

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District  
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners**

**Golf Advisory Committee Meeting  
December 4, 2014**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District and staff met for a Special Meeting to hold a Golf Advisory Committee Meeting on December 4, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the Bonnie Brook Clubhouse, 2800 North Lewis Avenue, Waukegan, Illinois.

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Duffy called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and directed the roll.

**II. Roll Call**

Chairman Duffy and Commissioner Sarocka were present. Absent were Commissioners Foley, Kilkelly and Bridges. Also absent was Executive Director Greg Petry. Superintendent of Finance and Administration Jim Glogovsky was present as was Accounting and Payroll Supervisor Jon Beckmann. GolfVisions staff included Dirk Skelley, Tony Tinetti and Greg Benson. Committee members and others present were. Jack Bradbury, Sandy Bradbury, Emilio Perez, Ed Holm and Sandy Chess.

The meeting was called to order. President Duffy introduced Jon Beckmann from the WPD Finance Department and noted that Jon's grandfather, a well-known figure in Waukegan, passed away over the weekend. Jon was welcomed and condolences given for his loss.

The group introduced themselves.

Due to lack of a quorum, no official business was conducted.

**Dirk Skelley**

Dirk began by noting that the bad weather days had a negative impact on play. There were 168 playable days. However, in June, July and August, they did see some good numbers and he noted that golfers are still coming out and playing, with a slight uptick on spending. However, the lost revenue from that many days early on just cannot be recovered and is across the board at all Chicagoland golf courses. Dirk does feel that they are doing better than competitors. The numbers when the weather was good were impressive. He believes that pricing is on target and that food and beverage has turned around. Despite naysayers, Dirk believes that golf will do well with some good weather days.

In response to a comment, Dirk noted that marketing efforts are bringing in golfers from further away and throughout Chicago. He discussed GolfNow, noting good and bad points, and further noted that much turnover with the local GolfNow representatives. Tony described how they must give away two tee times to them daily, and often the low rate makes the golfers expect such low rates, no matter when they schedule, thereby hurting the industry. It was noted that the majority of rounds still come through the course website and continued golfer education will help address the issues. Extensive discussion on how it works with GolfNow took place as well as what the course receives from them. Questions on the process were addressed. Tony noted that the GolfNow search engine is applicable to him so he can make rate changes, creating a course special. Tony noted that he can see the tee sheet fill up when the rates are reduced. Dirk agreed that technology is valuable in the golf industry. Also discussed was that golfers like having the option to go to Bittersweet when outings close the course, but asked if any other GolfVisions courses would be added as options.

### **Tony Tinetti**

Tony agreed with what Dirk said, and noted that the weather hurt us bad. He said we were about 9,000 rounds short of the 2012 season this year. Comparison to the other GolfVision courses, he noted that there were more rounds at Bonnie Brook than the other GolfVision managed courses. Rounds were up when the weather was good. The course condition gives us an edge. Tony said that they rarely have complaints about the course. 2% down in rounds this year, 3.5 down in gross profit, but expenses were kept in check. Tony is happy that they are 9% down in payroll this year for golf operations. He is looking forward to next year as the weather may improve. The industry is also seeing fewer dollars per round, and strategic pricing is key. He noted that the course maintenance staff has things looking the best ever. A Emilio Perez said that seniors liked the volunteer awards presented last year and Tony noted this was a park district idea. There was a discussion about stairs to the basement in the event there is bad weather and they must take shelter.

A comment was made about the new great parties this summer, and there was a question about outside lighting.

Tony noted that Ralph Sabatini could not be at the meeting due to a family commitment. He noted the dramatic improvement in the food and beverage and the great ideas that Ralph has tried. Most have worked, some have not, but many have been well received. Tony noted that he has his staff meeting his expectations and commitment, and he holds them to a higher standard. This has been an issue in the past, but has now been resolved. There are plans to do a lot of evening events in the coming year. Tony agrees with Ralph that there needs to be consistency in events, and perhaps a cookout on Monday nights, and entertainment on Thursday. The weekend outdoor grilling will be done more next year as well, since it was well received, and may be under a canopy. The food and options have improved and the feel around Bonnie Brook is much improved.

Tony noted that food and beverage revenue is up 17% with net income up 30%. If there were a regular number of golfers, those numbers would improve. All agreed that Ralph is doing an incredible job. He is personable and friendly and an asset to Bonnie Brook.

Tony expressed his pride in what is being done at Bonnie Brook and loves to bring friends and family to enjoy the events.

In response to a question, Jim Glogovsky spoke about the status of the minimum wage legislation. He noted that it will have a large effect on the park district as well.

## **Greg Benson**

Greg began by talking about the slow greens comment. He noted that the harsh winter damaged the course, with all greens showing damage. He said that turf recovery in the spring resulted from a lot of hard work, and increases in water and fertilizer. After all was healed up, he felt that all were in fantastic shape.

Some good about the cool summer was a reduction in water use and electricity, and he had very good labor this year using extra staff yet remaining under budget.

In response to a question about tarping the greens, Greg noted the downside of doing so. He said that the greens were sprayed with wintergreen which helps protect them.

There has been reduced maintenance on the sand traps, down to three days per week due to heavy rain causing the rough needing more mowing.

Another question about the trees being taken care of this year was raised. Greg said that in spring, a company came in and took care of the larger trees. He noted that the park district has a tree inventory and was able to remove 12 critical trees in the spring and 56 ash trees this fall. Work will continue on replacing the ash trees. He noted that so far, 8 have been replaced.

They will also be working on a tree ceremony/dedication program. Commissioner Sarocka mentioned the trees received last year from the Chicago Park District at reduced cost.

Greg does not think that golfers will notice a big difference when the trees are removed. In fact, the course may look even better with less. Jim noted that the park district received grants for the Emerald Ash Borer program and some trees have been replaced. If there are more grants available, the park district will take advantage of them.

Greg mentioned a couple of capital improvement items from the park district this year, one was a golf cart and the other was a tractor. Irrigation system communication devices were replaced and they are working to get permits to address erosion.

Continuing he noted that equipment for the courses is separate from that used at the parks, this has always been the case, though there is some equipment such as the aerators that is shared.

### **Jim Glogovsky**

Jim noted that the renovation of the restroom is a capital project. Bids were requested and came in from \$120,000 to \$180,000 for both restrooms. The low bid is Efraim Carlson and Sons of Libertyville. The architect designer is PHN Williams and there is a signed contract. Demolition will begin on December 29<sup>th</sup>. The project is scheduled to be completed on January 19<sup>th</sup>. The building will be closed during this time.

It will be wonderful when complete and Ralph thinks it may attract more banquets. We hope to experience increased revenue once renovation is complete. There should be maintenance savings.

### **III. Questions and/or Comments**

There was a question about the money from Governor Quinn. Jim noted that it was grant and has specific guidelines and can only be used for the project it was awarded for, there are many restrictions. Jim also corrected the impression that it would be an outdoor pool and answered other questions about the project.

Continuing questions were asked about whether the revenue at the SportsPark covered the expenses and Jim noted that they do.

It was then mentioned that there would be a Customer Appreciation event at Bonnie Brook on Saturday, December 13th from 2-5 pm.

A question about a raise in property taxes was asked and Jim noted that the park district is not requesting an increase, in fact, the tax levy is lower than last year.

Commissioner Sarocka noted that Greg Benson and his staff are doing a great job maintaining the course. Other members agreed with his comments.

President Duffy commented about junior golf and First Tee of Chicago and asked for Tony's opinion of the program. He requested a written report from Tony on the subject.

Dirk then discussed revenue at other Chicagoland courses. He hopes to have more information later, but felt that other courses have done worse than Bonnie Brook. Tony also noted that things have changed and some clubs are closing. Jim noted that he spoke with someone at a chamber event about Midlane, and they said what a tough year they had.

#### **IV. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, May 7, 2015 at 7 pm at Bonnie Brook.

#### **V. Adjournment**

**Motion by Commissioner Duffy, seconded by Commissioner Sarocka, to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

James Glogovsky  
Acting Secretary

JFG:ss