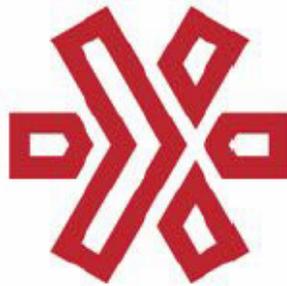


In The Matter Of:
VIRGINIA RACING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING

Transcript of Proceedings
December 15, 2025

ORTEGA INTERNATIONAL REPORTING
6933 Commons Plaza, Suite 119
Chesterfield, VA 23832
(202) 681-5140



Min-U-Script® with Word Index

1 VIRGINIA:

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VIRGINIA RACING COMMISSION

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PUBLIC HEARING

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Monday, December 15, 2025

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1:00 p.m.

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When heard at:

16

17

State Corporation Commission

18

Tyler Building, Courtroom B

19

1300 East Main Street

20

Richmond, Virginia

21

22

23

24

Reported by:

25

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

9

 COMMISSION STAFF:

10

 Waqas Ahmed, Executive Secretary

11

 Kimberly C. Mackey, Director of Operations

12

 Israel Saavedra, Director of Licensing and
Investigations

13

 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 December 15, 2025

3

4 CHAIR NIXON: Good morning. Oh,
5 afternoon. I'm sorry. Thank you.
6 First mistake of the day.

7 I call this December 15th, 2025,
8 meeting of the Virginia Racing
9 Commission to order.

10 The first item on the agenda is
11 to call the roll of the commissioners.
12 Vice Chair Tanner.

13 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Present.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand.

15 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Here.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
17 Gordon-Moore.

18 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Here.

19 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
20 Siegel.

21 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Here.

22 CHAIR NIXON: Let the record
23 reflect that we have a quorum with all
24 members present physically or
25 virtually.

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

2 The next item is the public
3 comment as noted on the agenda.
4 Comments are limited to three minutes
5 per person with the exception of any
6 open disciplinary or application file.

7 Is there anyone from the public
8 who wishes to address The Commission
9 at this time?

10 Okay. Thank you.

11 The next item is the approval of
12 the minutes from the previous meeting.
13 I would like to entertain a motion to
14 approve the minutes.

15 Is there a motion?

16 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: I
17 make the motion to approve the minutes
18 of the last meeting.

19 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

20 CHAIR NIXON: Are there any
21 additional -- excuse me. Are there
22 any additions or corrections from The
23 Commission?

24 All commissioners in favor for
25 approving the minutes as presented,

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

2 please say aye.

3 (Ayes).

4
5 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.6
7 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed, please
8 say nay.

9 Are there any abstentions?

10 The motion carries. The minutes
11 are approved.12 We will now move to item 4,
13 reports. I recognize the following
14 directors for their reports.15 Finance. Director Cordle, I
16 believe you are first.

17 MS. CORDLE: Good afternoon.

18 My name is Gabrielle Cordle, and
19 I'm the new director of finance.
20 Finance division was established when
21 I started in VRC in mid-October, and
22 we are also intending to hire a wage
23 financial services specialist position
24 that was posted at the beginning of
25 December.

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

2 In the very short time that I've
3 been here, I have been learning as
4 much as possible as I can about the
5 agency's financial activities. That
6 has included an introduction to the
7 horse racing industry, review of the
8 VRC's internal controls, ARMICS, and
9 audit reports, as well as review of
10 the funds and revenue sources, which,
11 of course, also includes wagering
12 data.

13 I have also reviewed VRC's
14 current appropriation as well as
15 appropriation history, general ledger
16 activity, payroll, and employee
17 reimbursement transactions, along with
18 accounts payable, procurement, and
19 small purchase charge card activity.

20 One the first major tasks that I
21 handled when I first started was
22 updating our non-general fund revenue
23 estimates through fiscal year 2032,
24 which was required by the Department
25 of Planning and Budget. I've also

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

2 completed a draft of the agency's
3 biannual budget for fiscal years '27
4 and '28, as well as forecasted
5 expenditures for the remainder of the
6 current fiscal year.

7 Looking ahead into calendar 2026,
8 I plan to implement process
9 improvements, which will include
10 applying corrective actions and
11 increasing internal controls across
12 financial functions. I will continue
13 to develop the budget and forecasting,
14 and will be creating a monthly
15 financial status report.

16 Plan improvements to the
17 reconciliation process, including
18 refinements to expenditure coding,
19 which will also provide better insight
20 into our budget. There are some
21 additional opportunities for
22 improvement in accounts payable and
23 procurement, payroll, and employee
24 reimbursements, as well as accounts
25 receivable, and incoming funds

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

2 received.

3 The goal is to have a number of
4 these improvements in place prior to
5 the beginning of the upcoming race
6 season.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you, Director
9 Cordle.

10 Next is Audit and Compliance
11 Director Jones.

12 MR. JONES: Good afternoon. In
13 2025, our focus was launching the
14 audit compliance division, and
15 building the core structure for a
16 modern specialized audit practice. So
17 we've established the division.
18 Developed an initial charter into two
19 auditors, built governance and
20 compliance frameworks, completed
21 baseline assessments of racing HHR
22 operations. It will be a dispersed
23 audit universe and risk assessment.
24 We also updated key policies and
25 expanded staffing in audit manager and

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

2 wagering systems officer.

3 For 2026, the focus kind of
4 shifts to execution. We are going to
5 finalize and carry out the annual
6 audit plan, conduct full scope audits
7 and targeted reviews, expand onsite
8 monitoring, strengthening coordination
9 with external partners, continue to
10 ensure our compliance policies, and
11 training. This year kind of built the
12 foundation. We're looking to kind of
13 put that into action for 2026.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you, Director
16 Jones.

17 Policy and Licensing Director
18 Lewis.

19 MS. LEWIS: Good afternoon.

20 So I started in -- I started on
21 September 10, 2026 [sic]. In that
22 time, the licensing division has
23 created the limited license
24 application to expand the structured
25 licensing pathways. We created the

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

2 ADW license application, and we also
3 revised the general permit application
4 to improve clarity and reduce some
5 confusion.

6 I can't take credit for this by
7 myself because Israel did a lot of
8 this. But in 2025, 4,339 permits were
9 issued, which reflects the continuing
10 demand across regulated activities.

11 We initiated discussions with
12 VITA regarding a digital licensing
13 platform for the VRC. The goal is to
14 streamline application submission,
15 reduce manual processing, enhance
16 tracking and transparency, and
17 eventually integrate additional
18 commission functions.

19 Policy achievements. We have
20 started drafting some policies such as
21 the commissioner's travel policy, and
22 other policies just to try to begin to
23 get some of the policies in place that
24 have been requested from our audits.
25 We also began reviewing other

P R O C E E D I N G S

1 jurisdiction's licensing standards and
2 background investigations processes to
3 determine which are substantially the
4 same as Virginia's as required by the
5 code so that we can have efficient
6 licensing pathways, recognize
7 fingerprinting and background checks
8 from other jurisdictions where
9 permissible, and reduce the burden on
10 applicants who are already vetted by
11 equivalent jurisdictions.
12

13 We initiated a comprehensive
14 review of existing regulations to
15 identify redundancy, streamline
16 language, and comply with the
17 state-wide regulatory reduction
18 mandate. And looking ahead to 2026,
19 we're going to continue the regulatory
20 modernization by refining,
21 consolidating, or repealing
22 unnecessary regulations. We're also
23 going to ensure that the stakeholders
24 are aware, and we are going to have
25 some transparency so that they can

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

2 help us to possibly adjust some of
3 these regulatory regulations so that
4 we can make it a little bit easier on
5 the -- on our stakeholders.

6 We are going to continue the
7 digital transformation, and continue
8 collaborating with VITA so that we can
9 get the system up and running. We're
10 hoping to have it on mobile phones as
11 well as on computers, and we're going
12 to begin drafting additional internal
13 policies to strength internal
14 controls.

15 Thank you.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you,
17 Director Lewis.

18 Next is Investigations Director
19 Saavedra.

20 MR. SAAVEDRA: Good afternoon,
21 commissioners and members of the
22 public.

23 My name is Israel Saavedra. I'm
24 the director of investigation. I just
25 want to start by thanking each and

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

2 every one of you for your continuous
3 support this year. We have been very
4 busy and I am proud of the work our
5 division has accomplished.

6 This year, we welcome a new lead
7 investigator. Her name is Bit Belly
8 Witsam. She couldn't be with us
9 today. And also Ernest Smith. He has
10 been with us for eight months. He is
11 coming from a background of law
12 enforcement. He has been a steady and
13 reliable presence in the field, and
14 his contributions have helped us stay
15 responsive and effective. Together,
16 we have worked hard to ensure safety,
17 fairness, and compliance across all
18 license, license facilities, and
19 participants.

20 This year, our division conducted
21 31 permit application investigations,
22 56 search operations across Shenandoah
23 and Colonial Downs. We tested 1,898
24 jockeys and participants for VAC. We
25 performed 12 gaming emporium

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1 inspections across multiple
2 facilities. And we handled around 194
3 administrative actions from software
4 approval, changes at the facilities,
5 all that.

6
7 We also handled a wide range of
8 incidents this year, from controlled
9 substance violations, equipment
10 infractions, to licensing issues. Our
11 team works very closely with law
12 enforcement, HISA, and HIWU. We carry
13 out arrests, suspensions, and other
14 enforcement actions.

15 Whether Colonial Downs,
16 Shenandoah, and the Virginia Gold Cup,
17 and across our gaming facilities, we
18 remain proactive in our oversight and
19 focus on maintaining accountability
20 and public trust throughout the
21 Commonwealth of Virginia.

22 Thank you again for your support,
23 and I look forward to continuing to
24 work together in 2026. Thank you.

25 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you,

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

2 Director Saavedra.

3 Next is veterinarian services,
4 our lead veterinary, Dr. Dave
5 Stanford.

6 DR. STANFORD: Thank you,
7 Madam Chair.

8 Just as way of introduction, just
9 to let you all know, I've been in
10 equine veterinary practice for 37
11 years. And over the last two years,
12 I've transitioned to working with the
13 Virginia Racing Commission. As you
14 are most aware, we've had some
15 significant changes in staffing before
16 the Colonial Downs meet last year, or
17 this past year. We only had two
18 returning vets to the staff. We had
19 four vets that were new to Colonial
20 Downs, and we had an off-site lead
21 veterinarian at that time.

22 However, this team had a lot of
23 experience in all aspects of equine
24 veterinary medicine, and we pulled
25 together, worked very hard, and worked

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

2 very well together. And despite
3 some -- some challenges early on, and
4 some administrative delays on some
5 things, I believe we accomplished
6 those goals.

7 And if you're looking at the
8 slide, you see that top chart shows
9 some of the statistics from the --
10 from the meets this year, and while
11 our ideal goal would be to have no
12 injuries, no fatalities, they are a
13 part of the sport. Something we have
14 to deal with by trying to minimize the
15 number and severity.

16 So looking, you can see at the
17 Great Meadows site, we had two race
18 days with 113 starters, no fatalities,
19 only three injuries. No pre-race
20 scratches and no void claims. At
21 Shenandoah, over 28 race days. We had
22 an approximately, that's an estimate,
23 of 2,400 starters. We did have one
24 race fatality in the fall meet. Six
25 racing injuries in the fall. I did

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

2 not have access to the spring data.

3 We did not do pre-race vet scratches
4 in the -- our previous vet exams at
5 the harness track, and no voided
6 claims.

7 Colonial Downs had 44 race days
8 with 2,986 starters in the summer
9 meet. We did have two race
10 fatalities, 16 racing injuries, with
11 31 pre-race exam scratches, and 21
12 voided claims.

13 In looking at those three total
14 racing fatalities over this year, I
15 can tell you that all three of
16 those -- those horses were attended to
17 quickly and professionally by the
18 veterinary staff and the track staff.
19 They were safely and humanely
20 transported back to the barn where
21 further diagnostics and treatment were
22 done. They were then assessed
23 individually by the veterinary staff.
24 The -- in consultation with the owners
25 and trainers, the decision was at that

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 time made to do -- to euthanize them
3 and do what was in the best interest
4 of the horses.

5 Going down to that lower chart,
6 you can see at Colonial Downs, we've
7 been tracking the fatalities, the
8 number per thousand starts, and that
9 is in that third column. And you can
10 see comparing the national average in
11 the last column, that we've always
12 been right at or below that average.

13 So looking ahead for 2026, we're
14 going to continue to work with the
15 track operators to improve facilities
16 and protocols based on after-action
17 reviews that have already been done,
18 updating our protocols just to improve
19 staff training and accuracy for
20 when -- specially for when we have
21 changes in vet staff. Updating
22 technology used to review at-risk
23 horses during pre-race exams, and to
24 hire an administrative assistant
25 during the meet to improve our

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

2 reporting time.

3 Thank you very much.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you,

5 Dr. Stanford.

6 Do any of the commissioners have
7 any questions or comments for anyone?

8 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: I was
9 just looking at the -- the voided
10 claims. What was the majority of the
11 21 horses?

12 DR. STANFORD: The reason for the
13 voided claims?

14 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Yes.

15 DR. STANFORD: Most of those are
16 almost all for lameness or
17 unsoundness.

18 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you,
21 everyone, for those reports.

22 Executive Secretary Ahmed, do you
23 have anything to add?

24 MR. AHMED: Just I want to
25 commend everybody, all the folks at

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

2 the table, as well as the folks behind
3 them. I want to commend all the folks
4 at the table and the folks behind
5 those directors.

6 I know I made a lot of promises
7 to you all, Madam Chair, over the last
8 year, and this is one of the ones
9 that, you know, I'm fulfilling at this
10 point. We have a great team that I
11 think they've understood over the last
12 couple of months that change is hard,
13 and that one of their jobs is to
14 implement change in the industry. But
15 it's -- hopefully, today, from the
16 small step of being transparent and
17 reporting on our end annual activities
18 to the public, you'll find that it's
19 changes for good.

20 And so, I'll just commend
21 everybody for the good job that
22 they're doing, and look forward to
23 2026.

24 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you. Thank
25 you, everyone.

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

2 Moving to new business. Item A
3 is a resolution of appreciation for
4 Dr. Charles Richard Harden -- I would
5 like -- DVM. I would like to read a
6 resolution into the record.

7 Recognizing C. Richard Harden,
8 DVM, for his distinguished service to
9 the Virginia Racing Commission and the
10 horse racing industry, whereas C.
11 Richard Harden, DVM, has served the
12 Virginia Racing Commission and the
13 Commonwealth of Virginia with
14 distinction, dedication, and
15 unwavering professional integrity.

16 And whereas for over two decades,
17 Dr. Harden brought his extensive
18 experience as a doctor of veterinary
19 medicine to The Commission serving in
20 critical roles including commission
21 veterinarian and equine medical
22 director. And whereas throughout his
23 tenure, Dr. Harden was a steadfast
24 advocate for the health, safety, and
25 welfare of the equine athlete,

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

2 ensuring that the highest standards of
3 veterinary care and integrity were
4 maintained at Virginia racetracks.

5 And whereas Dr. Harden played a
6 pivotal role in the advancement of
7 safety protocols and medication
8 reforms, including his instrumental
9 work in the adoption and
10 implementation of the Mid-Atlantic
11 Uniform Medication Rules, thereby
12 enhancing the public perception and
13 integrity of the sport, not only in
14 Virginia, but across the region. And
15 whereas his guidance, veterinarianian
16 acumen, and commitment to regulatory
17 excellence have been invaluable assets
18 to the commissioners, The Commission
19 staff, and the horse racing community
20 at large.

21 Now, therefore, be it resolved
22 that the Virginia Racing Commission
23 hereby formally recognizes and extends
24 its deepest appreciation to C. Richard
25 Harden, DVM, for his years of faithful

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

2 service and significant contributions
3 to the horse racing industry in the
4 Commonwealth of Virginia. Adopted
5 this 15th day of December 2025.

6 I would entertain a motion to
7 adopt this resolution.

8 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: So moved.

9 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

10 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:

11 Second.

12 CHAIR NIXON: Are there any
13 comments from the commissioners or
14 staff?

15 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: I'd just
16 like to say that I've known Dr. Harden
17 longer than anyone in the room, I'm
18 sure. He was my veterinarian 30 or 35
19 years ago. Always on time, always did
20 a great job, and great diagnostic, and
21 a terrific individual.

22 Congratulations.

23 DR. HARDEN: Thank you very much.

24 CHAIR NIXON: Dr. Harden, when I
25 think of racing in Virginia, I think

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

2 of you. Your leadership, compassion
3 for the horses, and steadfast loyalty
4 to the Virginia Racing Commission is
5 what has got us here to where we are
6 today. So thank you very much.

7 DR. HARDEN: Thank you.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Oh, I'm sorry.

9 All commissioners in favor,
10 please say aye.

11 (Ayes).

12

13 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

14

15 CHAIR NIXON: And all opposed say
16 nay.

17 Motion carries.

18 Okay. Let's get a photo.

19 You want to say anything?

20 DR. HARDEN: Well, I'm humbled.

21 I was thrilled that horse racing in
22 Virginia has finally reached this
23 point because I remember when it was
24 just a fond dream among most of us.
25 So I'm delighted to see it. Thank

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

2 you, and thank The Commission for all
3 of your hard work over the years.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. Item B is
5 the adoption of the code of ethics for
6 commissioners and the executive
7 secretary. I'd like to recognize
8 Director Jones to present the code of
9 ethics.

10 MR. JONES: Good afternoon,
11 Commissioners.

12 Before you today is the updated
13 ethics -- code of ethics policies for
14 commissioners and executive secretary.
15 This update modernizes the 2019
16 policy, aligns it with current
17 statutory requirements, and clarifies
18 rules and important expectations.

19 It also responds to regional
20 internal control funding in deciding a
21 need for a current well-defined ethics
22 framework. This is part of a top-down
23 refresh for the entire agency. The
24 draft incorporates all commissioner
25 feedback.

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

2 I respectfully request The
3 Commission's adoption of the updated
4 code of ethics. Thank you.

5 CHAIR NIXON: I would entertain a
6 motion to adopt the code of ethics.

7 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

9 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Second.

10 CHAIR NIXON: Any questions or
11 comments for Director Jones?

12 All commissioners in favor,
13 please say aye.

14 (Ayes).

15

16 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

17

18 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
19 nay.

20 The motion carries.

21 Next was the adopt policy for
22 commissioner travel. Unfortunately,
23 we're going to have to table this one
24 to continue to develop the policy.
25 And, hopefully, we'll have that in

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

2 February?

3 MR. AHMED: Yes.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Okay.

5 Next is the consideration of
6 licensing to conduct Pari-Mutuel
7 wagering on historical horse racing
8 for 2026. Item E. I recognize the --

9 MR. AHMED: Item D.

10 CHAIR NIXON: Excuse me. I
11 apologize. Thank you.

12 Item D is a consideration of
13 limited licensing to conduct race
14 meetings for 2026 pursuant to Virginia
15 Code 59-1382 for Shenandoah, Downs,
16 Virginia Gold Cup, and Colonial Downs.
17 I recognize each licensee to present
18 their plans related to their
19 respective entity. After all the
20 presentations, the VRC will present
21 the recommendations and conditions
22 related to the application.

23 Is there someone?

24 MR. AHMED: So Shenandoah Downs,
25 Gold Cup, Colonial Downs, as well

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

2 as -- Katreena, are you going to lead
3 off, or we want them to go first?

4 MS. LEWIS: I'll let them go
5 first.

6 MR. AHMED: Okay.

7 Shenandoah Downs is first.

8 MR. WOOD: Good afternoon,
9 Commissioners.

10 We've got kind of a presentation
11 on a review of the 2025 meet, followed
12 by our application for '26. So --
13 yeah. Andy will go through this
14 pretty rapidly I think. But to recap
15 2025, we had a pair of seven-week
16 seasons. Seven in spring, seven in
17 fall. This was, I believe, the third
18 straight year that we've had that
19 racing schedule. We have four days
20 between meets that we run nine weeks
21 during races at the Shenandoah County
22 Fair as well. But this was the tenth
23 year of racing in Woodstock, believe
24 it or not, getting ready for race
25 season No. 11 coming up in spring.

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

2 The neat thing this past year was
3 that in spring, the three Triple Crown
4 legs all coincided on our race days.
5 So we got to show the Derby, the
6 Preakness, and the Belmont, which was
7 nice. Purse distribution gave up \$3.2
8 million over that course of the meet,
9 that includes some of the -- all the
10 Virginia Breeders races, and the
11 Virginia Sired Stake races, which were
12 held for the first time ever. And I
13 think I probably missed one. Here we
14 go.

15 I think the biggest -- the
16 biggest news from this past season was
17 we were able to use this new barn, the
18 VEA racing and livestock barn for the
19 first time. 32,500 square feet, a
20 \$2 million project. Most importantly,
21 it provides safe and stable housing
22 for 175 horses. And it's kind of
23 changed the way that we are able to do
24 business in Woodstock.

25 We don't need to rely on Mother

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

2 Nature's good wishes. We can safely
3 accommodate nearly every horse now
4 that races, and it's based on the
5 grounds throughout the meet in the
6 stable and two others that we have.
7 So this is a game-changer for us this
8 year.

9 \$1.4 million were paid out of
10 purses for the Virginia Sired and
11 Breeders Fund races like we talked
12 about. Here is a couple of the
13 2-year-old Breeders champions in the
14 next slide. Both are from the Caviart
15 Farms in Vienna, Virginia. A
16 2-year-old trotting champ, Caviart War
17 Room. And Caviart Trenton was the
18 other one. But you can see the -- the
19 Shenandoah with the mountains and the
20 background. It's just a great great
21 setting.

22 This is probably the biggest --
23 the biggest aspect we had this fall.
24 This horse, Lou's Starr is a local
25 track champion at Woodstock. But he

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2 went on to complete in the Little
3 Brown Jug race in Delaware, Ohio.
4 This is racing's grandest stage. It's
5 probably the biggest race. And we had
6 a local horse that actually made it to
7 the \$500,000 final.

8 And the three gentlemen to the
9 right of the horse, Dan Chansky, has
10 spoken here before. Fern Paquet is
11 the driver of the horse. And Scott
12 Warnick is the trainer. But these
13 three guys, I saw them as they came
14 down from Delaware to bring the horse
15 down to Woodstock, and it was kids in
16 a candy store. And this is two days
17 after the race. It was just the
18 biggest -- the biggest moment in their
19 racing life. So it's the owner,
20 driver, trainer. So that was a nice
21 score for us to have a local horse and
22 represented that way.

23 Another -- another really nice
24 score for us, Tony Morgan is the
25 second leading driver in the history

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2 of harness racing, and he chose to
3 race here in the month of October in
4 Woodstock. So we had really, a
5 well-known driver among people all
6 over the country. His first -- his
7 first day of racing here, he had six
8 starts, and got four wins. So that
9 was instant credibility for
10 Shenandoah.

11 Our leading driver and trainer in
12 the next slide you'll see, the Youth
13 Movement took place this year.
14 William Carter on the left is 21 years
15 old. He is the leading driver. And
16 Bryson Dunning on the right, leading
17 trainer at the age of 22.

18 So again, it helps a future for
19 young folks doing well. We had four
20 people get their first win ever.
21 Sierra Seidner on the left has been a
22 trainer for years. She competed in an
23 all-female driver's race to support
24 breast cancer awareness, and a race
25 won for the Cancer Society. She got

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2 to win that race. So that was her
3 first win ever.

4 This kid on the right, Joe
5 Malone, is a 17-year-old senior in
6 Bethany Beach, Delaware. He got his
7 first driving win ever during the fair
8 in the dead heat. So it's not just
9 the first win, but in the dead heat
10 was pretty special. Our two others
11 here is going to be, on the left, this
12 is a horse named John's Dream based
13 out of Suffolk, Virginia. He is the
14 winningest horse ever at Shenandoah.
15 But this is Chuck Perry, the owner.
16 His son, John -- John got a qualifying
17 win. His first time ever in the bike
18 in a qualifying race, and he got to
19 the winner circle.

20 And on the right is
21 Jesse Leinbach, whose horse won at the
22 24 to 1 in the Sires Stake race, and
23 he also got his first win. So nice to
24 see that, you know, we're able to have
25 young people getting their first win

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2 and getting their foot on the ground
3 in the sport in Woodstock.

4 On the other token, the veterans
5 continue to do well. These three
6 guys, on the left is Gerry Longo, 79
7 years old, Rock Vinci in the middle is
8 84, and Roger Hammer is 79. All three
9 won on the same weekend at that age.
10 So kudos to people of all ages who are
11 doing well.

12 Quickly going through the
13 promotions here. But Mother's Day has
14 become a really big hit during the
15 spring meet. The Grandstand sells
16 out. Every race is given to a mother
17 and her family to enjoy the race, get
18 the picture taken. We love it when
19 locals do well.

20 The lady in the red shirt there,
21 Betsy Brown, her farm is about a mile
22 from the track. She's an owner,
23 trainer, driver, advocate for racing,
24 longtime Woodstock resident. And,
25 again, every time she wins, family,

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

2 friends, neighbors join in the winner
3 circle, which is -- which is great.

4 We contribute to the Aftercare
5 Organizations and Standardbreds. The
6 Standardbred Retirement Foundation on
7 the left. Saddle Creek Retirement
8 Farm, which is in Palmyra, Virginia,
9 they do just a phenomenal job. Was
10 out there last week. They have 80
11 standardbreds on their property, and
12 they just do a marvelous job and we
13 are happy to support them, and
14 Standardbred Transition Alliance.
15 Along with another of -- three or four
16 other smaller places, but happy that
17 we can contribute to the -- to the
18 aftercare.

19 We raised \$3,000 through this
20 all-female driver race. And again,
21 this was on our Pink Power Breast
22 Cancer awareness, including Sierra in
23 the gray and black who, who didn't win
24 that race.

25 Government outreach. Mike

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

2 Pearson and the VHHA bring out
3 delegates nearly every weekend. The
4 first lady was out this meet. Spent
5 an afternoon at the races. Matt Moore
6 obviously was here a few times this
7 meet, but they got an all-encompassing
8 tour and spent a day at the races,
9 which, hopefully, is helpful in the
10 long run.

11 Other events, just like Colonial
12 Downs, finds that Weiner dog racing is
13 a big hit. The stands fill up.
14 That's our fall event. Corgi dogs in
15 spring is amazing. Don't spend any
16 money, but the stands fill up.
17 Suzette Youngkin here got this up-next
18 opportunity when she was out, but she
19 got to ride in the starter's car, and
20 that's something we try to do as often
21 as we can, getting people the
22 experience of riding with the starter
23 for an actual race, and just gives
24 them a perspective that, you know,
25 many people don't get the opportunity

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2 for.

3 We still do an "Own a horse for a
4 day" event. We invest along with the
5 VHHA, \$16,000. It gives 2,400
6 different people during the meet a
7 chance to own a horse, go to the
8 paddock, visit the horse, and share in
9 the purse money for that race.

10 And we still have four people
11 that have won that contest that
12 continue to actually invest in the
13 business. Steve Wetzel on the left
14 owned -- won this contest, I'll just
15 say, four years ago. Believe it or
16 not, Steve just -- who is -- was the
17 leading trainer for two weeks during
18 the spring meet. A guy that was a fan
19 is now an owner and a trainer. And he
20 won as a trainer on our 15 races this
21 year in Woodstock.

22 And, again, it brings the
23 neighbors and friends and other people
24 to enjoy that with him. Ivan Fultz on
25 the right in from Mount Jackson,

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

2 Virginia. Another contest winner.

3 And Ivan had 11 wins as an owner
4 investing in the business this year,
5 so that was nice.

6 John Pence has been on the track
7 crew for the Shenandoah County Fair
8 harness races for 50 years. He's been
9 involved with us for all ten years, so
10 we got a chance to recognize five
11 decades of service on the track crew
12 involved at harness racing.

13 And heading into 2026, we are
14 proposing a pair of seven-week seasons
15 just like this year every Saturday and
16 Sunday with a 1:05 post time. Spring
17 and fall meet dates nearly identical.
18 Marketing opportunities that come up
19 based on these dates, the next slide
20 will show again, Mother's Day,
21 Kentucky Derby day, Preakness Stakes,
22 Memorial Day weekend.

23 In the fall, we run our Breeders
24 Cup Saturday this year for the first
25 time. So maybe either something we'll

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

2 do there. The Autumnfest celebration
3 brings 4,000 people annually as our
4 biggest betting day of the year. And
5 Halloween falls on a Saturday on our
6 closing day. So it should be festive
7 this year.

8 Our stakes schedule, the
9 3-year-olds Sires Stakes and Breeders
10 go in spring, and the 2-year-olds go
11 in fall. We kind of separated that
12 this part year, instead of running
13 them all together on a big day, by
14 separating them and just kind of
15 creating some breathing room for the
16 other horses that were going to race
17 that weekend.

18 And here's our final one at this
19 works. But this gentleman is named
20 Jimmy Biers. He's an owner, trainer
21 from Tazewell, Virginia in the
22 southwest part of the state. Jimmy is
23 a retired coal miner. He's been
24 involved in harness racing for ten
25 years, but this just shows the passion

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

2 that he has when his horse races. And
3 the driver that he is urging on is
4 William Carter. But if -- if it works
5 handy, you'll hear --

6 (Video playing.)

7 That's kind of like
8 Commissioner Nixon back in the day.
9 It was -- and I think the next -- Andy
10 is our commercial that through the
11 VT -- through the Racing Commission
12 Marketing Grant that we wrote to
13 promote Shenandoah Downs with.

14 (Video playing.)

15 Good stuff.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

17 ATTENDEE: Good job.

18 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you, Darrell.
19 That was a great presentation. Very
20 good. Thank you.

21 Anybody have any questions or
22 comments before we move on?

23 MR. AHMED: Well, Katreena asked
24 for the staff's recommendation. What
25 we'll do is, rather than them do all

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2 the recommendations at the end, let's
3 do them for each track, and that way,
4 it's fresh.

5 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. All right.

6 MS. LEWIS: So staff recommends
7 that we approve the 2026 racing dates
8 for the Shenandoah spring meet
9 April 11, 2026, through May 24, 2026.
10 And for the Virginia Downs Foundation
11 for the fall meet, September 19, 2026,
12 through November 1st, 2026.

13 Each applicant did submit an
14 application pursuant to Title 59.1 of
15 the Code of Virginia. And we have --
16 we have finished an initial review of
17 each application. There are some
18 outstanding requirements, statutory,
19 and regulatory documentation needs
20 that we have. So at this time, we are
21 recommending that we approve the
22 racing dates and have a provisional
23 license issued pending the -- pending
24 the final staff review and acceptance
25 of all materials submitted to date.

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2 Shenandoah, both of them,
3 Virginia Downs and Shenandoah County
4 Agricultural have been very good about
5 getting all of the information that
6 I've requested, and there's just a few
7 things outstanding still. Submission
8 and approval of all remaining
9 documentation and the satisfaction of
10 all applicable statutory and
11 regulatory requirements, and then we
12 can issue a permanent license after we
13 get the requested information.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a motion?

15 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

16 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Second.

17 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners
18 in favor --

19 MR. AHMED: I don't think
20 we're --

21 COMMISSIONER TANNER: I have a
22 question.

23 CHAIR NIXON: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So I know
25 it's in the documents we've gotten,

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

2 but the deadline for receiving
3 information is January the 14th; is
4 that correct?

5 MS. LEWIS: That is correct.

6 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Okay. I
7 just wanted to get that into the
8 record.

9 MR. AHMED: All right. Hold on
10 one second.

11 CHAIR NIXON: I would like to
12 entertain a motion to approve the
13 limited license for Shenandoah Downs.
14 Is there a motion?

15 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: So moved.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

17 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

18 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners
19 in favor, please say aye.

20 (Ayes).

21

22 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

23

24 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
25 nay.

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

2 Motion carries.

3 Next is the -- I believe the
4 Virginia Gold Cup.

5 MR. HOPF: Madam Chair and
6 commissioners, thank you very much for
7 your consideration for our application
8 for 2026. I had previously reviewed
9 our spring race meet here before. I
10 do have a short summary of the 88th
11 running of the International Gold Cup.

12 60 horses went to post-running in
13 eight races, six hurdle, one Timber,
14 and the Steeplethon with a total purse
15 structure of \$365,000. Attendance was
16 slowing down from previous
17 International Gold Cup levels.

18 Interestingly, the government shutdown
19 was the number one reason given by
20 previous spot holders. This is right
21 in the middle of the shutdown. We're
22 focused on the attendance enhancement
23 moving forward.

24 The highlight of my day, and
25 maybe some of you as well that were in

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2 attendance, it was the riders going
3 off course in the International Gold
4 Cup Timber Stakes. Fortunately, after
5 all riders committed the same error of
6 going off course, they appropriately
7 came back on course per the rules, and
8 the race was successfully completed.

9 I'd like to thank the stewards,
10 for one, knowing the detail of the
11 rule, and two, immediately applying
12 them correctly.

13 I had the pleasure of hosting
14 Suzanne Youngkin with my wife in the
15 steward stand because she was
16 presenting that trophy. I
17 subsequently apologized to
18 Ms. Youngkin, and she said that she
19 had heard that verbiage before, and it
20 was totally appropriate for the
21 occasion.

22 The efforts to improve the racing
23 conditions and surfaces at Great
24 Meadow continues. And this effort
25 here and at other Steeplechase courses

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2 seems to be paying dividends. 2025
3 has been the safest year in the last
4 15 years for Steeplechases. The fall
5 is down 40 percent from last year.
6 And the horse mortality rates in
7 keeping with Slacktracks this year.
8 This will continue to be our main
9 focus both at Gold Cup and with the
10 National Steeplechase Association as
11 we enter the 2026 season.

12 The replacement of the north turn
13 at Great Meadow will take place early
14 next year and will eventually leave
15 Great Meadow where the turf course is,
16 minimally, 90-feet wide all the way
17 around, allowing for multiple racing
18 lanes. This combined with the
19 allegiance between Great Meadow and
20 the Virginia Gold Cup Association to
21 create the best possible turf
22 conditions makes me very excited about
23 our future racing opportunities.

24 I'm glad to entertain any
25 questions.

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

2 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners? No?

3 Thank you very much. I
4 appreciate it.

5 Katreena.

6 MS. LEWIS: Staff recommends
7 approval of the following two 2026
8 racing dates for Virginia Gold Cup:
9 May 2nd, 2026, and October 24, 2026.

10 Again, the applicant has
11 submitted an application for licensure
12 pursuant to Title 59.1 of the Code of
13 Virginia. There were some outstanding
14 statutory and regulatory documentation
15 requirements that are needed to
16 complete the application. Virginia
17 Gold Cup has been responsive, and they
18 have submitted most of what has been
19 requested.

20 So we're requesting a provisional
21 license for Virginia Gold Cup
22 continued upon the staff review and
23 acceptance of all materials submitted
24 to date, submission and approval of
25 all remaining documentation identified

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2 in the deficiency letter, and
3 satisfaction of all applicant --
4 sorry, applicable statutory and
5 regulatory requirements.

6 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

7 I would entertain a motion to
8 approve the limited license for
9 Virginia Gold Cup.

10 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

11 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

12 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:

13 Second.

14 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners
15 in favor, please say aye.

16 (Ayes).

17

18 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

19

20 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
21 nay.

22 Motion carries. Thank you.

23 Next is the -- let's see --

24 Colonial Downs -- limited license for
25 Colonial Downs.

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

2 MR. HOPF: Afternoon, Madam
3 Chair, commissioners. I can ensure my
4 presentation is a little shorter than
5 Mr. Wood's, but I'll get in the mark
6 preparing the February meeting.

7 So just a quick recap of 2025
8 racing season. Obviously, this was
9 the first time the race days had
10 expanded from the standard 27 days.
11 We ran 44 days, including a special
12 three-day meet in March, which
13 certainly was exciting but presented a
14 lot of new challenges to put on a
15 three-day meet in March in the
16 timeframe that has not been running in
17 Virginia in a while, if at all, for
18 thoroughbred.

19 So we're excited to put on that
20 show. Obviously, Virginia Derby Day
21 was the highlight of that day. We
22 sold out in advance, welcoming over
23 8,500 people to the track. Handled 6
24 and a half million on a ten-race card.
25 We certainly did a lot of work to the

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2 facility in the sense of trying to add
3 some elements for seating and dining
4 for that day, and trying to elevate
5 that guest experience. I think from
6 most conversations and comments we
7 got, I think we did a good job on the
8 first time on that.

9 I think, more importantly, we did
10 have two participants from the race.
11 American Promise and Render Judgment
12 actually go on to compete in the
13 Kentucky Derby. I think a lot of us
14 know that, yes, they would have enough
15 points to qualify for the Derby, but
16 to actually get out of the gate was,
17 you know, certainly on the back of my
18 mind. I was hoping that we'd get one,
19 perhaps two. Certainly was happy
20 about that.

21 So certainly a nice -- a nice
22 day. We're looking forward to hosting
23 that event here in a few months again.
24 Festival racing, Kentucky Derby
25 winner, Mystik Dan, competed in the

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

2 million, which was nice to have a
3 horse of that caliber at least coming
4 to Colonial to run, even though it was
5 his first time on the turf. That day,
6 actually did break the track handle
7 record of 10.4 million, topping the 23
8 addition by half a million dollars.
9 So I'm positive there.

10 The next slide kind of goes over
11 since, obviously, we had more race
12 days. 54 or 57 percent more race
13 days. It's kind of hard to show, you
14 know, yes, the numbers are going to be
15 higher than previous seasons. So what
16 this slide kind of tells us is just an
17 average handle by race. An average
18 live handle, average export handle,
19 average total handle, average races,
20 number of starters, turf races,
21 attendance, and handle by race. So it
22 does show Wednesday, Thursday, Friday,
23 Saturday.

24 The Wednesday slide, obviously,
25 this is the first time Wednesday

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2 racing returned to Colonial Downs in a
3 couple of years. The 23 and 24 days
4 are make-up days when we lost days in
5 those previous seasons. So those are
6 in there. Obviously, there were one
7 or two, I think we had two Wednesdays
8 in '23 -- I can't remember anymore.

9 So, again, just showing some
10 averages there. One thing that we did
11 notice, obviously, expanding to four
12 days, our Wednesday, Thursday crowds
13 seemed to kind of just split. So
14 either, before, they came on
15 Wednesday, or they came on Thursday.
16 Maybe they showed up on Wednesday, or
17 they came on Thursday.

18 Fridays, the second -- second
19 addition of running in the evening, we
20 did see a drop-off in attendance and
21 handle both on live and export. And
22 then on Saturdays, certainly a
23 positive was Saturdays. If you
24 exclude the festival, we did increase
25 our average per race handle up to

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2 273,000 per race, which is
3 significantly higher from '24.

4 Part of that, again, we changed
5 some of the -- working with the
6 horsemen on the stake schedule and the
7 program certainly played a part in
8 that, but felt that that was a
9 positive, especially on the export
10 side seeing some jump, you know, with
11 that as well.

12 So that's what this slide is
13 showing, just kind of -- and more of
14 the post times where instead of just
15 saying we did 110 million over the 44
16 days.

17 A couple of positives from the
18 '25 season. The new dorm. The new
19 20-room dorm was finished in late
20 March '25, and was ready for all of
21 our friends from the horsemen for the
22 summer meet. We are wrapping up the
23 final phase of the irrigation project.
24 This has been a four-part project.
25 Right now, we are wrapping up some of

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2 the internal valves and things on the
3 pump house. That should be completed.
4 Just waiting on a couple of pieces of
5 equipment. That should be wrapped up
6 here shortly, and that should be the
7 end of -- of that project that's been
8 going on.

9 A few other items that we've done
10 inside the facility. This year, we
11 increased the jockey club seating from
12 324 to 524 people. The terminals were
13 removed from the third floor, were
14 either moved downstairs or moved to
15 another facility.

16 We continued to improve our
17 processes with Ticketmaster. Again,
18 tickets sold, responding to customer
19 questions. Food and beverage
20 improvements. We switched food
21 vendors in late June. So that
22 certainly helped, I believe, the food
23 quality and the operations side of
24 that part of the business. And we
25 actually started up a little bit more

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

2 of a merchandise operation that will
3 continue in '26. But -- so we saw a
4 lot of positive feedback and a lot of
5 people buying stuff with Colonial
6 Downs. So we're happy to continue
7 that moving forward.

8 Stable area operations. Again,
9 one of the challenges we've had was
10 the manure program. I believe that is
11 becoming more streamlined and seems to
12 be working well. Trash collection,
13 ice, EVS, we struggled a little bit
14 this year. We have plans in place.
15 There will be some changes going
16 into '26 for this particular item.

17 Stall and dorm allocation
18 procedures improved, but further
19 modifications are needed. Obviously,
20 we are getting a lot more applications
21 than we have stalls for. So just
22 continue to work with the team on
23 making sure we are allocating those
24 stalls and the dorm rooms properly.

25 Preparation for '26 started in

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

2 October. We were able to get the
3 stable ready and cleaned up pretty
4 good by the end of September. So
5 we're able to move on to some
6 improvements and updates in October.

7 One of the big pauses was some
8 change in our racing office
9 leadership. We have appointed Dan
10 Bork, which certainly, I believe, has
11 improved the overnight stakes program
12 and has built a good positive
13 relationship with a lot of our
14 stakeholders. I'm happy to have Dan
15 on the team.

16 Frontside operations. Again we
17 made some adjustments going into the
18 '25 season to the team along with
19 transitioning of Levy. That has
20 certainly led to more efficiency and
21 enhanced guest experiences throughout
22 the season. So I'm looking forward to
23 having the team fully in place as
24 we've been working towards '26.

25 Just a quick look at racing 2026

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

2 preview. We are looking to expand.

3 So the new schedule would be the three
4 days in March. March 12th, 13th, and
5 14th. And then the summer meet would
6 be a proposed 45-day race schedule
7 Thursday through Sunday. That would
8 start June 25th and wrapping up on
9 Labor Day September 6th. I hope that
10 my date is correct on that.

11 Looking at this new schedule,
12 looking at Wednesdays, we felt that
13 they were not performing to what we
14 were hoping for. So the plan is to
15 move to Sunday racing to, again,
16 accommodate more -- more fans, and
17 more families on the Sunday. Focus on
18 Saturdays with the racing, and the
19 other promotions for Thursday and
20 Friday. Post time proposed is 12:30
21 for all race days moving towards the
22 26th season.

23 Virginia Derby Day, tickets went
24 on sale November 10th, and as of
25 today, we are over 2,600 tickets have

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1
2 been sold, including up to six or 700
3 general admission tickets. So we
4 are -- most of our seating is sold
5 out. So now we're focused on pushing
6 the rest of the general admission for
7 next year.

8 When we were fully on sale with
9 all of our seats last year, it was
10 February, the first week in February,
11 and we had 1,100 tickets sold at that
12 point. So we're happy with the
13 response we've received from the
14 public and looking for another great
15 day on March 14th.

16 And, again, looking towards the
17 2026 season. We started in October
18 planning in discussion meetings
19 wide-ranging for marketing sales,
20 strategies, operational improvements,
21 really getting ourselves ready for
22 this upcoming season based on the
23 proposed race days. So I think once
24 we get to the February meeting, we'll
25 certainly have a lot more information

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2 on our promotions, our marketing
3 strategies, and all the information
4 that I'd love to share with you but I
5 want to make sure I have the race
6 dates approved first.

7 So really looking forward to the
8 2026 season. Again, looking for a
9 preview for next year. Capital
10 improvements, part of the breakage
11 funding, the saddling paddock is going
12 to be one of those items that is going
13 to be addressed. Obviously, this did
14 not meet the time frame that I was
15 hoping for last year. But this
16 project has expanded to a much bigger
17 project than what was planned in '25.

18 So we will be -- we are
19 finalizing plans on this, but we will
20 be removing the existing pavers and
21 replacing them, excavating a backfill
22 in the subbase, and adding additional
23 drainage, and then backfilling that.
24 And then adding new pavers, the
25 existing circle along with the stalls

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2 and actually looking to add pavers to
3 the track.

4 So where the existing pavers are,
5 we would actually have pavers going
6 all the way down the hill to the race
7 track itself. So it's a much larger
8 project, but we are looking to get all
9 those details wrapped up here shortly.
10 Hopefully, I'll have a positive update
11 for everyone at the next meeting.

12 And then turf drainage. Another
13 area that we are taking a look at,
14 especially on the east turn of the
15 turf track. We are still working on
16 this project, but we are looking to
17 find ways to provide some additional
18 drainage so that part of the course
19 can get to the lake quicker and more
20 efficiently, and not stay as soft as
21 it is compared to other parts of the
22 track.

23 So one of the major projects that
24 we are looking at, the timing on that
25 could be maybe after the season as

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2 well just based on giving us enough
3 time to get the track ready for the
4 following season.

5 And I think that's it. So I'm
6 happy to answer any questions or
7 concerns.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

9 Commissioners?

10 COMMISSIONER TANNER: I have a
11 question about the jockey's room. I
12 don't see it as a capital improvement,
13 but I know that there's a lot of
14 improvements that need to be made.
15 And is that -- are they considered to
16 be just regular maintenance? Are they
17 not on the plans currently?

18 MR. HOPF: There are plans. We
19 are taking a look at the --
20 particularly the HVAC system. I know
21 that's -- that's an original unit in
22 there. There are some other repairs
23 that need to be done. Part of our new
24 agreement with the horsemen is that
25 scenario that will be addressed in, I

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

2 believe, before the '27 season. But
3 that's something that we are going to
4 be working on leading into the 2026
5 racing season, because there's some
6 things that we need to address.

7 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: I'd like to
8 also make a comment. The Commission
9 has continued the emphasis on fan
10 attendance and the fan experience.
11 I'm thrilled that you're now racing on
12 Sunday afternoons, which I think it
13 will be a big help. I'm personally a
14 little disappointed that you
15 eliminated twilight racing on Friday.
16 But I do like the four -- the four-day
17 meet with Sunday afternoons.

18 I would encourage you to consider
19 going back to twilight racing on
20 Friday for the '27 season. I think
21 that's important to get people out.
22 I've always said that people with a
23 job don't come to the racetrack on a
24 weekday afternoon. And I think
25 that -- I think the attendance has

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

2 proven that over time, and I want to
3 encourage you to get back to that.

4 CHAIR NIXON: Any other
5 commissioner comments?

6 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Yes, I have
7 a question.

8 CHAIR NIXON: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER BRAND: The
10 promotion of the Virginia Derby
11 weekend, how is that? Have you
12 increased that amount of promotion, or
13 is anything changed from last year? I
14 know you had more -- you had more time
15 and everything, but just curious what
16 you're doing to promote that weekend?

17 MR. HOPF: So right now, what
18 we've been doing is we've been
19 reaching out to those who purchased
20 tickets last year, and most of it has
21 been going through social media
22 channels. Especially, we created our
23 own Facebook page, so we are not tied
24 to the Rosie's Facebook page anymore.

25 So there is a Colonial Downs

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

2 page. Please feel free to follow.
3 We're also doing some other things
4 just through social right now. Our
5 marketing plan and marketing -- and
6 will start off in January pushing the
7 rest of the March meets.

8 So, yes. So right now, what
9 you're seeing is mainly word of mouth,
10 existing customers, and our social
11 platforms.

12 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Thank you.

13 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you,
14 Mr. Hopf.

15 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: One
16 more.

17 CHAIR NIXON: Oh, I'm sorry.

18 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: The
19 drainage of the east turn on the turf
20 course, has there been any -- been any
21 safety issues with that?

22 MR. HOPF: No. I mean, the track
23 does stay a little more wet than the
24 other parts of the course. What we've
25 ran into is when we have some more

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

2 rain, it has caused us to pull some
3 races off the turf just out of -- out
4 of precaution because of the turn
5 getting beat up, especially as wet as
6 it stays. So that is -- that's the
7 main issue there. Is it safe for the
8 horses to get around? Yes. But,
9 again, at long-term, and the amount of
10 turf races that we run, we're a little
11 more cautious with it than maybe in
12 the past, so --

13 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIR NIXON: Yes.

16 MR. AHMED: Can you clarify about
17 steeplechase dates, if you all are
18 requesting those today, or is there
19 going to be a subsequent request on
20 that?

21 MR. HOPF: So right now, the
22 request is for 48 days of racing. Our
23 plans -- and we are still having some
24 ongoing conversations with the
25 horsemen, is that we are looking at

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 possibly running jump steeplechase
3 races on separate days from the flat
4 races. So we haven't finalized dates
5 yet. That could still tie into the
6 existing things that we've requested.
7 But there might be an opportunity for
8 us to offer these races as their own
9 cards with wagering on a different day
10 of the week.

11 That's been proposed. But,
12 again, that's not been finalized, so
13 that's not part of this particular
14 proposal. But --

15 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: So that's
16 not part of the 48 days, it'd be an
17 addition to that?

18 MR. HOPF: It could be an
19 addition to those days, yes.

20 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: It could or
21 will?

22 MR. HOPF: Will. Yes.

23 MR. AHMED: And then second
24 follow-up. On the capital
25 improvements, are you all planning on

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

2 submitting a request for that since
3 that's using breakage money?

4 MR. HOPF: Correct. That is part
5 of the plan, yes. Once we get --

6 MR. AHMED: Okay. So February?

7 MR. HOPF: Yes.

8 MR. AHMED: Okay. Got it.

9 Perfect. Let's work together on that
10 to make sure -- because I think that
11 will the -- the first time that we're
12 getting that. We'll figure it out. I
13 know the race is going to need some
14 guidance on that one, so --

15 MR. HOPF: Okay. Sure enough.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Okay.

17 MS. LEWIS: Staff recommends that
18 The Commission approve the requested
19 requesting dates. The dates, again,
20 are March 12, 2026, through March 14,
21 2026, for the spring meet, and June
22 25th, 2026, through September 7th,
23 2026, for the fall -- or for the
24 summer, excuse me. We also recommend
25 granting a provisional license to

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

2 Colonial Downs Group, LLC, for their
3 facility -- or for their racing
4 license, condition upon satisfactory
5 approval of all of the statutory
6 requirements that are still
7 outstanding. They have also worked
8 very diligently to get those in to me
9 as well.

10 So that is our request.

11 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

12 MR. AHMED: Katreena, could you
13 clarify provisional license? Does
14 that mean they have to come back and
15 be on an agenda again?

16 MS. LEWIS: Yes.

17 MR. AHMED: Okay.

18 MS. LEWIS: They would need to be
19 back on the agenda. We will go
20 through all the material that is being
21 submitted by January 14, 2026, and
22 then we will look at granting them a
23 full license.

24 CHAIR NIXON: Okay.

25 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Also,

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 Katreena, that -- there's -- so in
3 that letter, if I'm reading it
4 correctly, there was some
5 authorization for release of
6 information form required that was due
7 by today at 9:00 o'clock. That's the
8 only item I see on here that was due
9 today that doesn't have a received on
10 it.

11 So have you received those?

12 MS. LEWIS: No. And I did speak
13 with them last Friday because my
14 letter went out on December 9th, and I
15 let them know that -- because some of
16 the individuals who have to sign those
17 authorizations don't -- they're not
18 close by.

19 So I told them that I would take
20 those by January 14th as well, but I
21 understand that every licensee has
22 been getting the information that I
23 have requested way before
24 January 14th. Most of them have given
25 me pretty much everything I've

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

2 required or requested, except they're
3 looking for the authorizations, the
4 fingerprints, and the permit
5 applications. Those are the things,
6 really, that are missing right now.

7 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Thank you.

8 CHAIR NIXON: I would entertain a
9 motion to approve the limited license
10 for Colonial Downs for 2026 as
11 recommended or conditioned by the
12 staff.

13 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: So moved.

14 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

15 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners
16 in favor, please say aye.

17 (Ayes).

18

19 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

20

21 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say

22 nay.

23 Motion carries.

24 Thank you, everyone.

25 Item E is the consideration of

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

2 licenses to conduct Pari-Mutuel
3 wagering on historical horse racing
4 for 2026 pursuant to Virginia Code
5 59.1-382 for Colonial Downs.

6 I recognize the applicant's
7 representatives to present the request
8 and the VR staff to present their
9 recommendations and conditions.

10 Mr. Sours.

11 MR. SOURS: Yes, good afternoon,
12 Commissioners. It's my pleasure to go
13 over our renewal application for the
14 satellite wagering facilities, HHR.

15 So going over the ownership
16 structures of the applicant legal name
17 is Colonial Downs, LLC. That is a
18 wholly-owned subsidiary out of
19 Arlington Park Race Course, LLC, which
20 is owned by Churchill Downs
21 Incorporated.

22 The satellite wagering
23 facilities, HHR facilities that are
24 being considered today are Rosie's
25 Gaming Emporium New Kent, Rosie's

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

2 Gaming Emporium Richmond, Rosie's
3 Gaming Emporium Hampton, Rosie's
4 Gaming Emporium Vinton, Rosie's Gaming
5 Emporium -- Rosie's Gaming Emporium
6 Emporia, Rosie's Gaming Room
7 Collinsville, and The Rose Gaming
8 Resort, and Roseshire Gaming Parlor.

9 So just going over the current
10 state of machines in Virginia, we're
11 up to 4,868, and that compares to 4458
12 this time last year. So roughly a 400
13 gain increase. We have replaced over
14 1,700 games this year and converted
15 out over 400 software. So continue to
16 keep the parlor very current.

17 So just looking at the individual
18 facilities, the first one is New Kent
19 as a restaurant, which is our R'Burger
20 Kitchen. It has also the 1609
21 Restaurant, and also over private
22 dining areas, which you all are very
23 familiar with. And the total
24 occupiable square feet is 112,200. We
25 generate approximately 380 permanent

P R O C E E D I N G S

1 jobs at this facility, and had --
2 currently has 486 historic racing
3 games.
4

5 Moving on to Vinton. This one
6 was expanded back in 2021 to go to 500
7 games. It currently has 470 machines
8 in it. It also has the R'Burger
9 Rosie's Kitchen. It does have a bar
10 with a stage for music entertainment.
11 Occupiable square feet is 3,300 and it
12 has approximately 120 permanent jobs.

13 Looking at Richmond. Richmond
14 also has 1,199 historic racing
15 machines. Has approximately 190
16 permanent jobs. A total occupiable
17 square feet 133,000. It does have two
18 bars and two restaurants. The Rosie's
19 Burger Kitchen as well as the Playbook
20 Sports Bar Grill. And recently, we
21 did complete the expansion out there,
22 which you all are very familiar with.

23 Looking at the Hampton, this one
24 also has the Rosie's R'Burger Kitchen.
25 It has approximately 160 permanent

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

2 jobs. It has 700 historic racing
3 machines, and the occupiable square
4 feet is 37,500.

5 Going out to Collinsville, this
6 is the Collinsville game room. This
7 one is 3,500 occupiable square feet.
8 It has 25 permanent jobs, and there
9 are 37 devices there.

10 Emporia down south also has
11 the R'Burger Kitchen. It does have a
12 stage for music entertainment behind
13 the bar. It's 16,900 square feet, it
14 has 95 permanent jobs, and has 150
15 devices.

16 Looking at The Rose Gaming
17 Resort, this one is 175,000 square
18 feet. It currently has 1,650 devices.
19 Total occupancy is 7,000. It has
20 eight bars and restaurants to include
21 1609 Restaurant, as well as a Market
22 Street Food Court. It has 102 hotel
23 rooms with 3,300 square feet of
24 banquet space.

25 I'm going to go to my paper copy

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

2 now. And we have approximately 450
3 jobs out there. And then the last one
4 is Roseshire Gaming Parlor, which has
5 175 devices. It has a Crimson Kitchen
6 Restaurant. Total occupancy out there
7 is 733, and we currently have 115
8 permanent jobs.

9 And just to recap where the funds
10 for each HHR dollar wager go to the
11 five entities, the Virginia Horse
12 Center, the Virginia Breeder's Fund,
13 the VEA, the Virginia Horse Industry
14 Board, and the Virginia and Maryland
15 College of Veterinary Medicine.

16 So with that, I will be happy to
17 take any questions.

18 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners, any
19 questions for Mr. Sours, or comments?

20 COMMISSIONER BRAND: I have a
21 couple. On Collinsville, how many
22 machines are on the Collinsville?

23 MR. SOURS: Sure. There's 37.

24 COMMISSIONER BRAND: 37. And
25 then at the Roseshire Gaming Facility,

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

2 have you all gotten the liquor
3 license?

4 MR. SOURS: It's still going
5 through the appeal process.

6 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Has your --
7 do you have any idea when that might
8 be resolved?

9 MR. SOURS: We are working with
10 the administrative judge and waiting
11 for an opinion.

12 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Thank you.

13 MR. SOURS: You're welcome.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners, any
15 other comments or questions to
16 Mr. Sours?

17 MR. AHMED: I'll ask a question
18 just because this is sort of the bread
19 and butter of the industry.

20 Do you all foresee any threats or
21 challenges next year to the pandle as
22 the gaming sort of landscape evolves?

23 MR. SOURS: Sure. I think we are
24 all aware that a Live casino is
25 opening in Petersburg, is in the same

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 basic market as three of our
3 operations. So Emporia -- well,
4 actually, four now, Emporia, Richmond,
5 Roseshire, and New Kent will all
6 compete for the same player that Live
7 is competing for. I think Roseshire
8 and with The Rose, hopefully, will
9 offset those impacts and still grow in
10 2026.

11 MR. AHMED: So any plans to
12 change those operations when the
13 casino goes up?

14 MR. SOURS: No, the only
15 significant projects for 2026 would be
16 additional parking in Richmond.

17 CHAIR NIXON: Anything else for
18 Mr. Sours?

19 Are we good, Waqas?

20 MR. AHMED: Yes. Katreena is
21 going to --

22 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. Katreena.

23 MS. LEWIS: Pursuant to Virginia
24 Code, the staff recommends that The
25 Commission grant Colonial Downs Group

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

2 a provisional owner/operator's license
3 for its satellite wagering facilities
4 under 59.1-371. Fingerprints, permit
5 applications, and background
6 investigations remain outstanding.

7 Permanent licensure shall not be
8 granted until all statutory
9 requirements are fully satisfied. So
10 accordingly, the staff recommends
11 provisional licensure conditioned upon
12 The Commission's receipt and review of
13 all outstanding fingerprinting and
14 background materials.

15 CHAIR NIXON: I would like to
16 entertain a motion to approve the
17 licenses as recommended or conditioned
18 by staff. Is there a motion?

19 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

20 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

21 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:

22 Second.

23 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
24 Gordon-Moore. All commissioners in
25 favor, please say aye.

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

2 (Ayes).

3
4 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

5
6 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
7 nay.

8 Motion carries.

9 Thank you, Mr. Sours.

10 MR. SOURS: Thank you.

11 CHAIR NIXON: Item F is a
12 consideration of licenses to conduct
13 advanced deposit wagering for 2026
14 pursuant to Virginia Code 59.1-369.2
15 for NYRA Bets, TVG, Twinspires, and
16 Xpressbet.

17 I recognize the VRC staff to
18 present their recommendations and
19 conditions.

20 MS. LEWIS: Staff recommends that
21 The Commission grant provisional
22 advanced depositing wagering licenses
23 to Churchill Downs Technology
24 Initiative Company, NYRA Bets, LLC,
25 ODS Technologies, Xpressbet, LLC.

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

2 Advanced depositing wagering
3 licenses are issued pursuant to Title
4 59.1 of the Code of Virginia,
5 including Section 59.1-369 through 371
6 in The Commission's implementing
7 regulations.

8 For each applicant, Commission
9 staff conducted a preliminary review
10 and identified missing or incomplete
11 materials necessary to complete the
12 statutory suitability, financial
13 responsibility, and compliance
14 determinations.

15 Deficiency letters identifying
16 the required supplemental information
17 were transmitted to each applicant via
18 e-mail. Staff further advises that
19 certain applicants submitted late
20 Thursday afternoon. However,
21 Commission staff has not yet had the
22 opportunity to complete its review of
23 those submissions.

24 In addition, licensing
25 application fees remain outstanding

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

2 for one or more applicants and
3 follow-up correspondence regarding
4 fees were sent on December 12, 2025.

5 Accordingly, staff recommends
6 provisional licensure only conditioned
7 upon staff review and acceptance of
8 all supplemental materials submitted
9 to date, submission and approval of
10 all remaining documentation identified
11 in the deficiency letters, submission
12 of all required permit applications,
13 fingerprints, and background
14 investigation materials, and receipt
15 of all required ADW licensing
16 application fees.

17 Permanent licensure shall not be
18 considered until staff has completed
19 its review, and The Commission is able
20 to make all findings required under
21 Title 59.1 of the Code of Virginia and
22 applicable regulations.

23 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Do you
24 anticipate by the February meeting,
25 these will all be resolved?

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

2 MS. LEWIS: Yes, sir.

3 CHAIR NIXON: Any other questions
4 or comments for the VRC staff?

5 Okay. I would entertain a motion
6 to approve the ADW license for 2026.
7 Is there a motion?

8 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

9 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner
10 Tanner. Is there a second?

11 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

12 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand.
13 All commissioners in favor, please say
14 aye.

15 (Ayes).

16
17 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

18
19 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
20 nay.

21 Motion carries. Thank you.

22 Item G is the consideration of
23 the horsemen's contract between
24 Colonial Downs and the Virginia
25 Horsemen Benevolent and Protective

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

2 Association pursuant to Virginia Code
3 59.36914.

4 I recognize the representatives
5 and staff. Mr. Berman, and
6 Mr. Petramalo, and Mr. Hopf.

7 MR. BERMAN: Good afternoon.

8 The Horsemen and the track have
9 come to an agreement, which we have
10 provided to the VRC. There was give
11 and take on both sides, but we both
12 are, I think, very satisfied with the
13 results included in our contract for
14 the next two years. It's a two-year
15 contract.

16 Is -- a couple of the items that
17 Mr. Hopf talked about, the pavers,
18 that's in there, that they have to be
19 level and all the way to the stalls
20 and all the way out to the track.
21 Drainage on the far turn of the turf
22 course is going to be worked on. We
23 gave them until 2027 to get it done
24 just because working on the turf
25 course could cause a disruption of the

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

2 upcoming meet, but since we have a
3 two-year contract, we're able to put
4 that in there.

5 And we -- a couple of the other
6 bigger items. Wheelchair access to
7 the buildings in the back, the racing
8 office, our office, and also into
9 the -- and into and out of the
10 paddock. Steps are going to be -- or,
11 you know, they're going to work on the
12 ingress and egress of all of those
13 areas. A couple of more handicap
14 spots in the back where the buildings
15 are. And then maintenance issues were
16 addressed. Increased cleaning.
17 Things that seemed to be missing last
18 year are in the contract this year.

19 Those are -- those are the bigger
20 points.

21 MR. AHMED: The staff has
22 reviewed the contract and it complies
23 with the statutes.

24 MR. BERMAN: Say it out loud for
25 the mic.

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

2 MR. AHMED: Staff has reviewed
3 the contract and it complies with our
4 statutes and regulations.

5 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners, do
6 you have any comments or questions?

7 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: I
8 just want to ask about the shuttle.
9 So this year, you are proposing to go
10 into both Laurel and Fairhill; is that
11 correct? Based on demand?

12 MR. BERMAN: Well, it'll --
13 probably depends on the time. Laurel
14 doesn't really want us shuttling
15 from -- when they're running. So we
16 ran into that problem this year. We
17 were doing Laurel when they were
18 closed, but once they opened, they
19 refused to allow it.

20 And so, for a week there, we were
21 doing Fairville, but the contract says
22 Maryland. So it'll be one shuttle.
23 But depending on what's going on in
24 Maryland, it'll be either Fairhill or
25 Laurel.

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

2 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: But
3 no shuttles in Virginia at all, just
4 out of state?

5 MR. BERMAN: Within Virginia?

6 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Yeah.

7 MR. BERMAN: No.

8 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Okay.

9 MR. BERMAN: No, this is just
10 Maryland and back.

11 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioners?

12 COMMISSIONER BRAND: I have a
13 question. I noticed that the -- for
14 Mr. Hopf. I noticed that the -- the
15 racing in May is coinciding -- excuse
16 me -- in March is coinciding with
17 Maryland; is that correct?

18 MR. HOPF: Yes, as I -- as I'm
19 aware, they are planning on running
20 those three days in March.

21 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Do you
22 perceive any kind of problems as far
23 as staffing?

24 MR. HOPF: No, not from -- not
25 from a staffing standpoint. I think

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

2 we'll be fine. Either if those
3 individuals that come from Maryland
4 are unable to, I think we have enough
5 people at reach to be coming from --
6 from other locales for that season.
7 So I feel comfortable with our
8 staffing on the racing side for
9 that -- for that weekend of racing.

10 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. AHMED: When will the track
12 open for training? I forgot to ask
13 that. For the Derby as well as the
14 summer meet.

15 MR. HOPF: So, Glen -- for March,
16 Glen and I have been talking about
17 that briefly. We are probably looking
18 at opening the stable area possibly
19 that Saturday before we take entry
20 seven days out. So that would be the
21 5th, 6th, 7th, we'll take entries.

22 Again, we have not finalized
23 this, but possibly open up the barn
24 area on that Saturday. Open the track
25 for training starting on Sunday, and

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

2 go all the way through Saturday with
3 the gates available Tuesday through
4 Saturday of that week. So I believe
5 Mr. Berman has got a board meeting
6 tomorrow. I think they will discuss
7 that at that point.

8 Looking towards the summer meet,
9 we will open up two weeks before
10 opening day, possibly looking at the
11 stable area opening up on that
12 Wednesday. Have the track available
13 two weeks before. So I believe that
14 will be the 11th, if I'm remembering
15 my dates right. And then we'll stay
16 open the one week, for right now,
17 after the meet concludes.

18 MR. AHMED: Okay. Could you let
19 Dr. Stanford know as soon as you all
20 agree on dates? Because he'll have to
21 put out the vets.

22 MR. HOPF: Yes. We will.

23 MR. AHMED: Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: One
25 more thing. So the track will be open

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

2 seven days a week for training?

3 MR. BERMAN: That's in our
4 contract, yes.

5 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE: Okay.

6 CHAIR NIXON: Anything else?

7 Thank you.

8 I would entertain a motion to
9 approve the horsemen contract. Is
10 there a motion?

11 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

12 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:
13 Second.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you. All
15 commissioners in favor, please say
16 aye.

17 (Ayes).

18

19 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

20

21 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
22 nay.

23 Motion carries.

24 Thank you, gentlemen.

25 Item H is a consideration of the

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

2 request to withdraw administrative
3 costs from the horsemen's account
4 pursuant to Virginia Code 59.1-392.
5 Representatives of the Virginia HBPA
6 are recognized along with the VRC
7 staff.

8 MR. BERMAN: Good afternoon
9 again.

10 So pursuant to statute, the
11 majority -- the majority horsemen is
12 -- at their license meeting made
13 subject to your approval which
14 administrative costs associated with
15 serving the interest of the horsemen
16 in an amount not to exceed 2 percent
17 of the amount in the horsemen's
18 account, the purse account.

19 We've submitted a budget for next
20 year. I believe answered follow-up
21 questions from the new auditor,
22 Camille, that had more questions. We
23 addressed all those questions she had
24 about where the money goes and what
25 our operation is.

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

2 And our request is for slightly
3 more than last year. We've given you
4 our budget from last year, which was
5 443,000. Actual was 448, and we
6 requested 380 last year. This year,
7 our budget is 483. It's -- the
8 expenses were a little bit more in
9 certain areas, but not actually
10 proportionate to the amount of
11 increase in days.

12 And in this year, we've requested
13 \$420,000 of our \$483,000 budget. The
14 percentage of our first account,
15 because it's increased so much, that
16 we're requesting is 1.4 percent. Even
17 though we're allowed to ask for up to
18 2 percent, it doesn't seem necessary.

19 And last year, we were just about
20 at 2 percent. And most horsemen, that
21 I'm aware of, pretty much think they
22 are 2 percent, but our budget is what
23 our budget is. So that's our request.

24 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: It seems to
25 me that every line item has increased.

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

2 Did you have anything in the actual
3 2025 that was below budget?

4 MR. BERMAN: Well, our -- I
5 thought they were mostly -- was very
6 similar. Our biggest increase was in
7 contributions. We do get requests for
8 money from all sorts of different
9 entities other than state. And
10 sometimes from national when there's,
11 you know, flood and things like that,
12 elsewhere gets special requests.

13 MR. HOPF: Actually, there were
14 two that were below budget.

15 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: I see that.

16 MR. HOPF: Accounting and
17 miscellaneous.

18 COMMISSIONER SIEGEL: Right. But
19 do you feel like these all need to be
20 increased regardless?

21 MR. BERMAN: Well --

22 MR. HOPF: Well, yes, that's been
23 the experience on 2025. For example,
24 the request in 2025 was for 20,000 in
25 contributions. We spent 32,000.

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

2 Contributions needs to be defined.

3 It's not simply limited to charitable
4 contributions. Our budget line says
5 contributions, and that includes
6 sponsorship of Virginia-bred races
7 throughout the state at steeplechase
8 meets and at -- at point of points, in
9 addition to the charitable
10 contributions.

11 COMMISSIONER TANNER: And -- and
12 the -- your -- I think one item did go
13 down. We are at utilities. I don't
14 know how you got your utilities to go
15 down. I'd like to do that too. I do
16 have --

17 MR. HOPF: I'm sorry, among other
18 things, we've discontinued telephone
19 land line service to our office, among
20 other things.

21 COMMISSIONER TANNER: That
22 explains why I couldn't reach, you
23 know --

24 MR. HOPF: Still have a cell
25 phone.

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

2 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Yes. So I
3 do have a question. There was a line
4 item in the past about chaplaincy and
5 backside support. I don't remember
6 what you called it, but I don't see it
7 here.

8 MR. HOPF: You -- Commissioner
9 Tanner, you will see that in February
10 because that's part of a separate
11 budget. That's the breakage budget.

12 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Great.
13 Thank you. Thanks, Frank.

14 CHAIR NIXON: Any other questions
15 or comments? Good?

16 Waqas, are you good?

17 MR. AHMED: Yes. Thank you.

18 CHAIR NIXON: Okay. No problem.
19 Okay. Go ahead.

20 MR. JONES: Yes. Good afternoon,
21 Commissioners. The order compliance
22 division were tasked with conducting a
23 limited high-level review of VHBPA
24 necessary budget request, which he
25 kind of touched on. I believe the

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

2 follow-up questions have all been
3 addressed.

4 Based on that review, the request
5 was within the 2 percent statutory
6 cap. The request was pretty
7 consistent with prior practices, and
8 we really did not identify any
9 statutory issues that would preclude
10 Commission action.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIR NIXON: I would entertain a
13 motion to approve the request. Is
14 there a motion?

15 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

16 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

17 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

18 CHAIR NIXON: Commissioner Brand.
19 All commissioners in favor, please say
20 aye.

21 (Ayes).

22
23 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

24
25 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say

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

2 nay.

3 The motion carries. Thank you.

4 MR. BERMAN: Thank you.

5 CHAIR NIXON: Item I is the
6 consideration of the agency's
7 strategic plan pursuant to Virginia
8 Code 59.1-364 and 59.1-369. I
9 recognize Executive Secretary Ahmed
10 and deputy secretary Secretary
11 Wolford.

12 MR. AHMED: Thank you, Madam
13 Chair. By the way, for the record, I
14 like the way that you say A. I think
15 that engages the next generation.

16 So I would like to present for
17 your consideration the VRC's strategic
18 plan. It's on the screen up there for
19 the public's inspection as well. This
20 plan is for 2026 through 2028. It was
21 developed following comprehensive
22 reviews, external reviews, as well as
23 internal conducted in 2024 by the APA,
24 Auditor Public Accounts, the Office of
25 State Inspector General, and

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

2 independent consultant staffed by the
3 Virginia Racing Commission board.

4 So last week, I attended the
5 Global Symposium on Racing. It's an
6 event I've been going to for about
7 five years, and was very happy to hear
8 the buzz surrounding the boutique
9 environment and circuit that Virginia
10 has created. It was also very
11 sobering to hear that many of our
12 colleagues in jurisdictions across the
13 U.S. are contracting.

14 And so, I think given that
15 contrast, we must recognize who and
16 what got us here. Certainly,
17 historical horse racing is the gold
18 standard here, and it's difficult to
19 imagine our position without it. But
20 more importantly, our success is due
21 to the cohesive nature of the groups
22 that make the Virginia Equine
23 Alliance, the VTA, VHHA, HBPA,
24 alongside the partner tracks, Gold
25 Cup, Shenandoah Downs, as well as

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

2 Colonial Downs. And, of course, it
3 relies on the vital role you all play
4 as commissioners in licensing,
5 approving the licenses, as well as
6 formally recognizing these groups
7 under the VRC's umbrella.

8 So this collected success is a
9 direct result of every entity's
10 commitment under your oversight to our
11 shared statutory mandate to promote,
12 sustain, and grow this industry.

13 So over the last few months,
14 Brian and I have met with each of
15 these groups to find ways to improve
16 our process, whether they be before
17 the meet or after the meet. We moved
18 away from discussing things in silos.
19 So instead of sitting down with our
20 team and then taking the
21 recommendation, issues to the
22 respective counterparts, we all got in
23 one room, sat down around the table,
24 and discussed issues as well as
25 solutions.

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

2 But I really want to commend
3 Brian Wolford for that. He came up
4 with the idea of the afteraction
5 reviews, and I'm not -- I don't think
6 -- it might be a miss, but I don't
7 think I've heard of that being adopted
8 in other racing jurisdictions. So
9 another Virginia first to add to the
10 list.

11 So we've implemented many changes
12 over the last year, often guided by
13 the North Star of the external audits.
14 And now it's time to, as we fill those
15 gaps, to shift the focus of the North
16 Star to strategic and clear vision.
17 So that's the strategic plan for you.
18 It's on one page, so it's easy for
19 everybody to understand. It's
20 designed to position the VRC as a
21 national leader in racing regulation,
22 but also championing a model that
23 proves integrity and growth are
24 inseparable.

25 So I'm going to turn it over to

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

2 Brian, who is the mastermind in a lot
3 of this strategy, and he is going to
4 talk through this activity with us.

5 MR. WOLFORD: So, Madam Chair,
6 commissioners, what I'd like to do is
7 just kind of explain the chart.

8 I think if you look at it from
9 the top blue line, and we'll work
10 down. So where we see "Mission,
11 Vision, and Values," I would offer
12 that is a purview of the
13 commissioners. If you start on the
14 far left, "The Mission," Chapter 29,
15 Article I, it's a law. Why we exist?
16 Promote and regulate.

17 And I think, as you heard from
18 the reports, just earlier in this
19 meeting for the first time in its 36
20 year history, the Virginia Racing
21 Commission has its authorized nine
22 classified employees with the one
23 appointee here. So it has its staff
24 of ten. And it's already started to
25 do some pretty phenomenal work.

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

2 "The Vision." The vision flows
3 from the mission itself. To be the
4 national leader. It sounds like a
5 pretty lofty goal when you think
6 Kentucky, California, Florida, New
7 York. But having being able to travel
8 just a little bit in the last couple
9 of months and seeing what the team
10 here in Virginia has not only done,
11 but will continue to do is pretty
12 impressive. And then again, the
13 values on the far right, again, flow
14 from the mission itself.

15 When you step down to the second
16 blue line, those core objectives,
17 we've been those, if you will, in
18 three pillars, integrity and safety,
19 sustainable growth, organizational
20 excellence. Frankly, this is where a
21 lot of organizations stop. They
22 create a fancy marquee, missions and
23 values, and they say, "This is what we
24 are going to do." But they never do
25 the hard work of saying, "Okay, what

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

2 are the actual tasks that we have to
3 do to meet those objectives? What are
4 the things that we can measure,
5 quantify in over two years to see if
6 we're actually getting to those
7 objectives?"

8 So what we would offer today is
9 if you look at those three pillars,
10 integrity and safety, sustainable
11 growth, organizational excellence,
12 with your approval, then the executive
13 secretary of the staff and all the
14 stakeholders will then work to develop
15 what you see at the very bottom. The
16 key performance indicators.

17 Then we come back to you probably
18 every other meeting and say, "Okay,
19 this is the mandate you gave us.
20 These are the things that we're going
21 to work on over the next two years to
22 meet the goals of the actual strategic
23 plan, and then we'll update you as we
24 go on that."

25 So -- and then we get to the

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 bottom, which is the end-state. The
3 green if you will. That's the goal.

4 So, questions, please.

5 MR. AHMED: Brian, could you read
6 that bottom. I think it's very
7 important to have that.

8 MR. WOLFORD: Yes, so the
9 end-state: "Working by, with, and
10 through its industry stakeholders, the
11 VRC regulates and promotes Virginia's
12 live and historical horse racing
13 industry, ensuring integrity, safety,
14 and welfare while being recognized as
15 a national regulatory leader
16 championing a model that proves that
17 both and integrity and growth are
18 inseparable creating a vibrant, fair,
19 and sustainable industry for
20 Virginia."

21 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Can you
22 provide some insight into a timeline
23 going forward for the development of
24 the KPIs and other aspects, tasks,
25 activities, resources needed

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

2 presenting this is accepted today?

3 MR. WOLFORD: Yes, so the staff
4 has kind of already kind. So just for
5 everyone. So KPIs, so what are they?
6 Those are metrics. Those are things
7 that we can actually use, actions,
8 events, weight point that -- when I
9 say operationalize, again, if we go
10 back to the mission, sounds lofty.
11 What are those tasks that we have to
12 do as a staff, as a community, to
13 develop? And then there's really two
14 things you have to look at. Measures
15 of performance, measures of
16 effectiveness. We can do a task, and
17 we can do the right steps one through,
18 you know, five to complete a task.
19 But is it the right task? And that's
20 where you get into measures of
21 effectiveness.

22 You could do the right, you know,
23 steps to complete the task, but that
24 may not move your metric from, you
25 know, 1 to 100, or wherever you want

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

2 to get it. So I think working with
3 the staff has already done, to answer
4 your question, and the external
5 stakeholders, I think we come back to
6 you in February and show you,
7 basically, the accompanying KPIs.
8 We'll go with each one of these. I
9 don't think we need 100 different
10 metrics. If you look at the three
11 core pillars, there are two or three
12 tasks under each of those. We may be
13 able to achieve those with one
14 measurable task. Some may require two
15 or three. So but I think the next
16 time we meet, we'll be able to show
17 you, okay, here's the roadmap itself.

18 COMMISSIONER TANNER: And the
19 biannual budget, which was mentioned
20 earlier, has that -- I'm sure that's
21 been a part of the discussion so far
22 so that you have the resources to
23 carry out those tasks.

24 MR. WOLFORD: Yeah. It's a great
25 point. And I think The Commission has

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

2 seen what a fully resourced nine plus
3 one staff has already done. And just
4 saying it public -- publicly for the
5 group, if you look at from 1989
6 forward, VRC was authorized nine plus
7 one, a total of ten people. You get
8 to 2018, House Bill 1609 is passed.
9 Vastly increases the regulatory scope
10 of The Commission but it has been held
11 at, frankly, I think talking to our
12 longest-serving VRC employee, The
13 Commission has never had more than six
14 people. And that includes up until
15 just about six months ago when through
16 your leadership and the executive
17 secretary here, we actually got up to
18 nine plus one.

19 So, yes, it is being considered,
20 and it makes a difference. With an
21 adequate staff, you can do a lot of
22 things.

23 COMMISSIONER BRAND: I just
24 wanted to clarify. How often will you
25 give us an update on your -- the KPIs

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

2 on how close you are, what that update
3 would be, is it quarterly?

4 MR. WOLFORD: So either quarterly
5 or semiannual. We can certainly do
6 quarterly. Some metrics are just
7 going to -- they are not going to move
8 that fast. But I think at least twice
9 a year. So you would get four bites
10 of the apple over a two-year plan.

11 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Right.
12 Good.

13 CHAIR NIXON: Any other
14 commissioners?

15 I would just like to thank you
16 guys both for working so hard on this,
17 and working with the other
18 stakeholders, and I'm excited about
19 this moving forward. So thank you
20 very much.

21 I would entertain a motion to
22 approve the agency's strategic plan.
23 Is there a motion?

24 COMMISSIONER BRAND: So moved.

25 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:

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

2 Second.

3 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners
4 in favor, please say aye.

5 (Ayes).

6

7 NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

8

9 CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
10 nay.

11 The motion carries.

12 Before we move into the second
13 public comment period, I believe
14 Commissioner Gordon-Moore wanted to
15 talk about to -- you went to Tucson a
16 couple of weeks ago, correct?

17 COMMISSIONER GORDON-MOORE:

18 Actually, yes. It was last week. And
19 Brian Wolford, Waqas Ahmed,
20 Commissioner Tanner, and I all went.
21 Plus two additional Virginia people.
22 And it was quite enlightening. Many
23 panels use Virginia as an example of
24 doing things right to advance racing.
25 They talked about the collaboration

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

2 with -- and cooperation with Maryland
3 particularly.

4 Standardbred business was talked
5 about. Is doing very well. Fall
6 crowds growing, sales flourishing, and
7 racing is improving. Advances being
8 made in the health and safety of both
9 horses and jockeys, and we continued
10 to strive towards consistency of rules
11 and practical issues. The University
12 of Arizona promotes young people into
13 our business, and their enthusiasm
14 gives us all hope for a future.

15 The biggest issue seemed to be
16 the sports betting free-for-all out
17 there. World-wide betting versus
18 state-controlled betting, prediction
19 markets, and there's so many loopholes
20 to contend with. So we have to
21 understand exactly what's going on.

22 The biggest threat to us is
23 decoupling of racing and casinos,
24 allowing racing to be phased out,
25 which none of us want. Racing is

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

2 changing and we need to be prepared to
3 protect our fragile ecosystem. It's
4 rapidly expanding. The rapidly
5 expanding technologies are a threat
6 that we must understand and manage
7 wisely.

8 And there's a definite movement
9 in all areas to collaborate with your
10 neighbors between states and regions,
11 trying to improve racing for all of
12 us. And there was a lot more, but I
13 just tried to gather a few bullet
14 points.

15 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you for that
16 report.

17 Do you want to add anything?

18 COMMISSIONER TANNER: The only
19 thing I would add is that through
20 discussions, we're going to be taking
21 the things we've learned, and I hope
22 building them into the strategic plan.
23 And when appropriate, working with
24 appropriate stakeholders to develop
25 them. Because the worst thing you can

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

2 do is send me to a conference, I come
3 back with lots of things I want to do,
4 and this one was no different. So get
5 ready.

6 CHAIR NIXON: Well, thank you
7 both for going and reporting on that.
8 I appreciate it.

9 Now, we will move into -- I will
10 open the floor for the second period
11 of public comment. If anyone wants to
12 get up and speak, I believe the
13 microphone is right over there.

14 MR. SHORES: Commission, my name
15 is Hoppy Shores. I know most of you
16 all. I've been your most ardent fan
17 since the track opened in 1997. But
18 I'd like to just go over some points
19 from the fan experience this year, and
20 some -- some of the stories I hear
21 from owners who would not want to be
22 here to say these remarks.

23 But anyway, first of all, I want
24 to say from hearing the report on
25 Shenandoah Downs, it was my first real

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 experience at the Standardbred, and
3 certainly Darryl and Aiden do an
4 amazing job running that -- that meet
5 there. And the staff they put
6 together, who work so good together.
7 And then to meet some of the owners
8 and trainers and drivers, they just
9 have an unwavering passion for their
10 sport. So for those of you all that
11 haven't been there, please try to
12 experience that.

13 As far as the fan experience this
14 year, certainly the entry process was
15 much improved. Whether you come in
16 from the paddock gate or you come in
17 from the maintain lobby, both the
18 staffs were well trained, and they can
19 actually get you to the seat or the
20 area of the track that you wanted.
21 And that's been a first.

22 And a lot of those people were
23 crossed-trained, so later in the day,
24 they could go to another -- take up
25 another task somewhere else. And

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2 especially late in the meet, when a
3 lot of the college people had left,
4 that these people could actually go
5 fill in in other places and keep it a
6 very smooth operation. And I know
7 they added, I think, three track
8 ambassadors who would wear the T-shirt
9 that says, you know, "Ask me." They
10 were very very first on where to send
11 people and to get them to their seats.

12 I would probably say the one
13 issue that came up that I talked to
14 Frank about some was when you come in
15 through the paddock side and go to --
16 to the check-in, it's right in the
17 sun. And with these digital tickets
18 on your phone, and you're going, the
19 sun is beating down on that, and one,
20 there might be a line of four or five
21 people, and it's actually fairly hot
22 there, so if they -- if they're trying
23 to purchase tickets, they're looking
24 at a little 8-inch iPad with the sun
25 on it, and you can't see to pick out

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

2 your seats.

3 So I did work with Frank, we did
4 get some laminated seating charts, at
5 least for the jockey club, but we
6 never did get one for the grandstand,
7 which what would happen is, you know,
8 the patrons want to have that close
9 view. So they go up, and when they
10 finally sit there for five or ten
11 minutes in the sun with no covering,
12 realize that that's not where they
13 want to be, especially if it's a large
14 group of ten or 12, then they are
15 trying to move somewhere and, you
16 know, often sitting in other people's
17 seats. So I do think that if we could
18 get another laminated for the
19 grandstand, it would smooth out that
20 process.

21 But I congratulate Frank on
22 getting his people trained and making
23 the process so much more smoother this
24 year. And also the -- in the grand
25 stands, the food service was much

P R O C E E D I N G S

1 improved. The service was much
2 improved. And the staff was, again,
3 well-trained and able to deliver, in a
4 timely manner, the food.

5
6 In terms of the suites, you know,
7 they were certainly underutilized and
8 the marketing from them was probably
9 underwhelming. They just were not --
10 you know, I saw a definite decline in
11 the use of the suites. You know, and
12 one idea -- and actually, Commissioner
13 Siegel brought it up a couple of years
14 ago, is having these alumni days. And
15 I know William and Mary did a really
16 successful one a couple of years ago
17 and had over 100 people come, you
18 know, not only at the suites, but
19 also, you know, maybe had a race named
20 after them, and were with the winner
21 circle.

22 And Commissioner Siegel had
23 brought, you know, that would be, you
24 know, as many colleges and
25 universities in this area. He would

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

2 see that would be a good day to fill
3 in, like, the Thursday, Friday kind of
4 race days.

5 CHAIR NIXON: Hoppy, I could sit
6 here and listen to you all day, trust
7 me, but I do have to kind of keep it
8 to three minutes. So --

9 MR. SHORES: All right.

10 CHAIR NIXON: If you could just
11 wrap up sort of quickly. Anything
12 else?

13 MR. SHORES: I better not then.

14 CHAIR NIXON: But I do appreciate
15 you commenting and always speaking
16 because, you know, this is great news
17 to hear. Maybe Churchill can give you
18 a job, you know, with all of this.

19 MR. SHORES: I would like to tell
20 you one quick 30-second story. It was
21 the favorite moment of the meet. One
22 day, it was a very hot day, and there
23 was a church group with probably 15
24 young girls from 10 to 14 years old,
25 and they made the mistake of getting

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2 those seats out on the rail in the sun
3 and ended up in the walkway in front
4 of my box with -- they had three or
5 four woman chaperones with them, and I
6 gave them a program, and they turned
7 around and said, you know, "These two
8 little girls, 10-year-olds, would like
9 to root for a horse, who are you
10 rooting for?"

11 And I said, "Number 1." And
12 they, "Okay. Well, good." So the two
13 little girls ran down to stay on the
14 rail, and right before the race, I
15 went down and bought them each a \$2
16 ticket. So they all showed their
17 friends what they had.

18 Well, as they turned in for home,
19 Number 1 and Number 10 were distant
20 from -- from the field. It was a head
21 bob the whole way, and they were just
22 waiting on -- on it to become
23 official. Well, Number 1 did not win.

24 So a couple of minutes later, the
25 lady brings up the 10-year-old girl

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

2 who was crying -- I mean, very crying,
3 and the lady held her head up to her
4 stomach, and said she wanted to say
5 thank you. And she could hardly get
6 the words out.

7 And I said, "Oh, that's all
8 right, little girl." I said, "Maybe
9 next time your horse will win."

10 And she said, "Well, she wasn't
11 crying because her horse lost. She is
12 crying because she was so happy."

13 And I said, "What?"

14 She says, "That's the most
15 exciting thing she's ever seen in her
16 life."

17 So I hope when race fans come,
18 they can all share a moment like that.

19 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you, Hoppy.
20 I appreciate that.

21 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Thank you,
22 Hoppy. One of the things at the
23 conference was, Frank, The Texas Horse
24 Experience, are you familiar?

25 MR. SHORES: No.

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

2 MR. HOPF: Yeah. I am, actually.

3 COMMISSIONER TANNER: Maybe

4 that's a potential use for some of

5 those -- I mean, we don't have to do

6 exactly what they do with a DJ

7 blasting everybody else out.

8 MR. HOPF: Yeah, I know.

9 COMMISSIONER TANNER: But, you

10 know, that may be something we could

11 do.

12 MR. HOPF: Yes, we're certainly

13 going to continue to evaluate and

14 develop some more things here.

15 CHAIR NIXON: Thank you.

16 If there's no other business, I

17 would like to entertain to adjourn

18 this meeting.

19 Is there a motion from The

20 Commission?

21 COMMISSIONER TANNER: So moved.

22 CHAIR NIXON: Is there a second?

23 COMMISSIONER BRAND: Second.

24 CHAIR NIXON: All commissioners

25 in favor of adjournment, please say

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P R O C E E D I N G S

aye.

(Ayes).

NOTE: Commissioners respond aye.

CHAIR NIXON: All opposed say
nay.

All motion carries.

The meeting is adjourned.

NOTE: This concludes the
December 15, 2025, meeting of the
Virginia Racing Commission.

HEARING CONCLUDED

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C E R T I F I C A T E

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA)

: ss.

COUNTY OF RICHMOND)

I, JUAN ORTEGA, a Notary Public
within and for the Commonwealth of
Virginia, do hereby certify:

THAT SAID PROCEEDINGS is a
transcript of the Virginia Racing
Commission Public Hearing, when held on
December 15, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in
Richmond, Virginia.

I further certify this is a true
and accurate transcript to the best of
my ability to hear and understand the
proceedings and other incidents of the
hearing herein as set down to the best
of my ability.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
set my hand this 29th day of December,
2025.

Juan Ortega

JUAN ORTEGA, CCR

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