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Motorsports Park noise is damaging community's quality of life

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With the inaugural season under the New Jersey Motorsports Park's belt, I read with interest Joe Savaro's accomplishments at the park. To be sure, it is a first-rate facility with success seemingly guaranteed. As a person who pays close attention to local affairs, I understand the need for Cumberland County to have an enterprise that can be a catalyst for and spur economic development.

One aspect of concern not listed in the items that officials will focus on to improve the facility for next year is addressing the volume of noise these racecars generate. Undeniably, the nature of a racetrack creates noise. But how much noise would be created, and how far it would be heard, was certainly downplayed by officials when the project first came to the public's attention.

Ever since the park opened its gates in August, our peace and quiet has been shattered. Some weekends are louder than others, but the fact remains that on Friday, Saturday and Sunday there will be no relief from this noise pollution. These three days are the days that most of us are home from work and want to enjoy the peace and quiet of our back yards and other outdoor locations in the surrounding area during the warm days of summer. That, now, has come to an end.

The incessant, irritating droning starts at 8 a.m. and doesn't quit until 6 p.m. There is no escape. It is one thing to accept the noise while attending the events at the park, but for the other 99 percent of residents, who are involuntarily subjected to this noise pollution 10 hours a day, 7 days a week from March to November, it is a disservice to the community in a colossal way.

It is clear that the track is a winner with racing enthusiasts, but it is coming at the expense of the surrounding communities. I have spoken to and read letters from many people who have taken their tranquil environment for granted, but are now awakened to the fact that the noise created at the racetrack will not go away.

Many cannot escape its torturous effects that can be heard inside their homes with the windows closed and the television and music playing. Some people on the online discussions have dismissed these concerns about the noise and compare it to the noise at the airport. Let me say that I live on the flight path of the larger runway and have to deal with the numerous low-flying planes directly over my house.

However, the noise lasts for less than a minute, where the noise of high-rev engines from the racetrack is continual, sometimes hours on end.

If I don't want to hear an annoying program on the radio or television, I can exercise choice by simply turning it off. However, I cannot choose to turn off the intrusive noise of the track. We are stuck with it.

The goal in changing Cumberland County is being realized, but not in the way intended. It is no longer the county of pristine countryside -- not due to overdevelopment, but by extreme noise pollution. This pollution affects everyone in a 15-mile radius. In addition, think of the impact it will have on tourists who come for our serene, wild and wonderful areas.

The 2008 season was only a partial one. In 2009, it will be a full season with the full extent of the noise to be realized. The quality of life and emotional well-being of the surrounding community must take precedence.

Serious noise abatement needs to top the list for the next phase of construction. Let the hotel and condos wait. Noise abatement, not tax abatement, is needed.

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