

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE
Minutes of November 16, 2005
5:30 pm – City Hall
Main Conference Room

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Members in attendance were Dick Fuller, John Campbell, Mike O’Connell, Bobby Davidson, Bob Reid, and Chuck Sipple, Councilman Lou Rasmussen, Councilman Gary Bussing,. Shane Gardner, Matt Roberts, Pete Spratlin of Orion and Parks and Recreation Director, Chris Claxton and Sara Dinkel were also in attendance.

Mike O’Connell moved to approve the minutes of the August 25 meeting. Chuck Sipple seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

I. Report of Outcome of the USGA Grant Application

Chris Claxton started the meeting informing the group that the \$60,000 grant requested for Greens 1 & 3 was not approved. She went on to say we had the option of replying to the letter denying the request but they are not willing to fund it at this time. Chris said we could make reapplication supported with enhanced documentation on the demographics, which was the key reason for the denial. Dick Fuller said that he visited with Kristen (the person who gathered the information and made the presentation to the grant review board) and he felt she didn’t have a good understanding of what we were trying to do here. Chris said she thinks that if we do pursue this again we should probably ask to work with someone more knowledgeable about golf.

II. Discussion of Revised Master Plan and New Office Building for Ironhorse Center

James Taylor said that this item has been approved by the Council and we don’t need to concern ourselves with this any longer. Chris was under the same impression, based on the action taken at the last council meeting and had a call in to Mark Klein of planning to confirm. This is why it was slated to be tabled to the next meeting. Mike O’Connell reported that he had visited with Fred Merrill and some small changes have been made to the building but nothing that would affect the overall project, just some small architectural detail changes.

Chris Claxton asked how the wall on the south side end up much taller (16 feet straight up)? and as a result why didn’t they terrace it like the one now proposed on the east side adjacent to #16 fairway? Pete said for aesthetics the 16’ foot wall looked as good as a 16’ wall could look. Dick Fuller asked how long the wall was and Pete responded it ran from Nall and approximately 150 yards east Dick Fuller asked if they were maintaining the area between the wall and the property line. James Taylor then asked how did this wall get approved originally, because the wall we are discussing is within the 25’ setback and seems different than what was originally planned? Chris said she will visit with Mark Klien and discuss this further.

III. Council Member James Taylor's Memo Dated November 11, 2005 Concerning Golf Green Reconstruction

IV.

Dick Fuller addressed the items outlined in the memo. James Taylor said that in his memo he makes a strong opinion, and that he is not expert in this area.

Dick suggested we get some more clarification on some of the items listed in the memo.

Pete said he thought some of these questions probably stem from lack of information. Pete went on to explain that we already have for consideration water tests, greens tests, construction bids, and USGA information. Chris said that as this information became available it was shared in pieces but she thought it important to reassemble and distribute it in one informational package. Pete then said that additional information is in Paul Vermeulen's report, and borings reports on 5 of the greens, which was handed out.

Dick Fuller said that all this information seems to point to one area and that is the overall quality of the greens, but led to questions concerning the expectant life of a green. Dick also mentioned that in the initial construction design of the greens, the architect said we would save more that \$300,000 if we put in a certain type of green, a California green vs. a true USGA specified green. Dick suggested that this may have been the start of our problems.

Dick then presented the group with the question "Would people continued to pay \$70/round with the current conditions of the greens?" and then added "Ironhorse must provide quality greens to be considered an upscale golf course and justify \$70/round?"

Chris said the problem is two-fold: 1.why are the greens not lasting? and 2.could they get worse and how fast?

Pete responded saying that California greens are a type of green that includes a drainage system and 4 inches of gravel, pea gravel. California greens have loose construction specifications as they are "design/build".

Pete went on to say that USGA greens consist of tile, gravel, large gravel, 12 inches of greens mix and sand and peat moss. Uniformity with this type of construction is key.

He then moved to the white board to make a comparison drawing of the three different greens; California greens, Ironhorse Greens and USGA greens.

Pete placed emphasis on the difference between the green types stressing that Ironhorse's greens drainage systems were placed further apart than the other types of greens. He said the drainage systems should run in a herringbone pattern no more that 10 feet apart. Ironhorse's are 18 feet apart. Pete then went on to say he would like to see the green's fixed from the drain level up. Pete maintained that the greens' moisture level remains more constant with the different levels of gravel beneath it.

Pete also said unlike California Greens, USGA greens have very extensive specifications and if the specs are not detailed you can end up with a mix of construction types.

Pete went on to explain that Ironhorse's greens have a problem with water at the bottom because the water just sits there and rots, producing a sort of methane gas... He said it is happening on almost all the greens. The water rots and in turn the clay rots and then the sand rots resulting in gases rising up to the top of the green killing the grass' root system. Pete said when you build the greens based on USGA specifications you know absolutely what is going on with the root system. Pete also mentioned that he does not have the "as-built drawings" for Ironhorse. He also explained that in 1999 they dug in and "blew out" the drains in an effort to help the grass and are now doing this approximately 4 times a year; it should be done maybe once a year.

Dick Fuller asked Pete why he was concerned with #15 when he started working at Ironhorse and Pete replied that some of the drains are crushed or buried and that #15 took almost two weeks for it to drain or "blow out".

Pete also went on to explain that the contours of the greens need to be consistent as the layers go down, but Ironhorse's greens are not contoured. Because of this some areas fare better than others.

Lou Rasmussen then said based on this information should we hire an expert to evaluate the information to date and take that recommendation to the Council?

James Taylor asked if we used Turf Diagnostics are they capable of giving us the ammunition needed to get the necessary funding from the Council.

Gary Bussing asked what are the alternatives to rebuilding the greens so we can be sure that spending \$1,000,000 is really necessary.

Lou asked what are the repercussions of doing nothing to the greens?

Gary then asked Pete if we could keep grass on the greens?

Pete said this is getting more and more difficult.

Mike O'Connell then added that the current state of our golf course is not "very high".

Pete answered that his job is to keep the grass up and on the greens. With conditions being what they are it's difficult to do this and it's going to keep getting more and more difficult.

Lou asked if there is bare dirt on the greens and Pete said in some areas there is bare dirt. Pete also added that with the way the Ironhorse greens have been constructed we will start to lose greens.

Pete said that in 1999 we had dirt on 12 of the greens.

Chris said that the gassing and regrassing may not be a viable alternative based on Pete's explanation of the problem.

Pete then added it will take 8 months to regrass.

Matt said that one alternative is to do nothing and to continue to spot fix. Pete said that USGA greens grow grass 10 times faster and that doing nothing will cause any grass to grow and the greens will start dying.

James Taylor then asked Pete do we not have a gravel base? What about the expandable clay, can that be part of the problem? What type of tile system do we have?

Lou Rasmussen said if all the alternatives have been looked at would there be justification in going out and getting an expert opinion?

James Taylor said he thinks we need another expert opinion before we approach the Council.

Gary Bussing said "Pete's opinion *is* an expert opinion unless he tells us differently."

Chris then asked "How is more testing different than what we have already done? Or is it that we are asking for more extensive testing?"

Lou then suggested that all the current data be gathered together and handed over to a third party expert and present them with the question "If we do nothing what will happen to the greens?" We should also ask them if there are any other alternatives we should be considering?

Lou also said to keep in mind that what he needs is the information necessary to raise the comfort level of eight Council members.

Gary added that he is convinced that we already know what the problem is, but is there some other approach we could take to get 10 more years from the greens?

Pete added that blowing out the greens 4 times a year left no room for extending the life of a green. Pete also added that 12 golf courses have done some form of reconstruction recently and they all utilized Paul Vermillion's USGA reports as justification to move forward.

Gary said they have been talking greens renovation at Leawood South for more than 11 years.

James Taylor said he appreciated everyone's comments and agrees with Lou that we need to take to the council a strong recommendation.

Lou asked how do we present this to the Council? Compile and present what we already have? Get a third party involved?

Pete said he thought Paul would go in front of the Council and make a presentation if we thought that was necessary. This could be done at a work session.

James Taylor asked the group do we support more testing or go with what we have?

Lou suggested we collect all the existing data and we give it to a third party and then present those findings to the Council.

Dick Fuller commented that he thinks Chris and Pete have already gathered the necessary information and they can put it in a presentation form that we all agree upon, and that can serve as our recommendation. We then present the package to Scott Lambers to see if he

agrees its what he needs for the Council, or do we get a third party involved in order to give Scott a “total conclusion”?

Lou asked if at this point we leave this with Chris, Pete and Scott?

Chris said Scott needs the “facts” in order to go to the Council.

Chris then added that she met with Continental Engineering last week and asked for a summary to see if we can realistically get this accomplished in the necessary time frame. The desire is to do these projects simultaneously.

Mike O’Connell asked if we could in fact move back the SMAC project, as some have suggested, based on the money allocation.

Chris said, according to Joe Johnson, this is not a problem.

Gary then asked Pete “could you stand before the Council next Monday and say for a fact that the only and best option is to reconstruct the greens?”

Pete added that the USGA states these greens need to be rebuilt and it would be best to do these projects simultaneously. Dick Fuller then added that Paul said the latest to get this work completed is mid-July.

Chuck asked Pete if any other courses here are built the same as ours? Pete replied no, but there are some in St. Louis.

Gary then added that he agrees that we may have all the information we need, but to keep in mind that when this goes to Council it will be up against other requests such as police cars, fire trucks, etc.

Then Gary and Dick stated that Chris and Pete need to get this information in front of Scott.

A motion was made from Mike that staff and Orion present all the data on the existing greens so the City Manager could make his recommendation to the council during the meeting in early December (possibly December 5, 2005). The recommendation should also include the construction dates.

Bobby seconded the motion.

Pete then added that he wanted to make sure they included in the request the other capital improvement projects such as the bridge planks and the concrete path work. These should be done at the same time so, if the project gets moved back, these should move with it.

The motion was approved unanimously.

V. Operations Report from Orion

Matt reported that because of the SMAC project and uncertain scheduling he has already made event commitments for next September. Orion feels it is important to move forward to keep operations steady.

Then Matt handed out a rough draft of the Ironhorse Golf Club 2006 Business Plan.

Chris said despite all the pending issues she told Orion last week to proceed ahead with business as usual.

Lou said that if Scott doesn't make a recommendation on the 5th of December, then all the projects could very well be pushed back to 2007.

Dick Fuller added that there is a lot of things happening in 2007 & 2008 such as the Justice Center. He also noted that after 5 months we still don't have a recommendation as to whether we will keep the Orion Management team. Dick feels that they need some answers.

Lou then asked Orion where we stand year-to-date on golf course operations. Matt answered that the net income is \$170,000 and that probably won't change by year's end.

Matt said they started installing the guttering today and they started to take the next steps in the implementation of the Crescent System with training schedule for the second week of December.

Matt also said because of all the beautiful weather we've been having the course has taken a real beating.

Lou then asked about the maintenance building roof leak, and Matt said Public Works has evaluated the situation and can make the repairs for \$5,500.

Chris then mentioned that maybe next month's meeting could be held over the lunch hour, on a date to be determined.

Mike O'Connell moved to adjourn the meeting and Bobby Davidson seconded the motioned.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation