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Discussions about racetrack should be open, not closed

A special committee of Millville City Commission was created to consider the request of the New Jersey Motorsports Park, to amend its current municipal development agreement. The Motorsports Park wants to construct its motocross and ATV course in a location that's different from the original plan.

Commissioner Dale Finch formed the committee, which will meet in closed session to review discussions with Motorsports Park officials. The committee plans to come to a decision regarding how to proceed. This special committee could serve an important purpose, but there's also potential for harm, as noted here.

Worrisome are the closed nature of this committee and the subject matter of the group's efforts: changing the current municipal development agreement. Over recent years, legitimate concerns have been raised with city officials, regarding the fairness of this agreement. There also remain questions regarding current compliance by the Motorsports Park, and the economic benefits for citizens claimed by both Motorsports Park and city representatives.

This municipal development agreement is essentially an investment in the Motorsports Park, made on behalf of Millville citizens and taxpayers. The investment takes the form of land sold at bargain prices; contribution of utility infrastructure; tax abatements; and, accommodation of operations. The expected returns include employment and economic benefits for the people of Millville.

Good investment policy and good public policy require objective, critical consideration here. Conducting this review on an expedited, closed basis has more potential for harm than good. Commissioner Finch and his colleagues should commit themselves to an open, efficient determination of the future investment by the people of Millville. They deserve nothing less.

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