

IRONHORSE  
Golf Club



**GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of July 9, 2009**

**5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall – Main Conference Room**

Members in attendance were Dick Fuller (Chair), Bob Reid, Tommy Davidson, Steve McCartan and Jud Alford, as well as Council Liaison James Azeltine. Also present were Shane Gardner of Orion Management Solutions, Inc., and staff members Pete Spratlin, Chris Claxton, and Tonia Morgan.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 5:49 p.m. Bob Reid moved to approve the minutes of the May 28, 2009 meeting and Tommy Davidson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**I. Introduction of New Committee Members**

Chairman Fuller reported that there are two new committee members, Steve McCartan and Jud Alford.

Chairman Fuller reported that Steve McCartan attended the May meeting to observe. His official term begins today.

Steve McCartan reported that he resides in Leawood near 132nd and Mission Rd. He and is an attorney with Lathrop and Gage.

Jud Alford reported that he resides in Whitehorse near 150<sup>th</sup> and Nall. He owns a Publishing Consulting business and is currently going back to school.

Chairman Fuller welcomed the new Board Members. He explained that typically the meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month. He stated that today's meeting will suffice for the July meeting unless something comes up that we need to meet on. The next meeting is scheduled for the fourth Thursday in August. Tonia will provide the committee with the necessary information prior to the meeting.

**II. Discuss Final Aggressive Maintenance Plan Progress Report #10**

Pete reviewed the aggressive maintenance plan (number 10). Committee members followed along with a handout.

Pete reported that this is the final maintenance plan. There are two items that aren't complete. There is minimal landscaping and trees that need to be planted. He has received the plants and trees for the area but will plant them when the time is right. It isn't cost effective to plant in July. The plants will not survive.

Pete also reported that it is nice to finally complete the list. Most of it was dependant upon zoysia and timing. The zoysia wasn't available until mid June. At that time, the fields were

too wet to install. All courses in the area received loads of zoysia the first of June. Another truck load is on order. It took over three weeks to receive it because the fields were under water. This pushed a lot back in the month of June. It is complete now. It is tied in and looks great.

Pete reported that after the rain finally ended the weather started heating up significantly. Most days it was near 110 degrees on the surface. This was really good for zoysia.

Pete also reported that there are areas to add additional sod, if the budget permits.

Pete reported that that he has a list of small disasters on the course. The first was weed control of the clover and crab grass in the collars. There were some staffing issues in this regard. They thought if they went twice as much on the chemical they would get twice as fast of kill on the clover. This thought is absolutely true but, in the process it unfortunately kills the bent grass. Currently, there are one, two or three dead areas on almost every collar on the golf course.

Pete reported that weak areas on the greens have been sodded. Upon completion, they waited on purpose to do the collars with the remaining bent grass.

Pete also reported that the main line irrigation blew out on #8. He has been extremely busy this week trying to get this repaired.

Pete reported that it was repaired yesterday. The fix is holding.

Chairman Fuller asked when it blew.

Pete reported that it blew on Monday. There were almost two days without any water.

Pete reported that the contractor arrived Tuesday morning. He fixed it three times and it blew each time.

Pete also reported that Brett Haugland and one of his engineers looked at it Tuesday night. They decided that they will not use this type of pipe anywhere again.

Pete reported that this is helpful information but doesn't fix our problem. He considers the current fix temporary. It is a good for now, but he is concerned if it goes under water how much the pipe will move and if it will hold. The pipes across the bridges and are UV resistant but are sixteen years old. This has concerned him for quite awhile. They are bound to get brittle over time. He fears it is near the end of its lifetime.

Councilman Azeltine asked how much pipe of this type is remaining on the course.

Pete reported that there are nine crossings.

Councilman Azeltine asked if the type of pipe is used mainly on bridges.

Pete reported that it is yellow mine pipe. The pipe on the irrigation system is PVC. This is fine for underground. The yellow mine is UV resistant. It is meant for over ground but temporary irrigation systems.

Councilman Azeltine asked Pete if he is expecting a lot of the others to go around the bridges.

Pete reported that he will seek proposals on replacement cost. He will check into a C.I.P. program to do this.

Councilman Azeltine asked the cost to replace the pipe on #8.

Pete reported a seven foot section was patched to repair the problem. He hasn't received a bill. Chris and he met with Brett from Continental Engineering to discuss different types of pipe that would be better.

Chairman Fuller asked if some are more critical than others and more susceptible to break.

Pete reported yes. Some are on the upstream side. They get a harsh beating when under water.

Chairman Fuller asked an estimated dollar amount to replace all of the pipes.

Pete reported that he would recommend digging up the anchor on either end of the bridge and replacing both z-lines on each end. He would estimate each bridge could possibly cost \$5-\$8 thousand dollars each.

Chairman Fuller asked if each bridge spans are typical in size.

Pete reported that they are approximately 40 feet and there are eight of them.

Chairman Fuller asked Pete how many days the course could survive without water if there was another subsequent blow out.

Pete reported that it depends. If the course is without water for more than a day, there will be significant damage and the greens will start to die, if typical summer weather is prevalent at the time.

Chairman Fuller reported that the reality of this happening again is great.

Pete agreed.

Chairman Fuller reported that we need to establish a back-up plan.

Pete reported that sadly, there is no back up plan. A lot of people don't realize that this is the only source of water flowing onto the golf course. There aren't any other options. A fire hydrant can't be tied into the system without another construction project. Even if it were possible, a fire hydrant wouldn't pull the amount of pressure and flow needed.

Pete reported that this isn't a big concern at this time, but it could cause some serious issues with valves. The mechanical company was astonished at the size of it.

Councilman Azeltine asked if we are still getting water out of the Blue River.

Pete reported that we are.

Tommy Davidson asked if we should be aggressively searching for estimates.

Pete reported that he will look into this soon. Especially for #8.

Jud Alford asked if there are any concerns of injuries to a golfer if this happens again.

Pete reported that this is a great concern. He will provide more information at the next meeting.

Pete also reported that they began laying sod in the dead areas yesterday in the collars. This should be complete tomorrow.

Chairman Fuller asked when the tournament begins.

Pete reported that it begins Saturday morning. The course is looking great... There are a few things pending, but it should be ready for the tournament.

Pete also reported that last week there was a hydraulic leak with the brand new equipment recently purchased from Toro. The chipping green was calibrated. They took out 1-4 greens with no issues, and it sprung a leak on #5.

Pete reported that until the oil soaked the sand it was noticed. The equipment throws 25 feet at a time which prevented the operator from seeing it when it happened. The affected grass isn't dead. It is burned and the leaf tissues are brown. It doesn't look good at this time, but within a few weeks the grass will grow and it won't be noticeable at all, if the weather holds. It should repair fairly quickly.

Pete reported that unfortunately it won't help with the special tournament weekend. The best that can be done at this point is to mask it and add additional fertilizer to the greens in hopes it will grow faster.

Chairman Fuller reported that he looked at it Monday. It doesn't appear that it will affect putting very much.

Pete also reported that Toro is taking full responsibility for this. They provided Pete with a documented letter stating this. They also provided the course a \$2,000 parts credit for future purchases. He plans to meet with the Regional Vice President from Toro soon. This is the second time they have cost him grass. He's contacted Superintendents' from other courses and found that they too are having similar issues with Toro.

Chairman Fuller opened the floor for additional questions for Pete regarding the maintenance plan.

Tommy Davidson asked if #10 has been stripped and the approach re-graded.

Pete reported that this has been done. There is one knob on the front left side on the corner where the approach begins that wasn't leveled enough at the time it was completed. This will be redone soon.

Chairman Fuller asked about #13 tee.

Pete reported that it is rebuilt and the sod is holding.

Pete passed around a picture that of the area near #8 green. The yellow line on the picture map represents the fence being installed today.

### **III. Discuss Recent Council Action on Golf Cars, Sale Merchandise, etc.**

Chairman Fuller reported that there was Council action on this a month ago. Orion had been approached by the City to replace the golf carts. It was recommended that if they were going to be replaced, to upgrade to the GPS system on the carts.

Chairman Fuller asked Chris Claxton to report the outcome from the Council meeting.

Chris reported that she was not at the meeting where this was discussed.

Shane reported that he was present at the meeting. The general consensus was to wait until September and see how the majority of the year goes.

Shane reported that the Council requested to also seek estimates on replacement cost for tires and batteries and to also get the fleet in workable condition to hold it over to the next year. At this time, the cost could be compared versus the cost of purchasing a new fleet.

Shane reported that he contacted The Club Car vendor, which is the fleet they've always had for bids. They are by far, the best golf car from a mechanical stand point. In his opinion, in September, he will recommend keeping the current golf cars. There isn't a need to replace them at this time. If they need to be replaced in the future, it would be beneficial to upgrade to a GPS system. From an economic standpoint in regards to the cost, it would be in the best interest to keep the current cars until they are no longer operating. From a budget standpoint, money needs to be allotted in the event they don't last and need to be replaced. The Council asked him to provide a report at the September Council meeting.

Councilman Azeltine reported that he was also present at the Council meeting. The initial discussion was GPS or not and deteriorated to rather it is economical to replace the fleet this year or next year.

Council Azeltine reported that the City Administrator, Scott Lambers did not favor the GPS addition.

Jud Alford asked why the City Administrator recommended not upgrading to the GPS system.

Councilman Azeltine reported that Scott felt this is not a necessity in the tough economy.

Councilman Azeltine also reported that it was discussed that the main competition has it.

Jud Alford reported that this is his main concern. Is there any way to determine the impact of Ironhorse not having GPS.

Shane reported that there are three to four courses in our price range and market that has them but in his opinion it is not "the" deciding factor on where someone decides to play golf. It is an added component when you are comparing golf courses. From his standpoint as an operator, he would much rather hold on to the golf carts and when they are traded out, to be able to afford the GPS by saving the money with holding onto them for another year. It is a valuable asset from three different perspectives, maintenance, operations and play. If we can save money by holding onto them for a year or two it will offset itself.

Pete reported that he agrees it will be a maintenance benefit to designate areas where the carts can not travel full speed. There are a lot of steep areas as well as it would be an added benefit to designate the clubhouse area to avoid hitting a pedestrian. If there is a designated cart path only area, the cart will warn you and shut down if needed when you travel too far off the path. The clubhouse will also be able to see exactly where all carts are at all times. It will also be nice to know where the Marshalls are in proximity of a problem.

Councilman Azeltine reported that were concerns from members of the Council of how it looks to spend an additional \$70K on a GPS system.

Jud Alford reported that in these economic times there may be extra leverage with manufacturers to get a better deal than we may receive two years from now.

Tommy reported that the carts definitely need tires.

Shane reported that he agrees. Some tires are bald, and have been changed as needed. A thorough check will be done during the down time in the winter months when they have extra time to complete projects like this.

Shane reported that the Council approved the sale of the merchandise at below cost. Most of it has moved. It will be marked down one final time after this weekend.

#### **IV. Discuss Financials Through May/June (Shane)**

Shane provided a handout to the committee. (Please see attached)

Shane reported that on 2006YTD vs. 2009YTD. As stated before in the committee, the end of June is an indicator of where your year is going to stand.

Shane reported that golf fees and golf cars have to be combined because the reporting of the golf car income is different. Previously, it was more scud towards the golf fee and now more money is going towards the golf cars. The numbers are fairly close when added.

Shane also reported that range fees have increased. There are more people using the range since we've been open. It also helps that more people are moving out south which brings more players to the course.

Shane reported that the biggest discrepancy is in memberships. This is a result of members that we had in 2006 that didn't return in 2009. With this significant drop, you will notice others profit centers slip.

Shane reported that merchandise is also down significantly. Economically people aren't buying expensive equipment as they were before.

Councilman Azeltine asked the total round amount.

Shane reported that it is approximately 10,000. It would have been 13,000 in 2006. These are people who would have played on a regular basis.

Councilman Azeltine asked if this is through the end of 2006, or if it is for the comparable period.

Shane reported that it is for the comparable period.

Shane reported that the tournament total will be approximately 3,000. There were 4,600 in 2006. This is not uncommon with other golf courses. People are more careful about spending money this year and we are finding that companies have a significant drop in participants. This is happening nationwide.

Shane reported that there is time to sell additional Ten Play Cards and Tour Cards from a membership perspective, but the Triple Crown Club are at a maximum level and probably won't change in regards to comparison.

Shane reported that all of the leagues will be ending in July. There were more this year than in 2008, but some had fewer players. They are currently working on assisting the churches, organizations and companies build their league play. They have never had to do this in years past. They are working with League Coordinators to send out e-mails and provide them with templates to make the information they send look more attractive. Hopefully this will gain the attention of potential players.

Shane also reported that they hosted a Couples event June 26. It was well attended. There was a light dinner beforehand, after which they played golf, and then returned to the clubhouse for dessert. This format worked out really well. Another event is scheduled for August 7.

Jud Alford asked who the couples were.

Shane reported that some were members; others were from the general public. Most were residents but some were non-residents. A blast e-mail was sent inviting people to attend. He will continue to use blast e-mails to advertise specials and events.

Shane reported that The Kansas City Amateur tournament will be held this weekend. This is a great opportunity to showcase the golf course to the clientele of people we would normally market to. People who play in this event are avid golfers and play several times per week. Staff will provide a bag drop for them which has never been done before. Their bag will be loaded on their carts as they pull up. They will also provide coolers with ice towels. This will hopefully set our facility apart from a service standpoint from other courses.

Shane reported that they were able to incorporate lunch, fruit and snacks in the fee. This should be a well attended event.

Councilman Azeltine asked about working with a list company and possibly obtaining contact information of members from private clubs that may not be able to afford it any longer. This may be a prime opportunity for us to introduce ourselves to them.

Shane reported that he's had success in the past obtaining a list of people who subscribe to the Golf Digest. It can also be provided by zip code. He will continue to work with them to receive this information.

Jud Alford reported that with his Publishing background, he knows that these lists are easily available. It depends on how much you want to spend to market to them.

Jud Alford asked if The Amateur tournament players will receive a goody bag.

Shane reported that they will not.

Jud Alford reported that in hopes of them returning, he wondered if a half round incentive could be offered. If they have a nice experience while playing in the tournament, this is nice, but it would be nice to offer them something to get them back on an individual basis.

Shane reported that as part of the marketing for this event, he will receive a list of players and the contact information for them. He will offer them an incentive moving forward.

Shane reported that all participants will be encouraged to complete a short survey at the conclusion of the event. The feedback will be used for future tournaments.

Dick reported that it would be nice to offer a free beverage for completing the survey. Once finished playing, they will be hot and tired and may not want to come inside but may be inclined to do so, if a drink is involved.

Shane reported that June promotion had few attendees. He had hoped for larger attendance.

Shane reviewed the list of promotions offered by other courses at this time (please see attached report).

Shane reported that other courses are recognizing that play is decreasing as well. They are offering incentive to get people to play on their course.

Shane reported that he work with Chris to devise something to offer for the remainder of July and August to get people out.

Jud Alford reported that it would be nice to add a question asking them what media they received inviting them to the event.

Shane thanked Jud for the suggestion. He will add this to the survey.

Chairman Fuller asked what the published weekend rate.

Shane reported that it is currently \$70.00.

Chairman Fuller asked if anyone in town is \$70.00.

Shane reported that there are a few. If other courses are advertising lower than \$70, they are only offering this to their customer base. It is not being offered outside.

Chairman Fuller reported that he has talked to numerous people and \$70.00 is extremely steep with today's economy. It is an impediment.

Jud Alford reported that he agrees with Dick. It may be in our best interest to offer an incentive until year end. The biggest challenge we face is getting people back to the course to experience it again.

Jud Alford reported that the amount of money received should be secondary to getting people to the course.

Shane reported that he agrees. The course is in great condition. It would be nice to get people out there to take advantage of it.

Councilman Azeltine asked Shane to provide the committee a spreadsheet of all of the different courses and what they charge relative to us.

Chris reported that this was completed for the business plan.

Shane reported that he will bring this to next months meeting.

Shane also reported that the latest edition of Golf Digest recently ranked the best teachers in the state and Skip Maiwald was rated the number one teacher in the state. This is a tremendous asset to Ironhorse. If people read the article which talks about where Skip teaches, this may bring people to the course to take lessons with him. If this does happen, it may encourage people to buy a ten play card or a membership.

Chairman Fuller reported that Skip has a tremendous reputation with the juniors. There aren't many in town in the State programs that haven't come through his program.

Tommy reported that ESPN hired him when they visited Ironhorse years ago.

Councilman Azeltine asked how long Skip has been with Ironhorse.

Shane reported that he has been with Ironhorse six years.

Councilman Azeltine asked if he has an agreement with us and if he is a City employee.

Shane reported that he is an independent contractor with us.

Steve McCartan asked Shane if when talking to other courses how much their rounds are down from a year ago. He would like to isolate the impact of the course problems over the past year versus other factors that seem to be affecting everyone.

Shane reported that there are premium courses such as Shoal Creek that are down 15%. There are courses such as Minor Park and Swope which he also runs that are off approx. 5%. He attributes this to being a lower price point. The cost is \$30-\$40 to play.

Shane reported that everyone in the higher end is hurting.

Jud Alford asked why the food and beverage total is dramatically lower than other areas.

Shane reported that there weren't many tournaments scheduled in May and June. These are typically two bigger tournament months. Most events will do a large amount of food business with us, but if there aren't any tournaments scheduled, the numbers will be significantly lower.

Shane reported that there were a total of 900 tournament rounds this year and this is low.

#### **V. Employee Prime Time Playing At Ironhorse (Tommy Davidson)**

Tommy reported that in the past employees can play on the weekends after 2p.m. This was in the business plan and approved by the Golf Committee, and the City Council. This apparently

changed by the City Administrator that employees (Marshalls who are employed by the City) can not play for free during prime times.

Tommy reported that there are several player assistants that can only play on Saturday or Sunday. There is an Assistant Pro whose father is a Triple Crown who played on Saturday afternoons with his father. The no free play rule precludes him from doing so unless he pays.

Tommy also reported that one of the employees wrote a letter to the City Administrator requesting to change this rule. The City Administrator responded that the City Council had given him the responsibility to put Ironhorse into a money making facility.

Tommy reported that he would like to suggest that a player assistant can't reserve tee times but should be allowed to play if an opening is available. This will not take money away from Ironhorse.

Tommy would like to propose to the City Administrator to allow them to play without paying if the time is available. This should be allowed for employees of the golf course and the Player Assistants who work during the week and on the weekend.

Councilman Azeltine asked if the Player Assistants are paid.

Tommy Davidson and Shane reported that they are paid employees.

Chairman Fuller reported that there are other courses that do not pay their Player Assistants. They only receive free golf. It was this way at Ironhorse until this year, when it was decided to make them employees and add them to the payroll. Most are working there to play golf, not for the money.

Chris reported that this came about due to concerns from the City Attorney. There was a discussion about golf being a benefit. The IRS has a position on how golf is a benefit. Perhaps there is some way to compromise and give them value of their round of golf based on their schedule. She agrees with Tommy's thought and suggestion and will discuss this with Scott.

## **VII. Misc.**

Chairman Fuller reported that he spoke with a few people who discussed that the clubhouse has been extremely hot.

Chris reported that unfortunately this happened during the Chamber event. She spoke with Howard who is working with the air conditioning company to fix the problem. In the interim, Chris asked Pete to purchase two portable air conditioners to cool the space until the problem can be fixed.

A motion was made by Tommy Davidson made to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 pm. The motion was seconded by Steve McCartan Leo Morton. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director  
Parks and Recreation