

Bryan Announces Southland Gaming Will Rebuild Randall “Doc” James Racetrack With \$25 Million Private Investment

Governor Albert Bryan Jr. said the agreement calls for track resurfacing, grandstand reconstruction, new barns and paddock facilities, a performance bond of up to \$12 million, and at least one race day this year if safety conditions allow.

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Governor Albert Bryan Jr. announced Tuesday that Southland Gaming will take responsibility for redeveloping the Randall “Doc” James racetrack on St. Croix under an agreement he said is backed by \$25 million in private investment, includes up to a \$12 million performance bond, and is structured to restart racing while avoiding additional public spending. The governor said the deal is intended to rebuild the long-troubled facility, restore operations under defined deadlines,

and create a framework for a self-sustaining horse racing industry on St. Croix.

“It is \$25 million of private money and investment to rebuild the facility and restart racing on St. Croix,” Governor Bryan said during a press briefing on Tuesday.

He said the work will include resurfacing the track, rebuilding the grandstand, constructing barns and paddock facilities, and putting in place what is needed for a certified horse racing operation.

“That means resurfacing the track. It means rebuilding the grandstand. It means building barns and paddock facilities. It means putting the pieces into place to support a certified horse racing operation with the safety standards and professional standards that the sport requires,” he said.

Referring to the racetrack’s difficult history, Governor Bryan said the agreement includes a performance bond of up to \$12 million to ensure construction is completed.

“It is very important, because I know people are tired of empty promises,” the governor said. “This agreement has deadlines, it has responsibilities. It has accountability.”

According to the governor, the project timeline calls for the track resurfacing and barn renovations to be completed within eight months of the start of construction. The broader redevelopment, he said, must be completed within three years.

He also said that if safety conditions permit, the agreement requires at least one race day to be staged before the end of the year.

Governor Bryan said he is confident in Southland Gaming because of the company’s work on the Clinton E. Phipps racetrack on St. Thomas.

“We are not buying a cat in a bag. We have built a racetrack through his partnership before, and we have an opportunity to do just that again, but this time even better.”

The governor also stressed that the agreement “does not require any additional public money, not one cent.”

He said the completed facility is intended to operate without ongoing taxpayer support.

“is designed to be self-sustaining, so we are not coming back year after year asking taxpayers to pay to keep racing alive in our territory.”

Governor Bryan said the agreement is structured to support the operation and maintenance of the track, race day purses, the Horse Racing Commission, the St. Croix and St. Thomas Horsemen Associations, and care for retired horses.

“This agreement supports the operation and maintenance of the track. It supports race day purses. It supports the Horse Racing Commission and the St. Croix and St. Thomas Horsemen Associations. It supports care for the retired horses, and it creates a framework that can help horse racing stand on its own feet for the next 20 years and more to come. For St Croix, the agreement provides up to \$800,000 in guaranteed annual purses capped at \$100,000 per race day. Once the track is operating and its revenues grow, those purses, they will grow too. That gives horsemen something real to work with. It gives them a reason and a goal to invest in.”

For Southland Gaming, the agreement would also allow operation of gaming services at both racetracks and the establishment of two new gaming centers on St. Thomas.

“That’s an important piece, because two new gaming centers will focus on attracting more dollars from people who are visiting. The share of revenue from these centers due to the government will be capped at 34%,” Governor Bryan said.

He added that the benefits to Southland Gaming depend on performance under the agreement.

“are tied to their performance. They have to meet benchmarks, they have to make progress. They have to fulfill their side of the obligation,” he said.

Governor Bryan said the agreement comes as St. Croix stands “on the verge of an economic renaissance,” and framed horseracing as part of the island’s cultural tradition.

Referencing the opening of Carnival Village on St. Thomas on Monday night, he said “we were reminded that our traditions survive because people protect them, invest in them, and pass them on.”

Horseracing, he said, remains one of those traditions.

“It still matters on St. Croix. It still belongs on St. Croix, and St. Croix has waited far too long.”

The agreement must still be ratified by the Legislature before it can take effect.