

## Atlanticville

February 10, 2011 Front Page

# State to seek proposals for sale of Monmouth Park

Local officials laud bills aimed at saving horse racing

BY DAN HOWLEY

Staff Writer

The state will solicit proposals for the sale of Monmouth Park racetrack in Oceanport. The New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority is preparing a request for proposals for the sale of Monmouth Park.

The announcement came as Gov. Chris Christie signed several bills into law aimed at helping to keep the state's ailing horse-racing industry afloat.

According to NJSEA spokesman John Samerjian, the authority has begun drafting the request for proposals (RFP), but he said lastweek information on guidelines and qualifications of those who submit proposals were not yet available.

Oceanport Mayor Michael Mahon said the borough was expecting the authority to issue the RFP.

"The governor's announcement ... that the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority would issue in the near future a request for proposals for the sale of Monmouth Park, including assignment of additional off-track wagering operations, comes as no surprise to the Oceanport Task Force [on Monmouth Park]," Mahon said.

"Representatives have maintained an open dialogue with the Hanson Commission, the NJSEA, the [N.J. Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association] and others that will likely play a key role in preserving horse racing at Monmouth Park." Christie made the announcement about the RFP in a statement released last week in which he also announced his approval of Assembly billsA-2926 andA-3200.

A-2926 establishes a system of exchange wagering for in-state and out-of- state horse races, while A-3200 authorizes horse-racing permit owners to establish a single-pool betting system.

"These measures represent the next steps in following through on my administration's commitment to securing a strong, independent, self-sufficient horse-racing industry in New Jersey," Christie said Jan. 31.

"Along with our ongoing efforts to transform racing at the Meadowlands and Monmouth Park through private management, these measures will place horse racing on a path to economic stability and sustainability without public subsidy that New Jersey taxpayers can simply no longer afford," he added.

In addition to the wagering bills, Christie also signed Senate bill S-11 into law, which allocates up to \$30 million over three years in purse subsidies for races at Monmouth Park and the Meadowlands racetracks.

The funding will come from proceeds from Internet gaming and savings realized through casino deregulation.

Although the \$30 million will not be made available immediately, Christie could choose to provide it to the racetracks if he deems it a necessity, according to the 12th District legislative office. Christie conditionally vetoed a fourth bill, Assembly bill A-1705, which provides revisions to the Off Track and Account Wagering Act to expedite the development of off-track wagering facilities throughout the state.

“While I wholeheartedly endorse the objectives behind A-1705, a conditional veto is necessary to give us the necessary flexibility and latitude in negotiations, as it relates to the assignment of off-track wagering locations, and that any future OTW locations not be hampered out of the gate with additional fees on their operations,” Christie said.

District 12 legislators Sen. Jennifer Beck and Assembly members Caroline Casagrande and Declan O’Scanlon praised Christie for signing the legislation into law.

“Horse racing is a vital part of our regional economy and helps preserve significant amounts of open space in our state,” Beck said last week in a press release.

“Exchange wagering and pari-mutuel betting will help the industry adapt to a changing market and consumer preferences and lend a much-needed boost to the racing industry’s revenues,” she said.

Casagrande said the bills were a step toward creating a horse-racing industry that is able to stand on its own two feet.

She went on to add that the off-track betting bill was a “critical component” of the equation for a stronger horse racing industry. “I call on my colleagues to swiftly take up the changes recommended in the governor’s conditional veto, which are neither unreasonable nor a threat to the overall objective of the bill,” she said.

Mahon also thanked Christie as well as the 12th District representatives for their help in moving the legislation forward.

“Horse racing is an important and vital cog in not only Oceanport’s economy and the economy of Monmouth County but the entire state of New Jersey as well,” Mahon said last week. Horse racing contributes 7,000 jobs, \$110 million in federal, state and local taxes, and 57,000 acres of working agricultural landscape and open space to our ‘Garden State.’

“In addition to A-2926 authorizing exchange wagering, and the enactment of [A- 3200] to permit racetrack permit holders to provide a single pari-mutuel pool for every horse race, we applaud the governor’s signing of the bipartisan bill, S-11, ... that would enable horse racing to not only survive, but to thrive,” he said.

Mahon added that the Oceanport Task Force on Monmouth Park continues to believe that virtual lottery terminals, slot machines or a gaming casino in the Meadowlands are the only way to secure the future of horse racing in New Jersey.

“The surrounding states of New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland now have some form of gaming at their racetracks. This uneven playing field enables our competitors to lure New Jersey horsemen out of state with larger purses and better quality horse racing,” he said.

[http://atlanticville.gmnews.com/news/2011-02-10/Front\\_Page/State\\_to\\_seek\\_proposals\\_for\\_sale\\_of\\_Monmouth\\_Park.html](http://atlanticville.gmnews.com/news/2011-02-10/Front_Page/State_to_seek_proposals_for_sale_of_Monmouth_Park.html)

**NOTE.....**

**A2926 Authorizes exchange wagering on results of in-State and out-of-State horse races through exchange wagering system.**

**P.L.2011, CHAPTER 15, approved January 28, 2011**

**Assembly, No. 2926 (Second Reprint)**

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/15\\_.HTM](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/15_.HTM)

**Bills and Joint Resolutions Signed by the Governor**

Identical Bill Number: [S829](#)

**A3200** Permits racetrack permitholders to provide for single parimutuel pool for each running or harness horse race.

Identical Bill Number: [S2229](#)

**P.L.2011, CHAPTER 14, approved January 28, 2011**

**Senate, No. 2229**

**An Act concerning horse racing and supplementing P.L.1940, c.17 (C.5:5-22 et seq.).**

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/14\\_.HTM](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/14_.HTM)

**S11** Directs establishment of Atlantic City Tourism District; broadens powers and duties of CRDA; transfers Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority and its functions to CRDA.

Identical Bill Number: [A3581](#) (ACS/1R)

**P.L.2011, CHAPTER 18, approved February 1, 2011**

**Senate, No. 11 (Fourth Reprint)**

**AN ACT** providing for the establishment of the Atlantic City Tourism District and for the transfer of the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority, together with its functions, powers, and duties, to the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, amending P.L.1984, c.218 and supplementing P.L.1977, c.110 <sup>2</sup>(C.5:12-1 et seq.)<sup>2</sup>.

[http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/18\\_.HTM](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/AL11/18_.HTM)