Start Your Engines: Indy Cars Return to Laguna Seca

In a move that thrilled fans and local hospitality, the County and Indy Car signed a three year deal to bring the Indy season finale race to Weather Tech Laguna Seca Raceway in 2019.

Indy Car racing has a long history with Monterey County. Two sections of the iconic WeatherTech Laguna Seca Raceway are named for famous drivers Michael Andretti and Bobby Rahal. Rahal himself was on hand to see the agreement signed by supervisors this week.
Supervisors approved a sanctioning agreement during their regular session then held a ceremonial signing with Indy Car executives. The scene was enhanced with an original Indy car on hand. You can see the event here. A media event at the raceway after the signing included Indy Car rides.

Indy Car racing had been a staple at the track at one time and the effort to bring them back was a flickering flame nurtured by Gill Campbell, Senior Vice President of Events at Laguna Seca. While the County expects to generate revenue from the event, this is more than just a County deal. Indy Car races are a big tourist attraction and this will mean big business for local hospitality.

Now that the deal is signed, the race to pull off the event begins! At the staff level, the County has its own special events process which has been in place since the Pope visited Laguna Seca decades ago. Pre-event meetings with a variety of local health and emergency agencies will take place, permits will be needed as will plans for crowd control, traffic and parking.

Working Group Guides Cannabis Program Efforts

The emerging local, legal cannabis industry is often in the news, particularly when it comes to regulations impacting cannabis businesses in Monterey County. But behind the headlines are County departments and staff who play a vital role in the developing cannabis industry as they are charged with implementing and enforcing policies that level the playing
field for legal growers and enforce health, safety and legal requirements to safeguard both the industry and consumers.

The County’s Cannabis Program is managed by the Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs Division of the CAO’s Office; but with the complex nature of the cannabis industry, communications and coordination are critical so the ten County departments which regulate, inspect or enforce cannabis business have formed a working group. Those departments are: Sheriff, Health, Agricultural Commissioner, Auditor-Controller, Treasurer/Tax Collector, District Attorney, County Counsel, Assessor, RMA and the CAO’s Office.

Using the informal working group format, participating staff can share insights, issues and challenges. The developing legal cannabis industry is unusual in that it is an industry that was once illegal, so new ground is regularly being broken in how the county will both serve and regulate this industry - ‘right-sizing’ what is good for both the industry and the County. Departments will be tracking work related to cannabis to better understand what the County needs to regulate and enforce this industry as well as costs of the program.

Helping in this process was a recent workshop to develop a strategic plan for the County’s Cannabis Program. Staff from all ten working group departments took part and the results are a three-year strategic plan which will be reviewed by the County’s Cannabis Standing Committee on Monday, July 23rd. The plan includes four key goals for the program:

- Support the lawful cannabis industry’s efforts to generate economic development in Monterey County, while being mindful of other local industries important to the well-being of the county.

- Protect public safety, health and the environment as the cannabis industry grows in Monterey County.

- Ensure a well-coordinated, responsibly managed program with effective and equitable compliance and enforcement that is self-funded.

- Generate revenue to support the program and services to the public.

If you would like to learn more about the Cannabis Program, check out the Monterey County Cannabis page, recently developed as an information entry point for growers as well as the public.
County Celebrates Rodeo Week with Little Hat BBQ and More

County staff enjoyed a western feel as the California Rodeo took place this week.

If it’s Rodeo Week, then it’s time for the Probation Department’s annual Little Hat Barbeque.

The Little Hat started out as a way to bring together the many partner agencies and organizations, county departments and court representatives which work with the department, but the event is now so well known that tickets for the Tri Tip lunch are very popular! Total from the event: 450 lunches served.

The lunch is usually held at the Probation Offices near Juvenile Hall, but with construction underway there, the food and fun moved to the parking lot near the Silver Star Offices on Laurel Drive. Sheriff Steve Bernal set the musical tone with great country tunes and the barbeque was smokin’!

The Little Hat is supported by donations and ticket sales, but it wouldn’t happen without hard-working volunteers. Probation Chief Marcia Parsons sends a big thank you to all who helped:

JIO D. Sims
JIO Ramirez
Roger McRae
Dawn Allen
Gabi Gomez
Erica Cruz
JIO Mesa
JIO Vasquez
Leo Salas
Desiree Saldana
Pascuala Rios
Sandy Degan
JIO Estrada
Omar Ramirez
Julie Kenyon
Annette Garcia
Gerri Bravo
Octavio Gutierrez
JIO Alfaro
Celeste Jimenez
Aileen Bravo

Cristal Wilcox
Maggie Contreras
Lourdes Rivas
JIO Segovia
Tom Hall
Marisela Morales
Wil Sims
Maria Mendez
Antonia Flores
JIO Romero
Robert Tamayo
Maria Acosta
Diana Manuel
Elizabeth Balcazar
Lucia Fierro
Debbie Martin
Kurt Mathews
Jeff Johnson
Patty Esparza
Yvette Sarmiento
The week of July 16

Also marking Rodeo Week - The Sheriff’s Office relaxed its uniform policy to allow deputies to wear denim this week.

A great turn out under the tents for the annual Little Hat Barbeque.

Other departments okayed western, casual wear for the week. Here is staff from the Treasurer/Tax Collector and Assessor’s Offices.