

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE
Minutes of May 17, 2006
5:30 – Leawood City Hall

Members in attendance were Dick Fuller (Chair), Bob Reid, Councilman Lou Rasmussen, Chuck Sipple, John Campbell, Mike O’Connell, Carl Howell, Tom Davidson and Bobby Davidson. Shane Gardner, Matt Roberts, and Pete Spratlin of Orion and Parks and Recreation Director, Chris Claxton and Sara Dinkel were also in attendance.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 5:55 p.m. Mike O’Connell moved to approve the minutes of the April 27th meeting. Minutes were approved unanimously based on said changes.

I. General Operations Reports

Shane reported that the weather in the first couple of weeks in May caused cancellation of two events but next week we will have an event every day. Some of the events are for the Boy Scouts, Ernest & Young, St. Michaels and UMKC. Shane also talked of being cautious of selling 10 play cards because of the upcoming course closing. He also reported that they are fielding more questions concerning the course closing.

Gary Bussing asked Shane if we have a database of all the patrons who need to be informed of the course closing. Shane said yes and suggested that maybe we host an informational meeting with drinks and appetizers. Dick said St. Andrew’s Golf course did a good job of this when they closed. Dick then asked if the City is now doing the books for the golf course and are we going to get some kind of operations report from the city preferably in advance of the meetings so we can be prepared for discussion. Chris said there are seven reports that feed into what was passed out last meeting. We will look into preparing something more informative but not as detailed as in previous years.

Dick said Orion used to provide some specific reports and hopes that sometime soon we should be getting this information now that the City has taken over the books.

II. Course Maintenance/Project Report

Pete reported that the course is doing well and we just received three inches of rain with no flooding. He said the staff is busy mowing the grass, which is growing quickly due to the weather.

Dick asked about the rough areas that were seeded and Pete reported that the seeding took well.

Chuck suggested that Orion put into place a suggestion box to encourage patrons to give feedback concerning the course and the impending reconstruction project. If one is selected, we could reward them with a couple of free rounds of golf.

John Campbell pointed out that someone could suggest something we already had planned to do and we would be rewarding them unnecessarily.

Pete reported that there is a long list of in-house projects to complete during the closing of the course.

III. Presentation by Orion of Course Closure Recommendations and Marketing Plan

Shane then proceeded to share with everyone the details of the proposal prepared by Orion outlining Orion's roll during the closing of the course. Section one outlined the advantages and disadvantages of closing the whole course and Shane talked in terms of revenues and if whether we could expect 50% or 60% of our customers returning.

Lou asked if the number we can expect between shutting down completely or keeping some of the operation running is \$100,000? Lou then asked won't we save that much money just in course maintenance alone? Shane said yes. Lou then went on to say so the at risk amount for the city tax payer in approximately \$100,000.

The group then spent some time discussing the potential for revenue and what could be done to retain our customers.

Some marketing options might be to possibly have our regular groups play at another location and then possibly return to Ironhorse for the group dinner. Another suggestion was to offer Crown Members a \$1,000 credit to entice them to return to Ironhorse after the construction is complete.

Gary added that group business is good business so maybe we offer the same 2006 price for their event if they agree to return in 2008. Gary then shared with the group an article discussing the dangers in discounting golf.

Shane then went into more detail concerning Section 2 and marketing directed at the 2008 member. Some strategies are to keep in contact with the customer during 2007. Orion said they intend to be out on the front line in an effort to lure the customer back including the senior leagues, ladies leagues and church organizations. Lou asked if we will be able to keep these groups that move to a different locale. Can we limit them to moving to just Leawood courses? Shane said at this time we are looking at relocating the groups to both public and private courses.

Dick said that while the course is closed down there could be different events out at the clubhouse such as stag nights, etc. Do we want to market these events in order to keep people coming out to the course and clubhouse? Shane said we could host these events on nights and weekends. Shane also mentioned that Deer Creek is very interested in helping us out because they are on the verge of having to do the same thing and close like we are doing.

Dick asked how many people Orion plans to retain. Shane said Pete's pay is already reflected in the operations. Golf shop people are in the golf shop and Food and Beverage in same. Under full closure, these full-time employees could not be retained.

Pete then shared with the group that construction staging areas will also have a bearing on what remains open. Pete explained that there will probably be a construction trailer at the Clubhouse parking lot which means the Ironhorse lot will probably be full. Mike then asked the group if there will be a need to overlay the parking lot when the construction is done.

Chris then asked the group where people will park if there is an event. We cannot promote parking in the residential streets and we need clearance maintained around the drive to get emergency vehicles through if needed.

Lou then asked if there is construction staging in the lot how much parking would be left for customers? Pete said half the lot would probably be available.

Shane said the lot had approximately 240 spaces.

Pete said we could also offer valet parking.

IV. Miscellaneous

Chris reported that the Mayor has made Council Liaison and committee appointments recently. Tom Davidson and Carl Howell will be joining the golf committee as citizen volunteers. Council Liaisons will be Gary Busing and Lou Rasmussen.

Chris also presented the group with a copy of the letter she wrote to a patron, Marilyn Lewis, in response to some concerns she had with the Women's league. Mayor Dunn had asked that all committee members receive a copy of the correspondence as well.

John Campbell moved to adjourn the meeting and Chuck Sipple seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation