confirming the sanction status of the
20 races for the spring meet.

21 For the fall meet, the NSA states
22 that they will need to evaluate the
23 outcomes of the spring races.
24 Therefore, if a license is granted
25 today, it will be with the usual

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2

3 conditions, including the ability to
4 obtain NSA sanction for all meets to
5 run in 2025.

6 And then just to talk about the
7 applicant. Over the course of the
8 last few months, the Gold Cup has
9 demonstrated a commitment to
10 addressing the issues that arose last
11 year. They've also responded swiftly
12 to any request for information,
13 including the one that's in your
14 documents, and respond to them timely.
15 So based on the staff's review, we
16 believe the Gold Cup meets the
17 requirements for a limited license in
18 2025.

19 Before we do the -- before you
20 all continue, could you talk about the
21 merge structure for the fall meet?
22 Just because that's something that
23 hasn't been finalized, so --

24 DR. GRIFFIN: Sure. So in
25 steeplechasing, a condition book is
 generated several months prior to the

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 beginning of the fall season, and
3 that's based on the inventory of
4 horses. And then the specific
5 conditions for that race meet at
6 Great Meadow at Gold Cup will be
7 dependent upon what horse inventory --
8 they have to modify them slightly.

9 The other piece to this is
10 actually that purse structure can
11 change the mundane of the racing,
12 because, for instance, in some of the
13 more popular races, like a maiden
14 hurdle race, if the entries are
15 sufficient to create an AE list of
16 maybe more than six horses, then the
17 opportunity exists to actually split
18 that race.

19 So, for instance, if there's a
20 \$40,000 maiden hurdle race, we would
21 then have the opportunity to split it
22 into two \$35,000 maiden hurdle races.
23 With the National Steeplechase
24 Foundation, we have two funds there.
25 One is the -- one is the Sport of

1 P R O C E E D I N G S
2

3 Kings fund, and the other one is the
4 Reverted Purse fund. So the NSA might
5 kick in a total of \$25,000 for that.

6 And then I would make a call to
7 the VEA saying, we have raised this
8 money in order to give additional
9 opportunity to the horseman. If the
10 VEA came up with \$10,000, this would
11 be an additional race. So we would
12 carp seven, but there may actually be
13 eight races on that day with the
additional purse structure.

14 So we have a condition book that
15 says it will be X number of dollars,
16 but that actually can vary depending
17 upon the entries that come in on
18 Monday.

19 MR. AHMED: Okay. And then you
20 mentioned the VEA, so they provide you
21 all with part of the plan for the
22 first structure.

23 DR. GRIFFIN: So part of the
24 money comes from the VEA, part of it
25 comes from what money we generate in

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Gold Cup from sponsorships, ticket
3 sales, et cetera.

4 MR. AHMED: Okay.

5 Then I have one question for
6 Mr. Jeb Hannum. He explained it to me
7 but I'd like it -- I know there are
8 people that are unfamiliar with
9 steeplechase racing. So Steeplethon,
10 I looked at the conditions for spring,
11 and there was a Steeplethon.

12 How is that different from the
13 other races that you have?

14 MR. HANNUM: So it's a hybrid
15 race. So it's a race that is over
16 hurdle fences and timber fences. And
17 there may be some other types of
18 fences on the course as well. Maybe
19 sort of a brush fence like you might
20 see in England. You might have a sort
21 of a water obstacle that you go
22 through where it's looking like the
23 horses are going through a pond but,
24 actually, they're just going through a
25 water area with a couple of inches of

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 water.

3 So there's -- there's -- I don't
4 know, there's a few of these races on
5 the National Steeplechase circuit
6 every year. It's a small pool of
7 horses that compete in these races.
8 They tend to be very popular with the
9 crowd just because it's a variation on
10 the sort of traditional hurdle race
11 and the timber race.

12 But again, you know, maybe
13 there's 20 horses in all of the United
14 States that do these races. And so,
15 there's a limited number of races
16 throughout the year for them. It's
17 just sort of a special, unique race,
18 you know, for horses that are, you
19 know, pretty seasoned in their
20 experience. And it's another
21 opportunity for them to race should
22 they not want to do the timber race or
23 they're not fast enough to just do the
24 hurdle race.

25 So I hope that helps. But it's

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2 just a unique sort of fun race is
3 probably the best way to describe it.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Dr. Griffin, you
5 had mentioned a learning question for
6 me. Racing inventory. How do you
7 acquire -- gauge the racing inventory
8 for these type of races?

9 DR. GRIFFIN: So are you talking
10 about the horse inventory?

11 CHAIR NIXON: Yes.

12 DR. GRIFFIN: Okay. So prior to
13 the beginning of the season, each NSA
14 trainer is obligated to provide the
15 NSA office with a list of horses in
16 training. And so, that list is then
17 looked upon, their previous
18 performance is evaluated, and they
19 were kind of stacked or pigeonholed
20 into the potential for the season.

21 And then that helps us move
22 forward with the overall condition
23 planning for the upcoming season.
24 It's an inventory from the trainers.

25 CHAIR NIXON: Okay, thank you.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Any other commissioners?

3 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Yes, I have
4 a question about the irrigation. I
5 don't know who will answer my
6 question. I understand you have two
7 wells.

8 I was just curious though, do you
9 have sufficient equipment and what
10 method of irrigation are you using?
11 Are you using pivot irrigation or
12 exactly what do you use?

13 MR. HOPF: Great question. We do
14 now have specific irrigation and it
15 is -- it's a fantastic volume for our
16 location in the state. And we will be
17 feeding downstream gear and pond,
18 which we would then act as a holding
19 tank. And then once it comes to this
20 distribution, it will come out in a
21 reel system.

22 So you've seen it's about a
23 5-inch reel. You hook onto it, you
24 pull it out to about 900 feet, and you
25 set it. And then the reel slowly

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2 reels itself back. Then you
3 reposition and do the exact same thing
4 again.

5 So we have four of them. And
6 like Delaney said, I've been doing
7 this now for 30 years and this is the
8 first time in my life that we've had
9 to irrigate in March. This is --
10 we're entering our third year, pretty
11 significant route. The race course
12 now is three inches behind already in
13 natural rainfall. So it's -- yeah,
14 water's becoming an issue.

15 So anyway, yeah, thank you.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Any other
17 commissioner's questions or comments?

18 All commissioners in favor of
19 approving Virginia Gold Cup
20 Association's limited license to
21 conduct race meetings in 2025, please
22 indicate by responding.

23
24 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.
25

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIR NIXON: Any commissioners
3 opposed?

4 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Yes.

5 CHAIR NIXON: I'm sorry, was that
6 opposed? Oh, okay.

7 Any commissioners opposed?

8 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: I
9 would say yes.

10 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. Just
11 clarifying that. Motion carried.

12 Thank you, guys.

13 DR. GRIFFIN: If I may, I'd just
14 like to thank the Great Meadow
15 Foundation, the Great Meadow board,
16 for stepping up and doing all that
17 they have done. It's been a
18 tremendous effort on their part.
19 We're very appreciative. We look
20 forward to the partnership moving
21 forward as well.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

24 Now, moving on, under new
25 business, Item D, I would like to

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 entertain a motion to address Colonial
3 Downs Group, LLC's request to amend
4 its limited license to conduct race
5 meeting in 2025.

6 Do I have a motion?

7 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand.

9 Is there a second?

10 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Second.

11 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
12 Tanner.

13 Executive Secretary Ahmed and
14 representatives of Colonial Downs and
15 the Virginia HBPA are assigned the
16 floor.

17 MR. AHMED: Commissioners, this
18 agenda item is a technical amendment
19 to Colonial Downs' license for 2025.
20 Over the last couple of months, the
21 HBPA and Colonial Downs shared that
22 they would like to conduct NSA races
23 at Colonial Downs on Thursdays during
24 the summer meet.

25 In order for these races to be

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 run under the jurisdiction of the VRC,
3 they have to conduct parimutuel
4 wagering on them. Colonial Downs with
5 the HBPA support has filed a request
6 to amend their license to add these
7 races with on-track parimutuel
8 wagering only. The wagering will be
9 conducted on a separate card.

10 I note that because steeplechase
11 races are not subject to HISA rules,
12 the VRC will get into an agreement
13 with a contractor to conduct testing.
14 If that's not -- we'll figure out a
15 way if we're not able to get into that
16 contract.

17 The post time for these races is
18 10:45 a.m. and all of the typical
19 rules of racing will apply.

20 I don't know if the
21 representatives of both groups want to
22 say anything about this.

23 DR. GRIFFIN: And I think the
24 problem was solved, so appreciate it.

25 MR. HOPF: Same thing. Whatever

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 we can do to help out, make sure that
3 this happened quite in light.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Anything else to
5 add?

6 Commissioners, any questions or
7 comments?

8 I know Jill's on a delay there.
9 You good, Jill?

10 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: I'm
11 fine. I think it's all great that
12 we're moving forward in such a
13 positive way. I like it.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

15 All right. All commissioners in
16 favor of approving Colonial Downs
17 Group LLC's request to amend its
18 limited license to conduct race
19 meeting in 2025 please indicate by
20 responding yes.

21
22 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.

23
24 CHAIR NIXON: Any commissioners
25 opposed?

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Motion carried.

3 The last item under our new
4 business is Item C. I would like to
5 entertain a motion to address a
6 proposal for the promotion of the
7 growth of the Virginia horse industry.

8 Do I have a motion?

9 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: So moved.

10 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

11 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
12 Siegel. Commissioner Brand, second.

13 Executive Secretary Ahmed and
14 representatives from the Virginia
15 Equine Alliance are assigned the
16 floor.

17 MR. AHMED: As they're getting
18 settled, I'll just summarize the
19 request.

20 Commissioners, before you is a
21 memo which evaluates the request
22 submitted by the Virginia Equine
23 Alliance. I know that we've reviewed
24 this request, talked about it for a
25 couple of meetings, but I'll summarize

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 everything for anyone that's not up to
3 date.

4 So the VRC is authorized under
5 the 2024 Appropriations Act to seek an
6 administrative appropriation
7 contingent on revenues exceeding
8 appropriate amounts. And for the last
9 five years, revenues have definitely
10 exceeded the appropriate amounts.

11 The purpose of this authorization
12 is to develop programs for grants --
13 develop programs or award grants for
14 the benefit of the Virginia horse
15 industry, including horse breeding.

16 The VEA is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit
17 entity and has applied for a grant of
18 \$655,000. The same amount granted in
19 the previous budget cycle to fulfill
20 the requirements of that provision.

21 Their proposal aims to build upon
22 their previous campaign. In December
23 2024, the VEA provided a summary of
24 their work from the previous year
25 highlighting their partnership with

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 Virginia Broadcast Solutions and the
3 Virginia Association of Broadcasters.

4 The cost-effective campaign in
5 2024 focused on the economic impact of
6 the horse racing industry in Virginia
7 targeting areas across the state and
8 achieving significant reach, including
9 over 247 million total impressions
10 across all media.

11 The VEA also produced a
12 commercial that won a Telly Award in
13 the tourism category. The total value
14 of the 2024 media campaign was
15 reported as over \$3 million. For the
16 2025 campaign, the VEA stresses the
17 importance of continuing their
18 efforts, focusing on economic impact,
19 but also highlighting specific areas
20 such as youth engagement and careers
21 in the horse industry.

22 Following the Commission's
23 request for additional information,
24 the VEA outlined their strategies and
25 the metrics they would use to assess

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 the campaign's progress. These
3 include utilizing paid media across
4 TV, radio, digital, social media,
5 including TikTok, and print
6 advertising. Creating targeted
7 messaging for youth such as a social
8 media campaign that they did with JMU
9 students, and then developing content
10 centered around, "Did you know?" and
11 how-to campaign to promote parimutuel
12 wagering over sports wagering.

13 The VEA has also provided updated
14 media highlights which are included in
15 your materials from December 2024
16 through March 2025. This includes an
17 estimated 7.6 million print and online
18 views, 11.9 billion estimated
19 broadcast views, and 3.1 million
20 estimated radio listens.

21 That billion figure, if I'm not
22 mistaken, has to be divided by
23 dimensions, right? So it comes down
24 to an average of 5 million, which was
25 was still pretty impressive.

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2

3 So finally, the memo includes the
4 VEA's amended cost allocation. If the
5 grant is approved, they propose
6 spending \$500,000 for paid media,
7 140,000 for content production, and
8 15,000 for survey polls and pay the
9 analytics.

10 Based on the information provided
11 by the VEA and detailed in this memo,
12 the Commission staff believes their
13 proposal is eligible for the grant to
14 assist the Commission in its mission
15 to promote, market, sustain, and grow
16 the Virginia horse industry.

17 If the grant is approved by the
18 Commission, I'll submit the request to
19 the Director of Planning and Budget to
20 disburse the funds and require the VEA
21 to submit invoices so we can track
22 that they apply to the proper
23 category.

24 Additionally, the VEA would be
25 required to provide at least quarterly
 updates for the VRC during the

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 campaign, such as progress reports or
3 presentations to the VRC at public
4 meetings. The VEA's representatives
5 are here today and can answer any
6 questions.

7 I don't know if you all want to
8 summarize that or if I -- if we talked
9 about it for a long time.

10 MS. BYRNE: Madam Chair,
11 Commissioners, and Executive
12 Secretary, actually, I think you just
13 did a great job of summarizing
14 everything in a very lengthy report.
15 So I'm just here to answer any
16 questions.

17 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners? Any
18 questions or comments?

19 DR. GRIFFIN: I'd like to say
20 that I'm impressed with it which
21 anticipated here similar to what we
22 did last year. I think that was very
23 well done. Most importantly,
24 effective. I think that we included
25 here metrics or whatnot to evaluate

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 the performance of this promotion. I
3 think I always believe you have to
4 inspect what you expect. And so, I
5 would hope that next year this time
6 you come before this commission and
7 tell us about great success that we
8 produced including numbers if possible
9 so we can evaluate anything.

10 MS. BYRNE: We look forward to
11 doing that. We're looking forward to
12 this next campaign. We have certainly
13 a lot to grow from with everything
14 exciting that's happening in the
15 Virginia horse racing breeding
16 industry.

17 COMMISSIONER TANNER: I just have
18 a couple of comments. First, I
19 appreciate the efforts you've made to
20 encourage young people to participate
21 in the industry and perhaps consider
22 careers in the industry because it's
23 just so desperately -- we desperately
24 need more workforce in our industry.

25 And then the other thing is the

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2 economic message that you created and
3 shared I think was really important
4 for those who make the decisions that
5 affect us, the General Assembly, other
6 electives, and so on. So I thought it
7 was a great, great year. And
8 congratulations.

9 MS. BYRNE: Thank you. I have a
10 lot of support, obviously, from
11 everybody in this room, including
12 everyone sitting up there. And I
13 think, you know, just garnering new
14 fans and education, as you mentioned,
15 to people that make decisions to
16 understand how it not only affects
17 them, but their constituents and the
18 entire Commonwealth of Virginia.

19 COMMISSIONER TANNER: And the
20 final comment I would make is I really
21 appreciated the fact that you extended
22 your capacity by involving the JMU
23 students. You know, there's such
24 quality work that they can do. It
25 doesn't cost us anything to speak of.

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2 And expanding capacity that way also
3 lets them know that we exist. And
4 that's -- that's a very good thing.

5 MS. BYRNE: And to see them, how
6 much fun they have when they come out
7 to Shenandoah. And, obviously, with
8 Colonial racing in the summer, it's
9 not quite as easy. People aren't in
10 school. But I think as you extend a
11 bit into September, certainly an
12 opportunity to do the same with
13 Richmond and VCU and other local
14 universities and colleges.

15 And Aidan's responsibility to
16 teach them how to wager.

17 COMMISSIONER TANNER: And, Frank,
18 we do have races in March, which is
19 right in the middle of the spring
20 semester. Just saying that might be
21 an opportunity.

22 MR. HOPF: We had Spring Break
23 this year. But yeah, we are targeting
24 the college -- Spring Break and March
25 Madness.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COMMISSIONER TANNER: I'm
3 actually getting a class to help you
4 market Thursday and Friday.

5 MR. HOPF: Yeah, but we will.
6 Certainly.

7 MS. BYRNE: And just also off of
8 that, we worked very closely leading
9 up to the March meet with Michael
10 Kelly who works for Colonial Downs and
11 Churchill Downs with Hunton Marketing
12 Firm. And we all shared more content
13 and working very closely to put out a
14 real solid messaging on this. And so,
15 it's a very good collaboration.

16 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So I join
17 in, too, in congratulating you all for
18 all the work and also your creativity
19 to try to reach new people. I think
20 it's brilliant that you're reaching
21 out to the local college students,
22 more young people because the younger
23 they are, they want to see the horses,
24 and then the parents have to come as
25 well. So that just is a multiplier

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 effect.

3 I guess I'm going to get in the
4 weeds a little bit about this thorn in
5 your side, I'm sure. But, for
6 example, on the page, it's not
7 numbered, but it's your submission of
8 additional information. It's a
9 three-page document. It starts off by
10 talking about Shenandoah Downs,
11 expanding the race days, how many
12 people, how many starters. And it
13 goes Gold Cup, Colonial Downs, and the
14 starter bike program.

15 And I know that it's hard to
16 really put a factor of how much this
17 campaign contributed to all of that.

18 And so, maybe this is a little bit
19 broad, but when we talk about
20 measurable results, a lot of what was
21 reported in here are activities not to
22 be minimized one bit. You can't have
23 anything until you have the activities
24 first.

25 But I don't see a lot of actual

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 results compared to previous years or
3 compared to a goal. For example, the
4 JMU students, so I would like to
5 see -- so last year, you had 200 JMU
6 students in Shenandoah. What's your
7 goal for this year?

8 And then when you do the updates
9 quarterly, where are you in that goal?

10 And it seems like there's a lot
11 of them, dollar increasing in some of
12 the programs. Or it could -- it
13 wouldn't have to be just JMU. It
14 could be all youth participation. But
15 measuring those in addition to the
16 survey, I think that's really
17 important, too, because you're getting
18 the sense.

19 But really, on these quarterly
20 reports, it could be as simple as a
21 spreadsheet saying, this is the goal,
22 this is how many you had, how many
23 youth, how many activities or
24 whatever. This is what you had in
25 '24, this is your goal, and this is

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 how far.

3 And I'm not saying the goal has
4 to be higher. It may be less, you
5 know, maintaining the momentum is
6 important, but at least there's a
7 starting point. So going forward, we
8 can look at a history and I won't have
9 to keep asking, "Well, what was it
10 last year?"

11 But it's -- it's just a way of
12 measuring. It's kind of basic smart
13 rules for goal setting is actually
14 measuring the results. So anything
15 that can be added to these, that can
16 do that, I have tons of examples that
17 I've written down.

18 I won't go over them here, but
19 I'm sure you guys have that, too. I'd
20 like to just see more of the actual
21 results and what -- how closely that
22 is to last year or where it falls in
23 from last year, but also where -- what
24 your goal is for this year and how
25 you're doing on reaching that goal.

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MS. BYRNE: Yes. And thank you
3 so much for the input. And also, some
4 of those goals are, as we alluded to
5 in here, measurable goals. So if
6 attendance was X at Shenandoah during
7 this meet, our goal would be to
8 increase that with the marketing and
9 targeting the Harrisonburg area, maybe
10 more with some of our broadcasts and
11 television. So those would be
12 measurable goals.

13 Handle is always one that, you
14 know, handle increase and growth in
15 other areas. So everything we're
16 looking for to do, obviously, is to
17 increase on what we've already done,
18 knowing that this really is only in
19 its second year, this program, this
20 campaign, and nothing prior to doing
21 this has ever really been pushed out
22 like this to promote and grow horse
23 racing and breeding in Virginia.

24 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Thank you.
25 And one other question or comment I

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 saw, this is number four on that same
3 one about trying to just help educate
4 mostly young people. But I wanted to
5 let you know the LinkedIn video you
6 had, I think it must have been about
7 March, sometime mid-March, before the
8 Derby Day, about what went into
9 maintaining the track. And you
10 actually did an excellent job with
11 that.

12 I actually shared it with people
13 and you would be surprised the number
14 of people that commented that they had
15 no idea. And so, those kind of -- I
16 would like to see those included. In
17 fact, you know, Commissioner
18 Gordon-Moore was talking about how HHR
19 machines, everybody calls them slot
20 machines, and they cannot figure out
21 how horses are related.

22 So I would highly recommend
23 having some type of video like that to
24 explain it as simply as possible so
25 people understand what really -- the

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 difference is between the slot
3 machines and the HHR machines.

4 I think those little snippets may
5 be run over and over multiple medias,
6 could really go a long way. And I
7 don't know if that's already included
8 in this funding, but I'm fully in
9 support of that. And it's amazing how
10 many people want to learn and want to
11 understand and are afraid to ask. So
12 this is a great way to get it across.
13 Thanks.

14 MS. BYRNE: Those are fun to
15 create and that is part of this under
16 the "Did you know?" and the how-to
17 section. And they really do transcend
18 very well on social media. So we plan
19 a series of 30 seconds to a minute,
20 the shorter ones, clips for social
21 media.

22 We actually have our broadcast
23 BDS team working on those right now
24 for Shenandoah. So if this is
25 approved, we're ready to pull the

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 trigger and start pushing them out
3 related to Shenandoah.

4 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Good deal.

5 Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: I would
7 suggest also that most people that go
8 into a Rosie's have no idea how the
9 machine works. They just look at it,
10 pull the crank, run it, and pull the
11 crank. And it'd be interesting to
12 educate some of those people so they
13 understand the difference. Because
14 that I think works to the -- to the
15 players' favor as opposed to a slot
16 machine.

17 MS. BYRNE: And that it ties
18 directly to horse racing and the
19 breeding industry.

20 COMMISSIONER BRAND. Connection
21 is important.

22 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Yes.

23 CHAIR NIXON: I would just like
24 to comment on the social media aspect
25 of it. Every morning, I get up, I see

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 something about racing in Virginia.
3 So you guys have done a fantastic job
4 with that. Not just about racing at
5 Colonial, but Shenandoah or Gold Cup
6 or either of the point-to-point races.
7 So well done on that. It's nice to
8 get up to that coffee and see
9 something about horses. Every day, I
10 see something. So great job.

11 Commissioner Moore.

12 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Yes,
13 if you can hear me. I think it's a
14 great idea to explain the HHR, how big
15 a part it is of our complete ecosystem
16 which needs to be supported and how we
17 support the rest of the options in the
18 state.

19 The other thing, I think the
20 youth engagement program is terrific
21 and maybe look into adding the pony
22 racing to it. I know it's become a
23 big circuit and it also gets a lot of
24 little kids out, show them not only
25 riding, but all kinds of things have

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 to do with care for the ponies. I
3 just think it would be a useful option
4 to let them see there are career
5 futures in this business.

6 And the third thing about the
7 Navy, I keep bringing that up.
8 There's a large group of people down
9 there with time on their hands and
10 money in their pockets. And there's a
11 gentleman, Pat Shepherd, who's on the
12 boards of the BTA and the HBPA,
13 retired Naval captain. And I think he
14 would be very beneficial in helping to
15 steer the way. At least give some
16 ideas of who to contact.

17 And sorry I can't be there, but I
18 think you guys are all putting
19 together a very positive show.

20 CHAIR NIXON: Any other questions
21 or comments? Thank you.

22 All commissioners in favor of
23 approving proposal for the promotion
24 and growth of the Virginia horse
25 industry, please indicate by

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 responding yes.

4 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.

6 CHAIR NIXON: Any commissioners

7 opposed?

8 Motion carried.

9 That concludes our new business.

10 We will now move into public

11 comments. I open the floor to members
12 of the public to provide a comment not
13 to exceed three minutes.14 Please approach the mic if
15 there's anyone that wants to make a
16 comment.

17 Good afternoon, Hoppy.

18 MR. SHORES: Madam Chair and
19 Commissioner, my name is Hoppy Shores.
20 Most of you all have seen me at the
21 track or over the years, but I
22 probably have attended 95 percent of
23 the live racing days since the track
24 opened. And I think I probably have
25 brought more patrons to the racetrack

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2 than anyone else.

3 But I really wanted just to go
4 over the Derby Day event. It was such
5 a joyous day for Virginia racing and
6 for the average fan. And I like to be
7 sort of a voice for that fan a lot of
8 times and try to increase and make
9 that experience much better.10 But I do think that when you look
11 at, on an average day, you know, the
12 average fan is in line most of the
13 time. And this time, it really wasn't
14 that way. I mean, the refreshment
15 options, the teller options spread out
16 where, you know, people really could
17 enjoy the day more. And to see down
18 in the paddock, you see at 4 and 5
19 feet for people trying to get a look
20 at their horses, we've never had that.21 And even out on the -- on the
22 fence line, all the way down on the
23 16th pole, there were people two and
24 three deep all the way down as far as
25 you could see. And we've never had

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2 that, you know, and I think it was one
3 of the best dressed crowds we've ever
4 had in Colonial Downs. And, you know,
5 one time, getting in the paddock, I
6 turned around and looked up at the
7 different levels of stairwells and
8 balconies, and people were crowded
9 just to look down on the paddock.

10 I think what was created, I think
11 can certainly be worked upon, you
12 know, going forward. And once the sun
13 came out, after two really chilly race
14 days, I mean, everyone's attitude just
15 rose. And I found myself, even in the
16 stretch runs, rather than watching the
17 race, watching the excitement of the
18 fans. And it was really thrilling.
19 So -- And I even had a lot of people
20 say, "You know, this hasn't been as
21 much fun since the Strawberry old
22 races."

23 And I don't know how many of
24 y'all go back that far, but it was
25 certainly a -- it was nice to see that

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2 kind of excitement. And I think what
3 can build on it, I think there's
4 plenty to go, especially competing
5 with March Madness and St. Patrick's
6 Day. And to get that kind of a
7 turnout, I think it lets you know
8 where this race can go, you know,
9 going forward.

10 But, you know, also, I'll end by
11 saying, Frank, congratulations on
12 pulling that off. I mean, some of the
13 areas that have always been bumps in
14 the road were really covered this
15 time, so great job on getting that
16 done. So look forward to next year.

17 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you, Hoppy.
18 Any other folks in the public that
19 would like to speak?

20 Since there's no other business,
21 I would like to entertain a motion to
22 adjourn the March 26th, 2025, meeting
23 of the VRC.

24 Do I have a motion?

25 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

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2 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Second.

3 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand,
4 Commissioner Siegel.5 All commissioners in favor of
6 adjourning, please indicate by
7 responding yes.

8

9 NOTE: Commissioners respond yes.

10

11 CHAIR NIXON: Meeting adjourned.

12

13 NOTE: This concludes the March
14 26, 2025, meeting of the Virginia
15 Racing Commission.

16

17 HEARING CONCLUDED

18

19

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21

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25

1 C E R T I F I C A T E
2

3 STATE OF VIRGINIA)

4 : ss.

5 COUNTY OF RICHMOND)

6 I, JUAN ORTEGA, a Notary Public
7 within and for the State of Virginia,
8 do hereby certify:9 THAT SAID PROCEEDINGS is a
10 transcript of the Virginia Racing
11 Commission Public Hearing, when held on
12 March 26, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in
13 Richmond, Virginia.14 I further certify this is a true
15 and accurate transcript to the best of
16 my ability to hear and understand the
17 proceedings and other incidents of the
18 hearing herein as set down to the best
19 of my ability.20 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
21 set my hand this 9th day of April,
22 2025.23 
24

25 JUAN ORTEGA, CCR

<p>\$</p> <p>\$10,000 (1) 35:9 \$15 (1) 11:8 \$25,000 (1) 35:4 \$3 (1) 47:15 \$301,000 (1) 22:21 \$35,000 (1) 34:22 \$40,000 (1) 34:20 \$430,000 (1) 27:4 \$5 (1) 19:17 \$50 (1) 11:10 \$500,000 (1) 49:5 \$655,000 (1) 46:18 \$8.4 (1) 21:7</p> <p>A</p> <p>ABC (1) 19:25 ability (1) 33:2 able (4) 13:2;16:2; 28:22;43:15 achieving (1) 47:8 acquire (1) 38:7 acre (2) 29:6,7 across (4) 47:7,10; 48:3;60:12 act (2) 39:18;46:5 activities (3) 55:21,23; 56:23 activity (1) 13:24 actual (2) 55:25;57:20 actually (12) 20:10; 34:10,17;35:11,16; 36:24;50:12;54:3; 57:13;59:10,12;60:22 add (4) 15:11;30:25; 43:6;44:5 added (6) 15:6;17:6, 25:18;5,11;57:15 adding (2) 13:19; 62:21 addition (1) 56:15 additional (5) 35:7,10, 13;47:23;55:8 Additionally (1) 49:23 address (7) 6:20; 25:7;28:25;29:22,24; 42:2;45:5 addressing (1) 33:9 adjourn (1) 67:22 adjourned (1) 68:11 adjourning (1) 68:6 administrative (1) 46:6 advertising (1) 48:6 AE (1) 34:15 aerification (1) 30:6 aerified (1) 29:21 affect (1) 52:5 affects (1) 52:16 afraid (1) 60:11 Aftercare (1) 11:15</p>	<p>afternoon (7) 7:18; 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**VIRGINIA RACING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING**

**Transcript of Proceedings
March 26, 2025**

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