

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

County of Suffolk

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Dear Resident,

I am writing about the Suffolk County Regional Off-Track Betting facility with video lottery terminals (VLTs) that is proposed at the former Brookhaven Multiplex Cinema site in Medford.

After hearing from many of you, it has become obvious there are numerous concerns about the location and plan. While many Medford residents called in opposition, some are in support, but we all share the same issues as they relate to wastewater treatment, groundwater and traffic. I have also heard repeatedly there are significant concerns regarding the potential of an increase in crime and the impact a gaming facility has on the public perception of the Medford community. All of these concerns deserve to be fully vetted in a public fashion as occurs with any development project, be it a gas station, condos, a big box store or an OTB facility with VLTs.

First, I would like to clarify the relationship that Suffolk County and the Suffolk Regional Off-Track Betting Corporation (SROTB) has. The SROTB is classified as a “public benefit corporation,” and as such, all rules and regulations are established by New York State. The Suffolk County Legislature does have the ability to appoint three board members to the Suffolk Regional OTB but does not have any regulatory control. The authority to create the VLT facilities was actually passed in New York State in 2013, prior to the referendum on gaming that passed in November of 2013.

As you may have heard, I introduced a resolution to require that Suffolk Regional OTB board members agree to require any applications for an OTB facility with VLTs in Suffolk County to obtain local host support prior to moving forward with a site, similar to the NYS requirement for any upstate casino. Unfortunately that resolution failed although it was supported by all of my Democratic colleagues whose districts lie within the Town of Brookhaven and by one Republican colleague from Smithtown.

I strongly believe that the SROTB has a responsibility to comply with local ordinances, as is clearly stated in NYS Law. As that pertains to Suffolk County I have insisted that SROTB applies for wastewater permits and comply with all applicable Suffolk County Department of Health Services regulations. This is an opinion shared by the Suffolk County Attorney and SC DHS. As a result of my insistence to both SROTB and the NYS Gaming Commission an application has been filed and I have confidence that the SC DHS will give the application a full and thorough review.

Additionally, the Medford Taxpayers and Civic Association has filed a lawsuit requesting court action to force SROTB to comply with town zoning and land use ordinances.

While the debate continues, it is important to make sure that all the voices of the Medford residents are heard. Whether you are opposed or in favor of the VLT facility, it is important that all of your elected officials hear from you. Regardless of your position, please get involved and make your opinion known.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Calarco
Suffolk County Legislator, District #7