

**Minutes of the Waukegan Park District
Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners
Golf Advisory Meeting
December 12, 2013**

The Board of Commissioners of the Waukegan Park District met in a special meeting on December 12, 2013 at 7 pm at the Bonnie Brook Clubhouse, 2800 North Lewis Avenue, Waukegan, Illinois.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Duffy at 7:00 pm who directed a call of the roll.

II. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners Duffy and Sarocka. Absent: Commissioners Bridges, Foley and Kilkelly. Also present were Superintendent of Finance and Administration Jim Glogovsky and Tony Tinetti, General Manager/Head Golf Professional, Greg Benson, Ralph Sabatini, Dan Dieck, Ellen Keirnan, Walter Lindquist, Emilio Perez and Troy Cooper. Senior Management representing GolfVisions were Tim Miles, Sr., Dirk Skelly, Tony Tinetti, Greg Benson, John LaFoone and Ralph Sabatini.

III. Review, Discuss, Decide

Introductions were done by all. Noted introductions include Ralph Sabatini as the new Food and Beverage Supervisor. Troy Cooper introduced himself as a new member of the advisory committee.

Golf Financial Update

Dirk spoke to the group, noting that there have been learning curves over the past year and that the weather has been difficult, but overall, things went as well as expected. Made some adjustments in the food and beverage area, and are positive about them. Good feedback has been received so far, and things are headed in the right direction.

Tim Miles noted that as a company, they have had to make choices about how to market and care for all of their courses. He spoke about rounds and golf setbacks throughout the country and the need to keep watch on revenue and expenses and the industry as a whole has suffered due to the bad weather. He expects a downward trend of about 15%.

Golf Update/Outlook

Tim said they continued to learn about the course this year and they are proud to be managing it. Greg and his crew have done a great job on the course and Tony is learning the GolfVisions methods. Ralph is a great addition to the group. Smooth transition overall, will continue to keep up with trends.

Tim continued, noted that the weather is a big determinant of financial success. He spoke about a “just one” initiative for getting new golfers to play and the need to promote the sport to help reverse the downward trend. He continues to compare operations with other courses, and adopt best practices. Extensive discussion by the members about changes in golf trends and how to get more golfers followed.

A member brought up the option of optimizing the driving range by adding more practice areas, islands to shoot at, etc. which he felt may get them to play, especially if they are having a good day while practicing. It was agreed that upselling by suggesting a warm up bucket of 20 balls is being suggested by Bonnie Brook staff.

Bonnie Brook Golf Operations Greenshire Golf Operations

Tony spoke about the special events he has set up to encourage more play. He noted that there are fewer outings since there are fewer players to sign up for them. He noted that the pass rate for kids was lowered to try and get them out and kids were free after 5 pm on weekends. He said that everybody is trying ways to get more golfers.

The discussion continued with members talking about how good the course is and how they try to get players to the course every chance they have. An idea to consider incentives for those who lived further away to get them here to try the course was described.

Tony referred to his dashboard report that had been distributed before the meeting. He said that everything affecting the data has to do with the golf industry and is not specific to Bonnie Brook. Discussion took place about the value in golf, time or price. Tony referred back to the earlier discussion of the protractor concept, and noted its pros and cons.

Tim noted that those who play here are impressed with the course. He said that there is a saturation of courses and not more than 1-2 bad ones in the group. He noted the sheer number of courses creates the issue. He noted that even high profile courses have had to adjust their pricing. He stated that so many of the courses have been upgraded and are very nice.

In closing, Tony noted that they are using the entire facility and trying to think of many ways to attract golfers.

Commissioner Sarocka then brought up two topics. First was the Field House price reduction that resulted in the current record membership. He said that this is similar to how Foss Park priced their course and ended up with lots of activity and profit.

Tony then described a concept using reciprocal play for pass holders and how that might work to generate business. Dirk spoke up about how they are now on with GolfNow as a premium partner and that should help. He noted that they are exclusive with only 50 Chicago area courses in the group. They do a lot more promoting and use SportsChannel, so this is a major positive. He stated that we believe we have a far superior product than North Chicago, and we aren't looking to cut rates to that point. It is doubtful that they are making money at courses that employ these tactics. He noted that tough decisions will be made if necessary and that they are trying to highlight the marketplace reality. It was noted that GolfNow works on a barter process and receives one tee time daily for their services. Discussion about the bargain hunter mentality and how it creates issues.

Food and Beverage

Commissioner Duffy spoke about how we are lucky to have Ralph who is working to enhance the food business, with benefits to and from golf as well. Ralph thanked everyone for their support and enthusiasm. He said that Tony and Dirk have given them so much leeway to work and he appreciates that. He also spoke about the tradition at Bonnie Brook and he wants to be successful while keeping tradition. He wants to add value without spending a lot of money.

Ralph talked about his passion for creating great food and experiences. He spoke about perception not being reality and the potential for this beautiful course with its history and tradition and how it can succeed.

He said he has met some great people here and he wants to keep things interesting for everyone who visits the facility. He is attempting to generate enthusiasm among the staff. He indicated that there will be more communication and that we will add value whenever and wherever possible. He stated that the youth market is necessary to generate revenue. He feels that GolfVisions and the park district are on the same side and will work together to achieve their goals.

The members noted that everything that Ralph has done since he arrived has been wonderful. Also noted that the quality of food has improved considerably since he took over. Tim Miles believes Ralph to be integral to the success at Bonnie Brook. Perception was again noted to be an issue for the area. The enthusiasm and plans were described by Ralph and will help make for a successful year.

Bonnie Brook Maintenance Greenshire Maintenance

Greg Benson noted that it was good year for maintenance. Rounds were down, but there were no extreme weather and no flooding. There was little turf lost due to heat and he said they didn't have to worry about many of the things that occurred in prior years. He felt that the greens were consistent this year and noted that the normal amount of water was used for irrigation. They didn't keep up with top dressing due to the heat and didn't get everything aerated. He believes that one thing that he has going for him is the core group of staff he has working with him.

Continuing, he noted that there is some snow cover on the greens which will protect them. He feels that the course was in great shape most of the year.

Greg noted that he is working with the park district to create a plan for the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) issue. He noted that the emerald ash borer (EAB) impact will be substantial, with many trees to be replaced. Tim Miles noted that he feels that trees have been overplanted and that it will not be a problem to reduce the number of trees on the course, so minimal replacement will work well. He counted 200-250 trees to be replaced. Greg described the details of the program and how it will be monitored.

Greg Benson indicated that 30 different cultivars of trees are available. He said that he believes that if ten trees are removed, they will be replaced with 2-3 trees. Discussion followed. Greg said that moving forward, the tree replacement will be the biggest obstacle.

He continued, noting that the mower, a tractor and a couple of carts were received and put into service. He also noted that the erosion on #17 bunker has been fixed and looks great. Also finished up putting the new tee posts on the tees that were rebuilt last year and opened the forward tee on #14. Greg felt it was a decent year.

Greg was asked why the greens seemed slower this year, but this didn't make sense. It is possible that there was more grass on them or perhaps the reduced top dressing had an effect.

A question was raised about the spike cleaners and possible addition of some at certain points.

A finance question was raised near the end of the meeting. It was based on Tony's report and the year to date information was not legible. A monthly snapshot report was discussed. Request was made for a detailed rolling twelve month report to be presented at the meetings. Jim Glogovsky explained why this type of report is an issue with the park district using a May through April fiscal year. Dirk noted that once we move through this year, you will always see the prior year information. The member noted that he did not see a drop off with the outsourcing, but he would like to see the month to month comparison for a year's time.

With the difference between the park district and GolfVisions budget allocations, the first year's information does not compare equally between the entities.

Tony indicated the items that will be unique about these reports including playable days and the weather. Of this, there were four worst months over 12 years.

Tony discussed again the comparison between Bonnie Brook and Foss Park courses in detail. He noted that things are done the right way here at Bonnie Brook, and will continue that way.

IV. Questions and Comments

Commissioner Duffy then opened the meeting for questions.

A member noted that the women golfers played several times and when a guest played at Bonnie Brook, she was impressed that the women were treated the same as the men.

V. Next Meeting

- A.** Time and date of the next meeting will be determined at a later date.

VI. Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Duffy, seconded by Commissioner Sarocka, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Glogovsky
Acting Secretary