

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Motorsports track like a dumpster fire in the road

Dear members of the Oak Ridge City Council:

I do not know whether you feel blindsided, but I believe you have been.

The racetrack contract that the Industrial Development Board (IDB) approved at its called meeting Aug. 11 is not the project you signed off on at your meeting Feb. 10. Councilwoman Ellen Smith clearly pointed this out at the IDB meeting. As she explained, the project you signed off on was for research and development. The contract as passed by the IDB is for an entertainment complex.

As I understand the situation, H.E. Bittle III of Hardin Valley Land Partners proposed and the IDB has approved a motorsports complex on Horizon Center land that the city acquired from the Department of Energy. My understanding is that some of the land at Horizon Center is protected by covenants and cannot be developed at all. The land the city obtained was acquired with environmental covenants for it to be used as a research park and for light industry. The racetrack does not seem to meet the intent of the covenants and is not consistent with the City Blueprint.

As an IDB member pointed out at the meeting, this is the only land the city has left for industrial development.

If you attended the meeting or watched the video of it, you realize the racetrack project cannot seem to pass the smell test; the developer will not disclose the investors. Although Mayor Warren Gooch respectively asked for the disclosure, Mr. Bittle summarily dismissed the mayor's request.

City Council, both you and the IDB deserve transparency for any project you approve, especially a

controversial project.

Men came to the meeting from Knoxville, Maryville, Loudon County and elsewhere to support the racetrack. To a person, they complained that they are horribly frustrated because they have no place in the area to race. They desperately want Oak Ridge to provide them a racetrack for their cars and motorcycles.

Supporters contend that money will roll into the city on the wheels of racecars and motorcycles as they roar down the Turnpike on their way to the racetrack. Yet there is no economic impact study.

Developers contend that the racetrack will do minimal damage to the environment. Yet they have done no study.

Developers contend that they can mitigate incredible racetrack noise. Yet there is no written study.

Perhaps think Myrtle Beach during biker week: money, but deafening noise, congestion and multiple other social problems.

A group of thoughtful Oak Ridge citizens has formed Oak Ridgers for Responsible Development (OR4RD). According to its website, "Responsible development means the management of human relationships with the natural environment so that economic, social and cultural needs are met, and ecological process and natural diversity are maintained." That sounds like development for a first-class scientific community.

My understanding, City Council, is that the project will come back to you for zoning. Because this is not the project you signed off on, I respectfully ask you to revisit the racetrack issue. You deserve full disclosure and transparency for any project, especially one of this size and importance.

Who are the investors? Where are the feasibility studies? You deserve written statements that explain economic, environmental and social (noise, congestion, etc.) im-

act on the community. You deserve to understand the impact of motorsports complexes on the quality of life in other communities, like the Monticello Motor Club in New York and the Barber Motorsport Park in Alabama.

If you feel that there is adequate transparency, if you feel there is adequate documentation for development so that you can wholeheartedly support this project, if you feel this is the way you want the last of Oak Ridge's industrial development land to be used, if this is really what you want for Oak Ridge, then perhaps your constituents will feel a little better about your decision.

As approved, however, the racetrack seems like a huge dumpster fire put down in the middle of the road of an otherwise wonderful community.

Martha Moore Hobson  
Oak Ridge

### Supports citizens' review of man's death

To the Editor:

I am writing in support of Eugene Spejewski's request for review regarding the recent death of Fred John Henry Acera at the hands of Oak Ridge Police, but rather than a review by the Police Department and City Council about current policies, there should be a citizens' review about the shooting. We know from past experience that the TBI Report will probably be kept secret and TBI will say they are not subject to the Open Records Law and the County District Attorney, who will receive the report, will say that he cannot release it.

There is no reason to be afraid of a citizens' review, which would make recommendations which might be very sound and useful.

Virginia M. Jones  
Oak Ridge

## is relief dollars to train more police

other com-  
most strident  
l for defund-  
ething Lee,  
urned and  
gless."  
ursday  
ndations  
ration offi-

comprehensive and collaborative  
law enforcement advancements  
in recent Tennessee history while  
also working to recruit top-tier  
talent to our force," Lee said.

Rep. G.A. Hardaway, chairman  
of the state's legislative Black  
Caucus, countered the governor's  
group lacked representation

"several deficiencies" on various  
issues including mental health,  
transparency, body cameras and  
whistle blower protections.

Rep. Rick Staples, a Black Demo-  
crat from Knoxville and vice chair  
of the Black Caucus, was a member  
of the governor's task force that  
formed the recommendations.

bility to the national registry that  
tracks officers who have lost li-  
censes or certificates due to mis-  
conduct — known as the  
National Decertification Index.

However, on Thursday, Lee's  
administration noted that law  
enforcement agencies will now  
have to provide more details  
when explaining why an officer