



**Agriculture and New York State Horse Breeding Development Fund
DRAFT Minutes – September 11, 2026**

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Brian O'Dwyer called the meeting to order at approximately 2:01 p.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 Trustee Steve Jones. Chairman O'Dwyer noted the presence of Executive Director Fletcher Whyland, Elizabeth Wolters, Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and representatives from Capitol Hill Management Services.

ITEM 2: CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF MARCH 30, 2026

The Fund considered previously circulated draft minutes of the meeting conducted on March 30, 2026. The minutes were accepted as circulated.

ITEM 3: 4-H GRANT PRESENTATION

In 2025, pursuant to Section 332(1)(b) of the Racing, Pari-Mutuel Wagering and Breeding Law, the Fund contributed to the 4-H standardbred development program. These contributions are crucial in fulfilling the Fund's legislative mission. Representatives of the NYS 4-H Horse Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension were invited to make a presentation regarding the status of their programs. Brianna Hughes, NYS Equine Youth Specialist, spoke to the members about the expansion of programs this past year and plans for the upcoming year. A grant of \$214,000 was approved.

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

ITEM 4: GRANT REQUESTS

Pursuant to Section 332(1)(i) of the Racing, Pari-Mutuel Wagering and Breeding Law, qualified organizations were encouraged to apply for grant funding. The Fund received eight proposals totaling \$393,117. Staff reviewed and determined that five grant proposals meet the statutory and regulatory requirements for funding.

Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame: Kristin Roberts from the Harness Racing Museum's education department presented a request for a grant in the amount of \$70,000 for 2026. The funding requested would be used to continue teaching the public about harness racing, the standardbred horse and New York State agriculture. The museum

plans on deepening their commitment to career development and help students secure internships, connect with industry professionals, and establish professional networks to build a robust future for the equine sector. Under Section 332(1)(i) of the Racing, Pari-Mutuel Wagering and Breeding Law, the Fund is authorized to distribute monies received by it “to support and promote research, educational programming, and the preservation of the history and traditions of harness and trotting horse racing through acquiring and maintaining collections of artifacts, memorabilia and documents related to such history.” This grant proposal meets that standard.

SUNY Morrisville College Foundation: Students of SUNY Morrisville’s Equine Breeding Program and Mike Mazza presented a request for a grant in the amount of \$120,000. The funding requested provides for the expansion of its standardbred breeding program. This grant is necessary to continue providing education for future equine breeding professionals and to help strengthen the industry in New York State, which fulfills the Fund’s goal of investing in equine research and education. Under Section 332(1)(i), the Fund is authorized to distribute monies received by it to support “educational programming.” This grant proposal meets that standard.

Goshen Historic Track: The Goshen Historic Track requested a grant in the amount of \$100,121. The funding requested would be used to renovate historic structures at the track including the judges’ stand and bandstand. A recent evaluation revealed significant age-related deterioration, raising concerns about structural integrity and long-term viability. Funding would be used towards architectural fees, surveys, inspections, and renovations. The Goshen Historic Track is also seeking to rehabilitate the sound system to improve the quality of sound for spectators to effectively hear the calling of races. Under Section 332(1)(i) of the Racing, Pari-Mutuel Wagering and Breeding Law, the Fund is authorized to provide such funding in “maintaining a historic racetrack that is designated as a national registered historic landmark.” This grant proposal meets that standard.

Therapeutic Horses of Saratoga: Therapeutic Horses of Saratoga requested a grant in the amount of \$12,000. The funding would be used to support the implementation and expansion of its “Harnessing Hope” program. The program is aimed at enriching the lives of economically disadvantaged youth by providing them with unique opportunities to engage with horses while learning about standardbred racing aftercare and career possibilities within the harness racing industry. Under Section 332(1)(i), the Fund is authorized to distribute monies received by it to support “educational programming.” This grant proposal meets that standard.

Harness Horse Youth Foundation: The Harness Horse Youth Foundation requested a grant in the amount of \$5,000. The funding would be used to assist in introducing and educating young people about standardbreds in order to foster future generations of fans and participants. Funding would be used for summer programming expenses. These programs provide students with hands-on, supervised instruction about harnessing, hitching and care of harness horses including every participant jogging a racehorse around a track with

an industry professional. Under Section 332(1)(i), the Fund is authorized to distribute monies received by it to support “educational programming.” This grant proposal meets that standard.

These five proposals total \$307,121, which is above the statutory limit for this year (\$276,835). The Board was receptive to providing funding on a prorated basis, which equals approximately 90% of each request.

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

ITEM 5: BUDGET & FINANCIAL UPDATE

Chairman O’Dwyer noted targeted increases incorporated into the proposed budget intended to address specific operational priorities, support the Fund’s continued effectiveness and position the Fund to meet its responsibilities and objectives in the coming year. The key proposed increases include providing \$500,000 in bonus payments to comply with Chapter 167 of the Laws of 2026. Additionally, due to renewed interest in the Country Fair Program, the proposed budget contains several targeted increases including the funding for three additional fairs and providing that all fairs receive a \$2,000 administrative payment for expenses related to conducting a race. The proposed budget also allocates additional funding to ensure that an appropriate number of Fund contract workers are available and on-site to effectively support operations for county fair race days with high attendance and increased activity.

Giuseppe Carberg of Capitol Hill Management Services presented the proposed 2027 Budget. Mr. Carberg noted estimated operating revenues of approximately \$18.5 million, an additional \$951,000 of other income, and expenses of approximately \$20 million.

Trustee Jones emphasized that the Fund should continue to ensure that participating county fairs maintain safe racing surfaces for all participants and remain accountable for meeting basic safety and maintenance standards. Chairman O’Dwyer advised the Executive Director to obtain a legal opinion regarding whether the Fund has statutory authority to allocate additional funding to county fairs and report findings to the Board. Executive Director Whyland will review the county fair application and reimbursement process and make revisions as appropriate to further enhance the quality and safety of county fair racing surfaces. Executive Director Whyland will also seek a legal opinion related to the Funds statutory authority related to county fair grant funding.

The Breeder Awards were approved at the same level as 2025 (\$1,750,000) and the NYS Bonus Payment was approved (\$500,000).

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

The 2027 Budget was approved.

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

ITEM 6: SERVICE CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

December 31, 2026, will be the end of the initial terms for both the Advertising and Public Relation Services and Equine Program Administrative Services contracts. Each contract has the option for two, one-year renewals. This year will be the last of the renewal options.

One-year extensions for the Advertising and Public Relations Services and Equine Program Administrative Services contracts were approved.

ON A MOTION BY: TRUSTEE Jones, APPROVED 3-0

ITEM 7: AUDITING SERVICES

UHY LLP's term of engagement to provide auditing services to the Fund concluded on December 31, 2025. UHY has satisfactorily audited the financial statements of the Fund, which are comprised of the statements of net position, revenue, expenses and changes in net position, cash flows, and the notes to the financial statements for years ended December 31, 2023, 2024 and 2025. A one-year extension for UHY LLP auditing services was approved.

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

ITEM 8: NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Trustee Jones noted that the Fund should review the existing breakage provision contained in the conditions to determine the intent of the rule, examine how breakage is addressed in other jurisdictions, and evaluate potential alternatives. Commissioner Ball noted the Fund should examine how breakage is addressed in other states and recommended that the matter be included as an agenda item for further consideration. Chairman O'Dwyer directed the Executive Director to review the breakage rule, solicit stakeholder feedback, and report findings to the Board.

ITEM 9: ADJOURNMENT

Chairman O'Dwyer noted the next Board meeting is anticipated to be scheduled for January or February. Chairman O'Dwyer declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:16 p.m.