

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

A Message From The President - by Stuart Pittman, president



We are far enough into the Great Recession now that its effects are hitting the horse industry in Maryland everywhere. The Maryland Horse Council cannot control the economy, but we can fight hard to stay alive so that when things get better we are not starting over.

If you believe that the voices of citizens should be heard in government, and you believe that horses are good for people, then you should pay your dues and support this organization. It costs as little as forty dollars and takes about a minute with our new online

membership form at www.mdhorsecouncil.org. We need you now!

Save Maryland Thoroughbred Racing

Maryland's racing industry had high hopes that Magna Entertainment's bankruptcy auction would give us new track ownership with deep pockets, new ideas, and a commitment to revitalizing our sport here. Instead, the auction was cancelled when Magna agreed to let its parent company, MI Development (MID), pay off the creditors and take over the assets.

MID stockholders have a history of opposing involvement in racing, and its press release announcing the acquisition said that the real estate at Bowie, Laurel, and Pimlico were ideally suited for development. This Canadian company, chaired by the same Frank Stronach who owns Magna Entertainment and is a supporter of racing, wrote in its release that no more than \$15 million in losses would be budgeted to Maryland racing, and that profitability would have to be achieved within three years. Estimates of MJC losses per year currently are as high as \$10 million. At that rate \$15 million will last a year and a half.

If that doesn't put you on the edge of your seat, this might. The casino that was projected to generate \$60 million per year to the racing industry is now on hold because of an anti-slots petition drive that was funded by our friends at the Maryland Jockey Club. The MJC's owner, Frank Stronach, has argued that blocking slots at Arundel Mills Mall will eventually make it possible for somebody to get a license, zoning, financing, and a plan in place for slots at Laurel Racetrack, but how many more years will that take? Can racing survive without slots revenue under an owner unwilling to invest enough money to stay afloat?

The Maryland Horse Council is doing outreach to its members in the racing industry as you read this. Based on the results of our opinion survey we may or may not request that state officials intervene on behalf of the public interest to either secure a real commitment to racing by MID or to force a sale to a group or company that will commit to racing in Maryland. The Maryland General Assembly passed legislation in 2009 titled, "Condemnation of private thoroughbred racing-related property for public use." The public benefits enormously by having a racing industry

in our state. We can't let a Canadian real estate development company take it away from us.

Save The Horse Farms

On March 18 forty members of the Maryland Horse Council met to kick off our county by county Save The Horse Farms campaign. Representatives from Frederick, Howard, Baltimore, Caroline, Kent, Carroll, Anne Arundel, Queen Anne, Montgomery, Cecil, Prince Georges, and Washington counties were there and commitment was strong to do the work that it will take to make zoning laws in every Maryland county serve the interests of the horse community while also benefitting the general public.

Contact Valerie Ormond (Valerieormond@aol.com) or Amy Samman (aks@fdalaw.com) if you are willing to do some research. We must gather the facts from each county about current law and how it is being implemented so that local horse council members can propose reforms.

Don't Miss the MHC Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors

Tuesday, May 18, 2010
 Prince George's Equestrian Center/Show Place Arena
 14900 Pennsylvania Ave., Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
 6 p.m. Meet & Greet Reception
 7 p.m. Meeting

Including:

MHC Save Maryland Thoroughbred Racing Committee:
 Do new track owners (MID) need to hear from us about their limited commitment to MD racing? Is there a risk of delaying or losing slots revenue by supporting an effort to block zoning for slots in Anne Arundel County?

MHC Save The Horse Farms Campaign: Progress on zoning law reforms including special presentations from Prince George's & Frederick Counties.

MHC Business Network

How we fared in the Legislative Session

For more information, or to join MHC, please visit
www.mdhorsecouncil.org

MHC Business Network

The MHC Business Network was a brainchild of our Executive Committee just a few months ago. After three meetings, establishment of a yahoo online discussion group, a Facebook page, and sponsorship of a reception at the Horse World Expo, nobody can deny that it truly exists

Maryland Horse Council membership is open to all associations, farms, businesses and individuals.

To join, please visit mdhorsecouncil.org, contact admin@mdhorsecouncil.org, or call 301-502-8929

The Maryland Horse Council is sponsored by B & D Builders, Naden/Lean, The Equiery, Farm Credit and Southern States



and is serving its members' needs.

The most recent meeting was at Pleasant Prospect Farm on April 2. The Equiery treated the thirty or so business owners there to lunch and Crystal Kimball led us in a fascinating discussion that covered all sorts of ideas for how our businesses are taking advantage of the bad economy. Light bulbs came on for a lot of us when we each described our "ideal client," and nobody left the place without both new ideas and new friends.

Participation in this group is limited to farm and business members of the Maryland Horse Council, but you are welcome to join at the meeting. We plan to meet every other month.

The Legislative Session

The Maryland Horse Council had another successful year in Annapolis. With Amy Samman as chair of our Legislative Committee we had a constant presence by a professional lobbyist looking out for our interests. Amy is with Furey, Doolan & Abell, LLP in Chevy Chase most of the year, but they keep an office in Annapolis during the legislative session. See Amy's synopsis of the bills we were following.

The hardest work we did was coaching and educating the sponsor of a bill that would have required children to wear riding helmets in certain situations. We managed to shape the bill so that it would have worked, but we never really felt that it made much sense to have the police department involved in something that the horse industry has worked so hard to police itself. Our friends on the legislative committees picked up on our lack of enthusiasm and did not move the bill forward.

We also had to do some fancy footwork when a state legislator sent a mailing to a number of licensed stable owners offering to fight on their behalf against the Maryland Horse Industry Board's bill to increase inspection fees. Our Board voted unanimously to support the bill back in January because it insulates the program from the state's general fund and the cuts that we all saw coming. This legislator seemed to have misread the bill and was looking for a way to be seen as anti-tax and anti-fee. We let him know that he was barking up the wrong tree. Stable owners were doing the fiscally responsible thing by supporting their own program and paying for it from their own pockets. The bill passed overwhelmingly with

If you missed the April 6 networking lunch, not only did you miss great fried chicken, but you also missed:

- a fascinating debate on whether or not it is a conflict of interest for a service provider to also sell products. In this debate, the question centered around the hypothetical situation of a farrier selling hoof care products out of his truck; does doing so question the credibility of the farrier ("he is getting a percentage of the sale, so of course he is going to recommend that I buy it"), or is providing recommended products a legitimate service for a trusted provider ("my farrier would only use it if he truly liked it, so he is a good source for buying this product")?

- almost two dozen boarding stable owners from throughout Maryland describing their ideal client (based on geography, socio-economic demographics, sex, family status, sport, breed, level of involvement with their horse), and not one stable owner duplicated another...proving that there are plenty of niches to fill in the horse industry, and proving that stable owners - no matter how geographically close their businesses or whether they service the same sport - are more colleagues than competitors.

Don't miss the **June 1 MHC Business Networking Lunch!** If you own a horse business in Maryland, you never know what you will learn or whom you will meet at the next networking lunch! But you have to be a business or farm member to attend, so visit mdhorsecouncil.com today to join online!

supportive testimony from MHC, the Maryland Farm Bureau, and the MD Department of Agriculture.

On a budgetary item of special interest to many of us, there was a real threat this year to the funding for Program Open Space, including the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund. Governor O'Malley had promised to support funding for these programs when he spoke to us at the Maryland Horse Forum, and he stood by his commitment in his budget proposal. The Senate, however, proposed removing all of the funding. The House went with the Governor's proposed budget, and the Governor came out on top after the conference committee. Please make a point of thanking Governor O'Malley and your state senators and delegates for preserving land preservation funding. It is critical to maintaining rural land in Maryland.

MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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