

## **Russell Williams elected USTA president**

from the USTA Communications Department

**Las Vegas, NV ---** Russell Williams was elected president of the USTA by a vote of Association directors during the first general session of the USTA board of directors annual meeting Monday (Feb. 27) at the Rio All-Suite Hotel and Casino.

Williams, who represents District 7 as a membership director and most recently served as the Association's vice chairman, was elected by a majority vote over four other candidates through two rounds of balloting of the 54 USTA directors in attendance.

In the first ballot, Williams received 22 votes of the 28 needed to be elected. Joe Pennacchio of District 6 received 17 votes. Jason Settlemoir of District 8 received 14 votes. USTA member Ryan Macedonio received 1 vote; and USTA member Fred Hudson received zero votes.

Before the second ballot was conducted, Hudson withdrew from the race and endorsed Settlemoir.

In the second ballot, Williams received the 28 required votes. Pennacchio received 19 votes. Settlemoir received 7 votes. Macedonio received 0 votes.

Williams, who works as chairman of both the Standardbred Horse Sales Co. and Hanover Shoe Farms, campaigned on a platform that the USTA is doing good work in the industry, citing statistics that mares bred in North America were up more than 700 in 2016 than in 2015.

"We don't have regulatory authority," said Williams, 63. "Commissions have that. They also have enforcement authority. But we have something quite powerful: we have ideas. A good idea -- sooner or later -- is going to be embraced. Commissions watch us. And when we deliberate and argue over these rules, commissions watch and see what we think as a breed.

"The excellent ideas that come from this board, from members and from staff, are a wealth of ideas that can solve the problems that we perceive. So let's harness the power of our good ideas and drive on."

Ivan Axelrod, chairman of District 3, was re-elected chairman of the USTA, topping District 4 chairman Gabe Wand by a vote of 30-24.

Don Marean, District 9 chairman, was elected vice chairman. He received 30 votes, defeating District 2 membership director Steve Oldford (19 votes), and District 6 chairman Alan Leavitt (4 votes). One director abstained.

Sally Stauffer, USTA executive secretary, was voted secretary of the USTA. She ran unopposed, replacing Barbara Brooks, who retired from the USTA after 62 years of service and 22 years serving as secretary. Dick Brandt, a membership director from District 1, was voted treasurer of the USTA, also running unopposed.



*USTA/Mark Hall photo*

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A protest was filed by District 8 director Jason Settlemoir regarding the seating of John Matarazzo of Saratoga as a track director in District 8. Matarazzo was voted a new track director for District 8 by the directors of that district, defeating Shawn Wiles of Monticello Raceway; however, Settlemoir cited Article 5, Section 1 of the USTA bylaws, which states that "all directors must be individual members of this association and must maintain that membership throughout the term of office." He was refuted by Joe Faraldo of District 8A, who cited Article 5, Section 1, Subsection A, that states that "The full board of directors shall be the sole judge of the election and qualification of its members."

After a paper ballot of the 53 directors in attendance at that time, Matarazzo's eligibility as director was approved by a vote of 45-6 (Matarazzo and Shawn Wiles abstained).

The USTA added six new directors this year. District 2 sat Mike Carlo of Northville Downs as track director, replacing the late Ken Marshall; and membership director Sam Hedington, who replaced Jerry Landess. District 5 sat track director Jim Miller of Hawthorne Racecourse, who replaced Phil Langley, who stepped down as track director and USTA president (and received a standing ovation after his contributions to the industry were recognized by Axelrod). District 6 sat track director Joe Frasure Jr. of Pompano Park, who replaced Brett Revington. District 8 sat Matarazzo who replaced Wiles as mentioned previously. District 11 sat track director John Hensley Jr. of Dover Downs, who replaced Jim Boese of Harrington Raceway.

The Meadowlands Racetrack asked the USTA to facilitate a survey of its members asking this question: "Are you in favor of dedicating 5 percent of the approximately \$500 million in annual slots subsidies to fund a major marketing effort for a three-year trial period?" The directors voted to not pursue this survey by a vote of 7 "yes" to 47 "no."

The board of directors annual meeting will continue through Tuesday (Feb. 28). Monday's meeting includes a joint USTA/Harness Horsemen International panel and a meeting of the Registration Committee. Tuesday's meeting includes the Racing Committee (combining the Driver/Trainer, Fairs, Pari-Mutuel, and Regulatory committees); Finance Committee; Rules Committee; and second general session, including the new president's address, remarks by Executive Vice President and CEO Mike Tanner, and approval of the 2017 USTA budget.