



The Horsemen's Newsletter

April 2015

Vol. 25 • Number 4

MTHA Golf Tournament



Monday April 27, 2015

Entry Fee \$60 Per Person Includes:

- **18 Hole Tournament with Cart**
- **Two Drink Coupons with Prizes**
- **Team Awards: 1st: \$250, 2nd: \$150, 3rd: \$100**
- **Two \$50 Closest to the Pin Awards (closest to the wire)**
- **One \$50 Longest Drive Award (fastest out of the gate)**
- **Drawing for Orioles and BaySox tickets**

Walden Country Club

177 Riedel Rd., Crofton, MD 21114
Call Dan Mangum to Register
at 410-802-5798

State Agency Proposes Cuts To Racing Funds

With newly elected Gov. Larry Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly working to wipe out spending deficits with this year's budget, the Maryland horse racing industry has come under the eye of the Department of Legislative Services.

The DLS, which is trying to find ways to cut spending in some areas in order to help the General Assembly restore funding in others, has proposed a 10 percent cut to the Purse Dedication Account and the Racetrack Facility Renewal Account (RFRA) as part of the state's Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) of 2015.

After much hard work by the MTHA, the Maryland Jockey Club and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association, the House Appropriations Committee, in consultation with the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Budget & Taxation Committee both rejected the proposed cuts and thereby maintained the current levels of funding for the industry.

Although the Hogan administration also indicated opposition to the DLS plan, the battle isn't over. The MTHA's longtime lobbyist, Bob Enten, explained that although unlikely, the cuts could reappear during a conference committee, composed of members of the House and the Senate, when they "iron out the differences in the House and Senate versions of the BRFA."

While the process can be tedious, Maryland's horse racing principals have been proactive since first hearing of the proposed cuts in late February.

"We committed to the General Assembly in 2012 to embark on a 10-year program to revitalize Maryland Racing," MTHA legal counsel Alan Foreman said. "We have made many decisions and committed funding for projects over the next

five years. In addition, those who continue to support Maryland's breeding industry made similar commitments.

"These cuts would stop in its tracks the enormous revitalization that is occurring in Maryland racing right now."

Foreman also pointed out the shift by casino patrons from VLTs (slots) to table games has already reduced the amount of revenue the racing accounts derive and



said a further cut would "be unfair."

A legislative team of representatives from the MJC, the MTHA and the MHBA communicated those thoughts directly to legislators emphasizing the detrimental effect the proposed cuts would have.

Representatives from those groups testified in the House and Senate against the cuts, met with the governor's staff and sent a letter to Senator James E. DeGrange Sr., chair of the Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee that reviews and makes recommendations on gaming issues.

The letter was signed by MTHA president Timothy Keefe, MJC chief operating officer Tim Ritvo, MHBA president Joseph Pons Jr., MTHA executive secretary David Richardson, MJC vice president and general manager Sal Sinatra and MHBA executive director Cricket Goodall.

Continues Page 2

In its letter the group stressed the importance of the 10 Year Agreement and the VLT revenues working in tandem "to completely revitalize and restore Maryland's historic and economically important racing industry."

"This is truly a concerted effort by all the constituent parties in the thoroughbred industry," Foreman said. "We're all working together and are in lock step."

"While this has been a wake-up call, in terms of letting us know the legislature has an expectation to see progress, it gave us an opportunity to present our revitalization to a much broader audience," he said, referring to legislative members who don't ordinarily hear from the horse racing industry. "It has been an opportunity to talk about the positives and what a success story the racing industry is becoming."

Among the achievements industry leaders spoke about and documented in their letter were: the raise in purses to a level that has

begun to stimulate interest in Maryland racing both locally and nationally; the MJC's ability to attract horses, owners and trainers from throughout the region and beyond; and new barns being built at Laurel, with the MJC and horsemen sharing the cost.

Also: The MJC's plan for significant capital investments at its facilities, made possible by the long-term RFRA commitment that MJC must match; the enabling of the horsemen and breeders to purchase the 46 live racing days necessary to maintain a year-round racing program in the state - a pledge the stakeholders made to the General Assembly in order to get the VLT allocations; and an astonishing revitalization of the Maryland breeding industry, which has seen Maryland rise to being the only state in the region with increases in foal numbers and mares coming to be bred.

"Simply put," racing's representatives wrote, "the proposed cuts would stop the redevelopment and massive investment that the under-

signed stakeholders are collectively making to restore Maryland racing."

The stakeholders went on to say, "There is no worse message or step that the state could take than to cut allocations to racing at a time when the industry is undergoing the most massive positive changes in a generation and especially when the industry is meeting the commitments it made to the governor, General Assembly and citizens of this state who derive the benefits from a strong and vital racing industry."

After the House and Senate decisions to reject the funding reductions, Foreman said he is cautiously optimistic.

"We're pleased the legislature didn't accept the proposed cuts," he said. "But until the session ends at midnight on April 13, we will be watching very closely to ensure these cuts don't materialize." "But until the session ends on April 13 we will be watching very closely to ensure these cuts don't materialize."

Tax Return Assistance Provided

Free assistance in English and Spanish with the preparation of backstretch worker's EZ Form tax returns is available. Please contact Diana Pinones at 410-902-6844 to arrange.



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Published by the

Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association

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Recreation Report *Dan Mangum 410-802-5798*

Donations

The following generous people made contributions to the backstretch this past month: J.D. Brown, Gene Gilhooly, Rustin Price, Kathryn Size, John E. Williamson and Lydia Williams. Thanks for your thoughtfulness.

Soccer League

The MTHA is in the process of planning a Spring/summer Soccer League and Softball League. We can just play pick-up games or try to form leagues if possible. Look for more info at the track kitchens or call Dan.

Texas Hold'Em

The next two Texas Hold'em Tournaments will be held on Monday March 23rd and Monday April 20th at the Bowie Track Kitchen starting at noon. Please sign-up at the track kitchens or call Dan.

Bowie Baysox Tickets

The Bowie Baysox Ticket sign-up will begin on Saturday April 4th in the track kitchens. Bowie sign-ups will be from 8:00 am - 10:00 am and at the Laurel track kitchen from 10:30 am - 12:30 pm. YOU must sign up to be eligible for the tickets.

2015 Backstretch Pension Signup Schedule

Pension Plan Registration for the year ended 2014 will take place at the following times and locations. Bring your MRC Badge and W-2, 1099, or tax return for 2014. For more information call the MTHA office at (410) 902-6842.

March 30 through April 3

Bowie, Conference Room
10:30 a.m. to noon

April 6 through April 10

Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

April 13 through April 17

Pimlico MTHA Office,
10:30 a.m. to noon

April 20 through April 24

Bowie, Conference Room
10:30 a.m. to noon

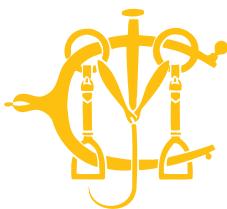
April 27 through May 1

Laurel Track Kitchen,
9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

May 4 through May 8

Pimlico MTHA Office,
10:30 a.m. to noon

Failure to register will result in the loss of your 2014 benefit.



Q&A With MJC Regarding New Barn Construction

As the first new 150-stall barn at Laurel Park nears completion and those at the Bowie Training Center move closer to being relocated, Maryland Jockey Club C.E.O. Tim Ritvo and MJC Vice President and General Manager Sal Sinatra provided answers to many questions horsemen may have about the changes.

When do you expect the first 150-stall barn to be completed at Laurel Park?

SINATRA: "The target date is the first of April. With the weather, the last snowstorm, we might be a tad behind."

When will the second 150-stall barn be started?

SINATRA: "The land is being cleared now. The plan right now is to start building in May."

What about tack rooms, wash stalls and everything else that goes into that project being completed?

SINATRA: "We are looking to purchase external tack rooms, completed buildings that will be dropped outside the barns. We're pricing them now and I suspect they'll be delivered within two weeks of purchase. By the time the barns are completed and I get the COs [Certificates of Occupancy], they'll be there."

Before we can finish the wash stalls and showers, the structure needs to be completed and the pipes need to be run to connect with the sewage system. But it all has to be done by the time the barns are occupied and our date for completion is the first of April or a week from that date."

When will Bowie close?

RITVO: "We don't even like using the word closed. We like to think of it as a remodel. We have to scale back operations, look at the facility and decide what to do with it."

SINATRA: Notices are being handed out now advising everyone they will have to relocate by the of April.

If stabled at Bowie, when will trainers have to move and will they get stalls at Laurel?

SINATRA: "Everyone will have to be relocated by mid or the end of April and everyone will be stabled at Laurel or Pimlico. [Racing secretary] Georganne [Hale] has just told everyone where they're going."

If a trainer doesn't get as many stalls as he/she wants, is there an opportunity to advocate for the number of stalls the trainer believes is needed?

RITVO: "Absolutely. Anyone who doesn't like what they have can come in and have the right to make their case. I am happy to arbitrate any disputes. My door is always open."

Will a trainer's employees be able to relocate to the track where their horses are stabled?



RITVO: "Yes, we are going to make sure all grooms have rooms where their horses are stabled. We're working to make sure of that. We're working closely with the Assistance Fund, to make sure all the grooms find rooms."

However, there are some grooms at the barns who don't have jobs. To have lodging [at Laurel or Pimlico] people have to be working on the racetrack. They have to be on someone's badge list. In the case of those not working, we will work with the Assistance Fund or have someone come in and help them find housing elsewhere."

If a trainer's stall allocation has been reduced, why would that happen?

RITVO: "The only reason the number of stalls could be reduced is for poor performance or

because horses haven't run. We're not reducing stalls. We need as many horses as possible, but if a trainer has sore horses or horses that are laid up, we think they should

go to farms.

Again, we want good horses and we want trainers to grow their businesses. We want to grow and

expand the schedule. We want people to live and work here year-round. To do that, we have to grow the field sizes, the fan base and the handle."

If a trainer is based at Laurel, will he/she be able to secure additional stalls if their operations grow?

RITVO: "Yes. We're encouraging people who are here to grow their stables and we would like more and more horses coming in. We're not looking to reduce the fleet, we need a bigger fleet."

Is there a future for the Bowie Training Center?

RITVO: "Possibly, everything is on the table. Once we have Bowie cleared out, we'll look at the facility and decide what works best. We're looking at every economic model. We want what's good for the horsemen, the breeders and the Maryland Jockey Club. We are all partners."

We want Maryland racing to be healthy, to grow and prosper. We need to fix the model, because the current economic model isn't working. Maryland needs the Preakness to be healthy. It isn't going anywhere. But everything is on the table and we don't want to get into details and speculation. A lot will be decided soon." *

OTB Planned For Baltimore's Horseshoe Casino

Is it time for a revival of the OTB, the off-track betting facilities that were popular 20 years ago?

The Maryland Jockey Club in partnership with the MTHA and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association is betting on it.

Recently, they sent an application to the Maryland Racing Com-

mission for an OTB site at the new Horseshoe Casino in Baltimore, in hopes of receiving approval at the MRC's April meeting.

The partnership will have 1,595 square feet near the bar and right next to the food court at the Horseshoe, and plans to have the OTB open in time for the Kentucky Derby.



MTHA

500 Redland Court, #105
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

April 2015

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Free Easter Breakfast

For Maryland's Dedicated
Backstretch Employees

**Easter Sunday -
April 5, 2015**

Laurel, Pimlico & Bowie

Compliments of Maryland Horsemen's Assistance Fund

**Note there is no live racing on Easter Sunday*

