



DELIVERY VIA EMAIL

June 27, 2024

Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas
City of Gardner
City Hall, 95 Pleasant Street, Room 121
Gardner, Massachusetts 01440

Dear Madam President and Honorable Councilors:

On behalf of Baystate Racing, LLC., thank you for receiving our application at the last City Council meeting. We are very excited to become part of the Gardner community. The hundreds of horse owners, breeders, and farmers from around Massachusetts are hopeful for a new place where they can bring their passion and love of horses in furtherance of the Commonwealth's policy to rejuvenate and grow the equine industry.

In response to the Council request for additional information, please see the attached for background information on traffic and attendance, and wetlands; we are currently finalizing the purchase of sale agreement and will submit an executed copy to you before our meeting. We respectfully request an opportunity to present to the Council in an informal session to answer any additional questions.

We are only at the beginning of the process. It is important to note that the Conservation Commission will play a role in approving this project. Our project will improve the storm water management, and environmental protections on the site. Only after the Council's approves the use will we be able to meet with them and continue our review. Also, we will go to the Planning Board to conduct and review a comprehensive traffic study for the site. The initial analysis is that Route 140 is capable for handling our peak traffic flow. Baystate will pay the City's cost for peer review. And annually, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission will convene a hearing in Gardner for the project. The Council's approval is necessary for us to take the next steps. This is a highly reviewed and regulated project by numerous state and local boards and commissions, including input from the City.

Our proposal continues what has occurred on the site for the last 150 years. We understand people are focused on the racetrack part of the proposal. Races will occur no more than 20 days in a year. Wagering only takes place on festival race days, and no other wagering, including sports betting, will occur on the site. We will not make money on the few festival race days, but the racing is critical for the horse owners as the state releases purse money to support the farms and horse care. We, along with the City of Gardner, will make money on the simulcasting of races around the country that people in Massachusetts watch and wager on their cellphones all over the Commonwealth.

Currently, there aren't enough horses to race, which is why the other parts of the park are critical. The breeding, training and retirement activities are the majority of what will occur on this site. Each plays a key role in supporting the horse farms throughout the Commonwealth.

Family farms are disappearing at a fast pace. Massachusetts is focused on preserving agriculture. Baystate Park will allow horse owners to breed Massachusetts-bred horses instead of having to go to another state. It will encourage the growth of more local hay, instead of going to Canada. Jobs and internships for local students will bring in a new generation of horse enthusiasts and farmers. The retirement program gives thoroughbred horses a chance at a "second career" in therapeutic riding, and other activities.

This is a way of life – in many cases for generations – for many hardworking people, and Gardner provides them with a lifeline.

What you see today from Route 140 is what you will see as Bay State Park. We will renovate the existing barns and house, and construct a gazabo and pads for food trucks will be added to the site. The grandstands for the track will be built into a hill, as a natural seating.

Bay State Park's focus is on the horses. We have the support of the New England Horsemen's Benevolent Association and the Massachusetts Breeders Association. Horse racing is highly regulated in Massachusetts and around the country. The Massachusetts Gaming Commission and its Horse Racing Committee will inspect the park every year and can inspect it at any time. Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority was established in July 2022 by the federal government to bring uniform regulations for the safety and wellbeing of the horses. We will have the highest level of care for horses from birth to second career and retirement.

If the site was taxed at its current assessment, it would generate \$15,231.34. In our Host Community Agreement, we will pay \$230,000 just in property taxes alone. Bay State Park will generate new economic activity for Gardner. Visitors to the city will stay in local accommodations, eat at local restaurants and shop in stores. Additionally, we will bring in local restaurants to cater and provide food and beverages during festivals. This will be a game changer to many local small businesses.

As for our proposed partnership with GAAHMA, we are very supportive of their nationally recognized work and the importance of mental health programs for those with substance use disorder. Our horses and programs will be there for their clients to work at the facility. We are there to support them. We also pledge to donate \$20,000 yearly to local charities to support their work in Gardner and the region.

We will be good neighbors for Gardner. We want to hear from you and your neighbors on how we can make Bay State Park work for Gardner. For example, if there is a concern about parking on a local street, then we put measures in place ensuring only neighbors can get down their street. There is a lot of creative ideas we can do to address concerns.

We look forward to working with you, your colleagues, and partners in government in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

John A. Stefanini

Attachments

CC: Mayor Michael J. Nicholson
City Clerk Titi Siriphan
Assitant City Solicitor Vincent Pusateri, II