

City should back residents, not racetrack

August 20, 2010

I bought my house before the New Jersey Motorsports Park existed and now I have been dealing with the noise from the racetrack since it opened.

Sometimes it is fine, but other times the noise ranges between annoying and unbearable. I used to call and leave a message for former Mayor James Quinn when the noise was unbearable or the loudspeaker could be heard clearly in my house at 8 a.m. After Tim Shannon became mayor, I started leaving voicemails for him on days the noise was extremely bad. Mayor Shannon called me back, which was very nice of him, and he would apologize and say to please be assured that the noise is a matter that would get attention and that the city was having ongoing meetings with the Motorsports Park to address the noise issues.

I was curious and put in an OPRA request to get the dates of these meetings, past and future and I received a letter from Mayor Shannon that stated there were no meetings scheduled, past or future, and the city was still in the fact finding stage. Soon after, Commissioner Dale Finch was designated as the person to complain to. So I called him, several times, and often got a call back, apologizing and assuring me that something would be done about the noise. Finch told me, and I quote: "Let's be thankful it's not bad every day."

One time I actually called the police non-emergency number, because the noise was so unbearable and it just was not stopping. A very nice police officer told me that he had been instructed by the chief to not accept any complaints about the racetrack and I would have to call the construction office and leave a message. So this means that, even if the Motorsports Park is violating its agreements of 80 decibels or starting early or going late, no one has any recourse because no complaints will be accepted by law enforcement. So the night that the race cars were supposed to stop at midnight but didn't, the community just stayed awake and suffered.

This shows me, and others, that while the community suffers with the noise, the racetrack gets

a pass. I have been woken up in the a.m. and kept awake in the p.m. I have been driven out of my neighborhood to achieve peace and quiet. And now the New Jersey Motorsports Park, immune from law enforcement and catered to by the city government, wants to make the noise worse by building a motocross track closer to the residents. Racetrack officials want another concession. The racetrack has agreed to start 30 minutes later and make a "good faith effort" to curb the noise. Since proposed, it has made no "good faith efforts" to curb the noise. The only action by the racetrack has been to hire noise consultants to say the noise levels are acceptable, and to say that the end justifies the means.

The government of Millville needs to put a stop to this; it needs to stop backing a private, for profit business, owned by non-Millville residents, over the community. The city needs to represent the people who live here and call Millville home. I have heard Mayor Shannon say that the New Jersey Motorsports Park will put Millville on the map. Well, it has. It has put Millville on the map as a great place to visit, but not someplace anyone would want to live.

Over and over again the racetrack has gotten special exceptions in the way of tax abatements, city services and excused non-compliance with business practices. Two of our elected officials are excluded from voting for potential conflict of interest with the Motorsports Park. Now it wants to change the general development agreement and move the noise closer to the community. When will this stop?

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It is time for the City Commission to stop representing private business and represent the community, listen to the people's concerns and act.

Please, commissioners, don't allow the Motorsports Park to have another exception that adversely affects the quality of life of the people who call Millville home.

Suzanne Robinson

Millville

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