



**Agriculture and New York State Horse Breeding Development Fund
DRAFT Minutes – April 10, 2025**

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Brian O’Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 11:09 a.m. Establishment of a quorum was noted by Chairman O’Dwyer. In attendance were Fund Board Members Richard Ball, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Steve Jones. Chairman O’Dwyer noted the presence of Executive Director Ralph Scunziano and Elizabeth Wolters, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Chairman O’Dwyer commends the Orange County District Attorney’s Office for its fine work in the prosecution of an individual convicted of all charges against him in connection with the beating death of a racehorse on July 17, 2023, at the Pine Bush Training Facility in the Town of Crawford. The Fund is also grateful for the work of the New York State Police in helping to deliver justice for these horrific crimes.

ITEM 2: CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 – The Fund considered previously circulated draft minutes of the meeting conducted on September 6, 2024. The minutes were accepted as circulated.

ITEM 3: FINANCIAL UPDATE – ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT REVIEW: Brian Kearns and Brandon Valvo from UHY were present to discuss the results of the 2024 Financial Audit. UHY noted the unmodified opinion without any significant deficiencies or material defects.

The 2024 Audited Financial Statements were approved.

ON A MOTION BY: TRUSTEE JONES - APPROVED: 3-0

Giuseppe Carberg from Capital Hill Management Services updated the Board on the 2025 Q1 Financials. Giuseppe noted that the Financials are in line with the budgeted amounts.

ITEM 4: SELECTION OF VENUE FOR 2025 NIGHT OF CHAMPIONS – Executive Director Scunziano noted that the Sire Stakes Finals – better known as the “Night of Champions,” are usually held at Yonkers Raceway. The Fund Board has previously decided that for each third year, the Fund accepts proposals to allow one of the other 6 harness tracks to host this prestigious event. This year, the Fund received four proposals –from Tioga Downs, Vernon Downs, Yonkers Raceway, and Batavia Downs.

Executive Director Scunziano noted that staff identified the proposal of Batavia Downs as the strongest one.

Batavia Downs was selected as the venue for the 2025 Night of Champions.

ON A MOTION BY: COMMISSIONER BALL - APPROVED: 3-0

ITEM 5: CONSIDERATION OF SCHEDULES – The schedules for the Sire Stakes and the Excelsior Series were considered. Both schedules were publicly noticed with a notation “pending Fund Board approval.” The proposed location for the 2025 Excelsior Finals is Saratoga.

The Sire Stakes and Excelsior Series Schedules were approved.

ON A MOTION BY: TRUSTEE JONES - APPROVED: 3-0

The 2025 County Fair schedule was considered. The proposed location for the 2025 County Fair Finals is the Goshen Historic Track. Executive Director Scunziano discussed the status of the County Fair Racing Series. Chairman O’Dwyer requested that Executive Director Scunziano continue to attempt to get more counties to participate.

The County Fair Schedule was approved.

ON A MOTION BY: COMMISSIONER BALL - APPROVED: 2-0 (TRUSTEE JONES - ABSTAINED)

ITEM 6: CONSIDERATION OF RACING CONDITIONS FOR 2025 – Four sets of Conditions were before the Board:

- NY Sire Stakes No. 66., which is for the foals of 2024
- 2025 Excelsior Series
- 2025 County Fair Conditions
- 2025 Big Apple Trot and Pace

The Big Apple is a new stakes race for 2- year-olds, featuring a \$1 million total purse. Eliminations will be held one week prior to the Big Apple and both are proposed to be held at Vernon Downs.

NY Sire Stakes No. 66. is the first set of conditions reflecting the recent statutory changes allowing for shipped semen. Executive Director Scunziano reminded the Board that, by statute, the resulting foals will not be eligible for the Excelsior and County Fair Series.

The remainder of the Conditions are unchanged from last year except for dates.

Trustee Jones expressed his opinion concerning the eligibility for the Excelsior and County Fair Series, stating that he is not pleased with the statutory changes. Chairman O’Dwyer requested that Executive Director Scunziano reach out to stakeholders to receive feedback regarding the changes and report back to the Board.

The 2025 Conditions were approved.

ON A MOTION BY: COMMISSIONER BALL - APPROVED: 2-1 (TRUSTEE JONES - DISSENTED)

ITEM 7: CONSIDERATION OF FUND POLICIES – The Fund’s policies were all updated in 2024. No changes have been made to the policies in 2025.

The Members approved the Policies.

ON A MOTION BY: TRUSTEE JONES - APPROVED: 3-0

ITEM 8: NEW/OLD BUSINESS – Executive Director Scunziano stated that Blue Chip Farms held lien sales on two mares and their 2023 foals for nonpayment by the owners in 2024. In addition to a large amount of board due, the farm had to absorb the loss of the stud fee income. Blue Chip respectfully asked the Fund to allow Blue Chip to become the breeder of records for both 2023 foals for the purposes of future breeders awards these individuals may earn in the New York Sire Stakes program. Executive Director Scunziano stated that this is a complex issue. There is time before the Breeder Awards, if any, need to be paid out. Chairman O’Dwyer instructed Executive Director Scunziano to seek a legal opinion from the Gaming Commission and present any viable options to the Board at the next Meeting.

The Members convened into Executive Session for the express purpose of consideration of personnel matters pursuant to New York Public Officers Law Section 105(1)(f).

ON A MOTION BY: COMMISSIONER BALL - APPROVED: 3-0

Return from Executive Session. Chairman O’Dwyer concluded the Executive Session and had the record reflect that the Executive Session was limited to discussion pertaining to employment matters, as provided under Public Officers Law Section 105(1)(f).

ITEM 9: ADJOURNMENT: Chairman O’Dwyer declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:02 p.m.