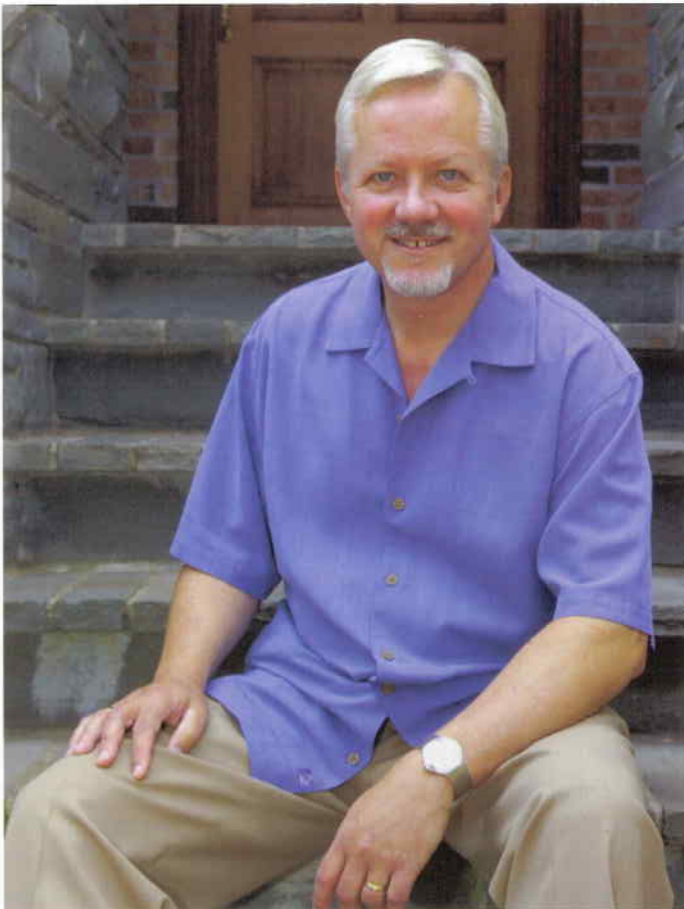


land acquisition and construction costs themselves, he continues, preclude an easy solution to the problem.

LOOKING AHEAD

Johnson is looking forward to the two-story expansion of the City Center slated for '09. The outside arches and patio area at the corner of Broadway and Ellsworth Jones Place will be closed and given an impressive entrance as well as several break-out rooms for small sessions, making the Center more competitive in the convention market which, in turn, will help sustain the year-round local economy.

As we go forward, it should be noted that one of our Mayor's more important jobs is his work on the State level securing a share of the VLT-generated funds for the city. Although payment to the city that hosts the venue is provided by State law, the Governor has the ability to redirect the funds back into the State budget. It's difficult to quantify the burden to city services, but infrastructure issues and public safety concerns are always implications of hosting a casino within a city. As an example, 8-10 New York State Police rotating personnel were recently pulled off the property, leaving policing issues up to the City's force. Although the \$2.7 million the city currently receives is only a drop out of the state's \$150-180 million bucket, it reflects almost 10% of our operating budget. Johnson relates that the



Finance Department estimates a potential impact large as a 25% increase in our property taxes should the VLT support not be continued. So keeping those relationships and lines of communication open and operating in our favor is crucial and top priority for Johnson.

Mayor Johnson also sees hope in the outcome of the recent national election. He says, "This election has shown that America is still a land of opportunity that has not been diminished by economic downturn. He sees Saratoga's future in that same light. Again, Johnson mentions his belief in self-reliance – the power of the individual as well as the community – and trusts that "we are challenged and faced with adversity, we will rise to that challenge. We have before and can again."



Sandra Cohen is a freelance writer and graphic designer. She is a resident of Saratoga Springs and has written extensively for The New York Thoroughbred as well as Saratoga Summer and other publications.

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