

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

Minutes of March 26, 2009

5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall, Public Works Conference Room

Members in attendance were Dick Fuller (Chair), Bob Reid, Chuck Sipple, Tommy Davidson (via telephone from Arizona) and Council Liaison Lou Rasmussen. Also present were Shane Gardner of Orion Management Solutions, Inc., and staff members Pete Spratlin, and Tonia Morgan.

Guest John Fetto, a Leawood Resident and Marshall at the golf course also attended the meeting.

Chairman Dick Fuller introduced John Fetto who spoke on behalf of himself and other concerned citizens that are not complimentary of the golf course and their willingness to give it another chance.

Dick reported that he appreciates Mr. Fetto attending the meeting and sharing his comments. It isn't something that the committee isn't aware of, but feedback is always helpful.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. Chuck Sipple moved to approve the minutes of the February 26, 2009 meeting and Bob Reid seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Prior to reporting on the agenda items, Mr. Fetto shared concerns from others

John Fetto reported that he's played with several different groups and each one of them have expressed their disappointed in Ironhorse and that they will are not returning.

Dick Fuller asked if they are older or younger players, and if they play at Ironhorse regularly.

John Fetto reported that they are different ages. They went back to Ironhorse last year, and the course was not in the playing shape they expected so, they are not going back.

He also reported that he contacted a friend Saturday and invited him to join him at Ironhorse, that there wasn't anyone playing at the time. The friend replied to John that he was at St. Andrews and it was packed. A lot of people are playing at other courses. He reported that Ironhorse looks clean but he is uncertain if people are going to give it another chance and return.

Dick Fuller reported he also receives a lot of comments, everyone recognizes this, and it is very unfortunate. We had an opportunity and didn't deliver.

Dick also reported that subsequently, when people are disappointed twice, it is really hard to gain their trust again and to get them back when we didn't deliver last year. It will take time, particularly in today's environment when the economy is down and people aren't playing as much.

Dick reported that people are more cost conscious than in the past. He also reported that Shane is trying to structure a lot of marketing and pricing aspects to see if we can get things turned around. It isn't necessarily pricing and the economy. The biggest factor is getting people to give us a chance.

Dick reported that he's noticed the numbers are also down on the Men's Club. This is the core group. It is very unfortunate if this group doesn't return.

John Fetto reported that his marketing suggestion would be to incorporate a punch card. Play three rounds and get one free. He also suggested May 15 would be the first paid round. If you bring three players with you, you play for 25% less.

John Fetto added that if this done early spring until May 15, it provides a discount and puts a competitive league price with the Overland Park golf courses and gets people back on the course.

Dick reported that the main concern is getting people back to the golf course. Years ago there were very few upscale courses but now there are a number of them that are direct competition.

Shane reported that he and the core group are at Ironhorse, which prevents us from being exposed to what people are saying.

Dick reported that the problem is the core group is shrinking. This is a not a good situation and is obviously reflected in Triple Crown and the Men's Club sign ups.

John Fetto reported that course currently looks great.

Pete replied that it does. He has received many huge compliments. When the tournaments go through the season and people hear how the course is now, hopefully it will bring them back.

Shane reported to John, that when people are interested in a tournament or joining, the first question they ask is what the golf course looks like.

Shane reported that when asked this question, he invites them to make a tee time, visit the course and the fee is taken care of.

Shane also reported that the complimentary round is calculated as a promotional round.

Shane also reported that on occasion, he has taken care of tournament coordinators fees for the day and once they actually play the course, they will book their tournament. The tournament coordinators report to him that they want to make sure the course isn't like last year and it puts them at ease to book a tournament.

Shane reported that if he is able to work more with tournament coordinators and also do some of what John Fetto mentioned.

Shane reported that there is a direct mailer going out to 25,000 households in the area. The mailer will have a coupon to come to Ironhorse and play golf for \$25.00 with a cart.

Shane reported that John mentioned cutting back fees a certain percentage, but it is most important to get people out, which is why the promotion is being ran. When the promotional rates were passed, it was understood that they would be used to get people to come back out.

Shane reported that if the course is in good shape and people are playing golf and having a good time, we should be fine.

Dick reported that people played the course last year and were very disappointed.

Shane showed the committee a report from the National Golf Foundation that talks about golfer confidence. It states that 2/3 of the Nations 15.7 million adult core golfers are feeling the economic strain and are raining in their spending. It also stated that approximately 30-40% of golfers are playing fewer rounds of golf and delaying golf purchases.

Shane reported that he shared this article because it speaks to the other side where people are also going to play fewer rounds so we need to entice them to come back to Ironhorse.

I. Discuss Maintenance Plan Progress Report (Pete)

Pete reported that he is working on a lot of drainage projects. He is in the process of mowing fescue sod and full season sod. It will be a while until he is able to secure zoysia to complete these projects.

The material for the split rail fencing on #15 has been returned. He is searching for better fence rails. Instead of getting two rails out of a post, they are getting four which makes it very thin. .

Chuck Sipple asked who the original vendor was.

Pete reported that the posts came from Sutherlands.

Dick asked about drainage on #18.

Pete reported that it is doing well, and moving great. The hillside from the recent rain washed across the fairway on the south side of the green. There is actually bare dirt showing as a result of this. He will establish the hillside soon and mow it down. It is a big mess.

Pete also reported that the greens are doing well.

II. 2010 Budget Recommendations

Pete asked the committee to review the 2010 budget proposals handed out that accompanied the previous e-mail and passed out tonight.

Dick Fuller tabled the discussion of the budget reports until the April meeting. Committee members are to take the reports and review on their own.

Dick asked committee members to bring any questions/input to the April meeting.

III. Discuss Upcoming Events/Marketing Efforts

Shane reported that there are two morning leagues, a Tuesday Senior League and a Wednesday Ladies League. The ladies league is growing but the senior league is down and facing challenges.

Shane reported that he would like to recommend using the \$30.00 promotional rate for league play on Tuesday and Wednesday in an effort to grow both leagues. He would also like to offer two complimentary rounds for anyone who brings out other people and recruits them. The complimentary rounds could be used Monday through Thursday, at some point other than the league.

Chuck Sipple asked will there be discrimination between Leawood residents and non residents when offering the \$30.00 deal.

Shane reported that they do not. This is offered at \$10.00 lower than any rate offered.

Shane reported that he spoke with Chris about it. She is fine with offering this. At Review of the minutes, Chris reported that she is not comfortable with dropping fees but overall thinks it is probably a good idea. She asked Shane to get her financial information on the difference this would create in revenues She wanted him to include it in this report and get committee members feedback.

Shane reported that we will have better luck in retaining league members if people are recruited to play for this price.

Dick Fuller asked where the senior league is considering moving their league to.

Shane reported that there is a gentleman originally in the league that set something up to try to get people to move to Deer Creek.

Dick Fuller asked if he has a Triple Crown membership there.

Shane reported that he does.

Pete reported that they offered to pay it for him if he brought people over.

Chuck Sipple made the motion to accept the recommended \$30.00 promotional rate. Tommy Davidson seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Councilman Rasmussen recommended getting this on the next City Council agenda.

Shane reported that when speaking with Chris, it doesn't need to go to Council because the \$30.00 promotional rate has already been approved. (At review of the minutes, Chris reported that she did not imply with certainty that this did not need to go to council for approval)

Shane gave a highlight of the remaining portion of the report (please see attached)

IV. Discuss Financial Through February

Shane reported that his financial report was included in his report (please see attached).

Shane reported that the financial comparison references 2006 vs. 2009 and 2006 YTD vs. 2009 YTD.

Shane reported that the numbers reflect the rounds of golf. They are 1/3 of what they were in 2006.

V. Misc.

Lou reported that he met with Scott Lambers regarding hole #5 because the residents adjoining hole #5 were given an additional thirty days and didn't respond. Lou suggested bringing them to court.

Lou reported that Scott received a call from their lawyer requesting additional time.

Lou reported that there were initially three options. 1. Ask for a maintenance easement on the channel that would require putting in a gate in the amount of \$5500.00 for cleaning out the channel. 2. It could be split three ways with the City, the property owners and the Homes Association. 3. The property would be given to the City of Leawood and it would become city owned. Lou feels the third option would pose additional problems. They have now been given an extension of thirty days by Scott Lambers. The thirty days will end April 9, 2009. Hopefully we will hear something soon.

Lou reported that on the 8th or 9th of April, he will contact Scott and will report any findings to the committee.

Pete reported that their lawyer came back with a new proposal, which is basically the original proposal from the City, but with changes. The new proposal clarified some of the City Attorney's language and there was a miscommunication between the private property owners and the homeowners association.

Pete reported that the private property owners actually thought they were being taken care of by the homeowners association.

Pete reported that they are on board, and we should hear from their lawyer early next week. Essentially, the proposal for the deed of the property is going forward. The homeowners association opted the initial homeowner out of any financial responsibility. It will be split two ways financially.

Pete also reported that a gate will be put in. It will not be fenced. He will have it surveyed and a legal description will be included early next week.

Pete reported that within a few weeks he should be able to get in there and clean it out.

Lou reported that he also spoke with Scott and he agreed with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to deliver a letter to the adjoining property owners whose fences are in need of repair to advise them that we are hiring a fencing company if they are interested in contacting them at their expense; they are welcome to do so.

Pete reported that he is currently working with five companies bidding on the fencing job. Each company is willing to offer their own letters that they normally use to offer surrounding properties the option to use their company.

Pete reported that he spoke with the homeowners association of the properties; they are willing to offer any assistance to get the letters to the property owners who need it.

Chuck Sipple asked where the deteriorating fences are.

Pete reported that #4 on the Hills of Ironhorse has been damaged since the 2002 ice storm. There is also a couple on #15 and #13.

Pete reported that the finials are broken almost everywhere and will need to be welded.

Lou Rasmussen reported that one of the goals of the city council that was established early this year was to establish mission statements for all of the committees.

Lou reported that this hasn't been done.

Lou reported that the Golf Advisory Committee may want to consider, since they have experience for ten years when the golf course was established is to write a suggested mission statement for the advisory committee.

Lou reported that he would suggest the Chairperson make a draft. Once a draft is made, submit it to the committee members and liasions to get their input and it can be voted upon.

Dick Fuller reported that he will present a draft at the next meeting.

Chuck Sipple asked if it needs to comply with a certain format.

Lou reported that it does not, because there is none. This will be the first one.

Chuck offered to assist Dick if needed.

Dick thanked Chuck for his offer. He will meet with Chris and get this taken care of.

A motion was made by Bob Reid to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 pm. The motion was seconded by Chuck Sipple. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation