

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOLF ADVISORY AD HOC COMMITTEE HELD AT 12:00 P.M., MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2022 IN PERSON AT THE NOBLE CENTER FOR PARK DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, 1125 WEST LAKE AVENUE, PEORIA, ILLINOIS.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Jackie Petty, Trustee Timothy Bertschy (v), Mike Blanco, Shelley Epstein, Carol Ferino, Clara Hooks, Phil Jordan

Note: (v) = attended virtually via Zoom

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Dutton

STAFF PRESENT: Executive Director Emily Cahill, Deputy Director Brent Wheeler, Matt Freeman, Jeff Heiden, Greg Walker, Jocelyn McDowell, Jenny Swanson, and Brittany Moldenhauer

OTHERS PRESENT:

1) CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Jackie Petty called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

2) Welcome and Introductions

Participants shared about early golf play this spring.

3) MINUTES:

Clara Hooks moved to approve the Committee minutes of March 14, 2022. Motion seconded by Phil Jordan. Motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

4) NEW BUSINESS:

4.A and B. Operations and Memberships Reports – Greg Walker, Director of Golf Operations

Greg Walker provided an update on golf operations. He reviewed the difficult weather that the division has faced so far this year.

Greg shared that Head Golf Pro Kyle Meger had neck surgery two weeks ago and pending a positive doctor visit later this week, he may return to work this week or next. We wish Kyle well.

Robert Stein has taken over pro duties at Newman. He's been in this role for three weeks and is getting staff organized and ready to go at the course. Robert is currently an apprentice and is working toward pro status.

Greg is targeting May 1 for extended hours at Golf Learning Center.

Greg reviewed the 2022 year to date rounds/revenue report. He shared that the division is down 2500 rounds and 1600 carts compared to last year and attributed that loss to weather. Trustee Bertschy asked about impact on the full year and if golf has reached its peak? Greg shared that it's too early to predict for the year and cited weather as the impact. He targets the June meeting as the time when longer-term projections will be possible. He also thinks that this does not provide any indicator of golf trends, but rather ties almost exclusively to weather.

Member Epstein asked about possibility/need to increase marketing when weather turns? Greg responded that it won't hurt, but did note that when weather was good, use has been high. The marketing team will be prepared to respond quickly depending on how numbers look.

Greg reviewed the January to March Member Report. He notes that 2022 is about 190 passes off from last year. Member Jordan asked about concerns raised about raising the price in 2022. Greg shared limited number of concerns raised and stated that the increase is justified and has been well-received when explained. Prices raised by \$35 and had not been raised since 2019. Greg stated that the committee should prepare for the possibility of an increase in 2023 if inflation continues to be an issue.

Greg reports that operational staffing is at good levels.

Member Jordan asked about when water stations would open. Jeff Heiden said those would be out this week ("soonly"). He also asked about holes in the practice green in Newman. Heiden said this week for that request as well. Finally, he asked about sand in the carts at courses. Greg said "soonly" as well. Member Ferino asked about sand on push carts. Greg will see if bottles are available for District rental carts and for user carts as well.

Greg concluded that he looks forward to a weather change and improved conditions for play. Point of sale system is also working well. Member Epstein asked about the season tournament schedule. Greg says there are two more tournaments than last year, with one added at each of Newman and Kellogg. Member Blanco asked about the two-man scramble which was removed. Greg reviewed rationale for its removal. Discussion about the balance between access to the courses vs. tournaments was had. Member Ferino also asked about Wine and Nines and staff will review the viability of adding that in 2023, using numbers from Parks on Tap in 2022 as an indicator.

4.C. Maintenance Report – Matt Freeman, Superintendent of Parks and Jeff Heiden, Director of Golf Maintenance

Before the report, Member Jordan commented on the condition of greens at Newman vs. Kellogg. Heiden shared information about the kinds of grass at each course and stated that poa grass is an issue because it likes the cold, wet weather we are experiencing.

Heiden also shared that crab grass preventer hasn't been applied yet because of weather.

Superintendent Freeman informed the group that Erich Zimmerman has submitted his letter of resignation and Wednesday is his last day.

Director Heiden started by echoing Greg's comments about the weather. Not only is this affecting numbers, it's also affecting growth and repair of the courses. Heiden shared that trees will be planted in May and he provided updates on tee work as well. Both projects have been slowed by the wet weather. Madison hole number 3 work will begin this week. Most likely the tee work will take place this year and will be fully operational next year.

Member Epstein provided positive feedback about the impact of the trees cut by Newman 14 men's tee. Heiden shared that many golfers haven't been out to see the impact due to the weather.

Heiden says irrigation will be turned on soon and pre-emergents applied. He also shared about the process to mitigate the impact of the ash tree stumps which have been removed and will be filled and seeded this spring/summer.

Staffing levels have been slow to return due to weather. Heiden did express concerns about the aging of his workforce.

Freeman also let members know that we are waiting on the weather turn to set a date for the education day at Newman. Consensus was sought on best day of week/time of day for a tour. The group agreed to a mid-morning time on Thursdays if possible.

The group agreed to work toward setting a date for a press conference to celebrate the tree stump carving after the plaque dedicating the project and honoring donors is completed.

4.D. Marketing Report – Jenny Swanson and Brittany Moldenhauer

Jenny reviewed the timeline for both direct and electronic mail outreach for member solicitation. Jenny and Greg have worked to build a list for outreach targeting league members as well. Using the new system, they will send an email to everyone who has played without memberships and target the impact of a membership on future play.

She also let the members know that creative is in place to be deployed quickly if needed in May/June.

Member Jordan asked about “30,000 foot plan” for golf marketing. Jenny talked about the strategy for the remaining part of the year and will present a full 2023 plan when we get to fall. Future reporting will include metrics and analytics that can be shared with the committee as well. Discussion was had about the opportunity and challenges of golf marketing in Peoria. Members encouraged “over-communication” to members and users about course conditions. Brittany shared that they are working to monitor the golf social media pages and helping to respond to user inquiries in a timely manner.

Member Ferino asked about cross-promotion of District memberships to include golf access. Jenny shared an internal discussion about connectivity between golf and the RiverPlex. She also shared member discounts available for multiple membership purchases.

Jenny concluded with notification that website updates and improvements are pending. These will be completed this week.

4.E. Playing Fore Our Parks Golf Outing – Jocelyn McDowell

Jocelyn introduced the District’s planned golf outing to members. The outing is scheduled for June 9, 2022. Members received electronic copies of the outing invite and hard copies were provided for distribution to friends and family. Member Jordan asked about the timing for the event and Jocelyn shared that she has secured \$6000 in sponsorship to date. Jordan offered a possible sponsor to Jocelyn for follow-up.

5) PENDING BUSINESS:

None

6) OTHER BUSINESS:

7) COMMUNICATIONS:

None

8) NEXT MEETING: Monday, May 9, 2022 at 12:00 noon

9) ADJOURNMENT:

At 1:09 p.m., Member Ferino moved to adjourn. Motion seconded by Mike Blanco and carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted by Emily Cahill
Executive Director