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Staten Island



Fallout Continues From Rowdy NASCAR Hearing On Staten Island

April 28, 2006

A day after a public hearing about a possible NASCAR track on Staten Island came to an abrupt end because it got too rowdy, residents and leaders are still reeling from what happened. NY1's Amanda Farinacci filed this report.

Thursday night's NASCAR public hearing was out of control long before what some are calling a near-riot erupted, ending the first opportunity for residents to voice their opinions about the proposed racetrack.

That's why City Councilman Andrew Lanza, who was at the middle of the melee, says the incident that ended the meeting wasn't completely unexpected.

"It was clear that they didn't want to hear the concerns of the people of Staten Island," Lanza.

"They" being NASCAR supporters, including union workers who want the jobs the track would bring. Lanza was grabbed by one of them, after he said union workers favor the project only because they don't live on Staten Island and wouldn't be affected by the potential traffic it would bring.

The worker - Christopher Wallace - does live on Staten Island, and tried to make his point by grabbing the microphone, and Lanza, too. Cops were called, and the meeting was canceled shortly after.

But Councilman James Oddo, who was standing behind Lanza during the incident, says more cops should have been there in the first place.

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“I’d say that security or lack thereof was problematic,” said Oddo.

Lanza blamed the International Speedway Corporation for the rowdy audience, accusing them of stacking it with supporters. ISC officials denied his charge.

But Lanza says his mind is made up about NASCAR.

“This project ought to be dead on arrival,” he said.

“My position that was open is now a no,” added Oddo. “It is more than dead on arrival. I hope that they pull the plug on it. I hope it never comes to a vote. They should take their little race car and their promises and all of their goons and pack it up and go back to wherever they came from, because I’m done.”

But city planning officials say the hearing will be rescheduled, and security will not be an issue.

The ISC says it’s moving ahead with the land use process, and plans to bring the issue to a full City Council vote.

- *Amanda Farinacci*

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NY1’s Staten Island reporter. She joined NY1 as an intern in 2000.

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