**NYС Rоаd Runners**

In addition to massive city wide devastation, Hurricane Sandy left in its wake, a controversy in the name of the 2012 New York Road Runners’ Marathon. Most of those who opposed to it, termed it as an extravagance, in light of the efforts to reinstate the New York City’s basic services such as electricity and transit system. Those supporting the running of the marathon as scheduled felt that it would prove to the New Yorkers and the rest of the world that, the city was strong despite the effects of Hurricane Sandy. The 4th of November race, was scheduled to start from Staten Island, through Brooklyn and Queens, then up the Manhattan East Side into the Bronx, then end at the Central Park. The marathon was finally cancelled, but it was a manifestation of the silent controversies that have dishonored its organizer, the New York Road Runners Club regarding the meaning and purpose of the Marathon, as well as leadership issues. This paper reexamines the pros and cons regarding the controversy of canceling the 2012 NYC Marathon.

The cancellation of the NYC marathon was met with resentment, reprieve, disappointment, frustration, despondency, and absolution among those directly involved or connected with the event. However, throughout the race week controversy, the City of New York and the New York Road Runners were engaged in a challenging and exceptional situation. They were expected to make an extremely acute decision that had repercussions, further than the constraints of the race itself. According to the NYRR website, the race was cancelled to quell unnecessary and progressive controversy and reduce interference with the relief efforts to assist more than 2 million New Yorkers who required assistance.

Accordingly, as with any radical decision affecting people on a large scale, the controversy regarding the cancellation had its own advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, the controversy illuminated the progress made among individuals in terms of their collective bargaining power in issues that affect them. Notably, the decision stemmed for massive public outcry to push or cancel particularly because many New Yorkers felt the city’s remaining resources would not survive the marathon. Indeed, the controversy displayed the unity in adversity among New Yorkers even after the devastation left by Hurricane Sandy.

Another positive stemming from this controversy is that it helped display the leadership priorities of New York City leadership and the New York Road Runners. In particular, the controversy proved the ability of the Race’s leadership to transform an overwhelming disappointing situation into an exceptional chance to redistribute its extensive influence, organization and resources to help solve a communal problem. Further, the controversy is a point of reference for the NYRR CEO, Mary Wittenberg, who has in the past received severe criticism regarding her style of leadership and the transformation of the Club into a more com unity responsible organization.

In effect, since assuming leadership in 2005, Wittenberg has led the non-profit organization to soaring profit heights to become a global leader in sport promotion. Markedly, under her leadership, the New York Marathon has grown by only 30 percent while the organizational revenue has more than doubled. However, this growth has been met with severe criticism whereby local runners have mentioned that the expansion ambitions of Wittenberg have eroded the philosophy of the Road Runners that is to serve athletes in New York City. Many argue that the rising entry fees have locked-out low-income runners and alienated some longtime members of Road Runners. Further, others have argued that the club has become excessively corporate rather than promoting the love of the sport foundations, upon which it was set. Accordingly, the New York Marathon cancellation controversy helped display the ability of Wittenberg to make decisions in the face of adversity and uphold the Club’s philosophy of serving the New York community (Macur & Belson, 2012).

On the other hand, cancelling the marathon accumulated many disadvantages. Firstly, the cancellation meant that, in the immediate future, the NYRR would incur legal and public relations issues regarding entry fee forfeiture; appearance fees for elite athletes. In addition, “claims" asserted by elite athletes concerning lost revenue opportunities; and "claims" by all categories of organizations that finance the event, such as from high-profile sponsors and fee-paying expo retailers. Secondly, cancelling the event denied New York City a valuable opportunity to contribute to the city’s economy. Notably, the marathon is estimated to bring approximately $340 million every year to the New York City economy. Moreover, numerous businesses stood to benefit largely from direct sales from the event while other organizations such as charities would gain significant donations from the events proceeds. Thirdly, the cancellation reiterated the vast rupture existent in the New York running community as regards to the NYRR and its focus, particularly as to whether it should be local or national. Further, the cancellation raises concerns about the future of the marathon particularly the scheduled 2013 races such as the implication on the costs of hosting and participating in the 2013 marathon.

In conclusion, the controversy surrounding the cancellation of the New York City marathon shined the spotlight on the New York Road Runners leadership. Particularly, it highlighted the conflicting viewpoints regarding the organization’s core focus whether it should be more corporate oriented or more love of sport oriented. From a personal viewpoint, the controversy showed the ability of the New York Road Runners Club to combine both characteristics for the benefit of the New York community.

**References**

Macur, J., & Belson, K. (2012, Oct 13). *Under Mary Wittenberg the New York City Marathon Is Thriving. So What’s the Problem?* Retrieved Dec 06, 2012, from The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/sports/under-mary-wittenberg-the-new-york-city-marathon-is-thriving-so-whats-the-problem.html?pagewanted=all&\_r=0