

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

Minutes of November 18, 2009

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

Members in attendance were Dick Fuller (Chair), Bob Reid, Tommy Davidson, Jud Alford, Steve McCartan, Chuck Sipple and Leo Morton.

Council Liaisons James Azeltine and Lou Rasmussen also attended.

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 6:00 p.m.

Chuck Sipple moved to approve the October 22, 2009 meeting minutes and Tommy Davidson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

I. Discuss RFP Interview Process/Timeline

Chairman Fuller announced that over the past two weeks a committee was selected to interview seven prospects for the management and operation of Ironhorse golf course. The final group interviewed last night.

The committee met after the final presentation to review all presenters. A determination was made of who the committee would recommend to the City Council.

Troon Golf Club from Scottsdale, Arizona was selected to take over operations and maintenance of the golf course beginning January 1, 2010.

Chuck Sipple asked if the second group chosen will automatically be the alternate if Patty Bennett, the City Attorney runs into an impasse with Troon.

Chairman Fuller reported that the City Administrator along with the City Attorney is negotiating a contract with Troon. If successful, it will go to Council December 7th for approval. The new contract will begin January 1, 2010.

Chairman Fuller reported that his understanding is if an acceptable contract can not be drafted with Troon; subsequently the second group will be the alternate.

Jud Alford asked if the alternate group has been identified publically.

Chris Claxton reported that the alternate company will not be identified at this time.

Councilman Azeltine reported that a copy of Troons presentation will be given to the golf course committee for review.

Chris Claxton reported that as soon as copies are made, they will be delivered to each home. They will receive them prior to the December meeting.

Leo Morton reported that he looks forward to receiving a copy of the proposal which will hopefully include a scope of the services they will provide.

Chairman Fuller reported that each committee member will receive a copy of Troons RFP which basically introduces who they are, and what they've done, etc.

Chuck Sipple reported that it would be nice for the committee to also receive a copy of the RFP they bid against and the supplemental booklet Troon provided.

Jud Alford asked if there was a criteria/scale to work with during the interview process.

Chuck Sipple reported that Chris devised a master list along with a grid of 10-15 factors to score within a range of 10-30 points, depending on a particular category. All presenters were scored. The highest number of points came in first.

Chuck Sipple also reported that each committee member was asked their personal first, second, and third choice. For the most part, the outcome was very common across the board.

Chuck Sipple reported that Troon was head and shoulders over the next bidder.

Chris Claxton reported that everyone completed their own list. Some things were weighted more heavily than others. Everyone received points for visiting the golf course, things of particular concern, along with maintenance and marketing issues received more points.

Councilman Azeltine reported that the contract must be approved by the Council before negotiations can take place. At that point, there will be an interim contract in December. By the end of January, a final contract should be in place.

II. Discuss Current Course Conditions

Pete reported that for the most part, the course has been wet and cold as expected for the month of November with the exclusion of the nice weeks at the beginning of the month which isn't typical. This allowed his crew to go back into a maintenance mode and work on mowing and leaf control.

They were able to fill up the spray tanks and water some areas due as a result of the drier part of November. They have also been busy with tree removal and cleaning brush on the course.

Pete reported that the greens are doing well. He received more compliments lately regarding the condition of the course.

Chuck Sipple asked if there has been any issues on hole #13 tee box due to the heavy rains we've received.

Pete reported that currently everything is stable. If we have the extremely wet winter projected, it will take months to get really deep and soften the ground. If so, this would be noticed in February and March and would be wet all the way through. If anything will move, it will do so at that time.

Pete reported that the course irrigation system has been valved-off since October 10, due to the main line break on bridge #8. They have taken advantage of this and have been able to complete a lot of irrigation repairs that they normally couldn't do.

Pete also reported that they have been able to valve the course up temporarily. The clamps are holding but not securely.

Pete reported that for security purposes, when they valve-up, plywood is installed for protection in case someone is going by and it blows. It may not shatter like before, but if so, the plywood helps keep people dry and safe.

Pete reported that Continental Engineers and the contractor have visited the course several times and have researched different options to rectify the situation. He anticipated having a cost amount to discuss tonight, but hasn't received it yet.

He would like to receive this soon, in hopes to make the December 7, agenda.

Chuck Sipple asked if the fix is weather related. Will January and February be too cold?

Pete reported that it would be better if the ground is frozen. The fix will take approx. 2-3 weeks. The course will need water in the upcoming months and needs to be fixed before then.

Chris reported that she met with Pete on Monday and reviewed the final progressive maintenance plan and identified a few things that are not completely done or that they are not fully satisfied with the way they are operating or performing. They also discussed the projects in the Capital Improvement Program and monies scheduled to be spent.

She hoped to have this information ready to distribute tonight but didn't have an opportunity to get this done. She will send this to the committee once it is typed up (via e-mail) so everyone has a good understanding of the existing projects and other items off of the list that also came up.

Pete reported that the items are ongoing maintenance issues that are continuing and constant.

Chuck Sipple asked if there is anything other than the piping issue on #8 that is already funded in the budget that won't get completed this year.

Pete reported that there aren't any ongoing issues. All of the projects are complete for 2009.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if all monies regarding hole #5 have been received.

Chris reported that she isn't completely sure. She will confirm this information and will advise.

Chuck Sipple asked if the drainage from the retention pond project is complete. Do we anticipate it will run well into the spring.

Pete reported that it tested great and should work fine. It is flowing correctly.

III. Financial Report & IV. Upcoming Events/Marketing Efforts (Shane)

Shane gave an overview of his financial report (attached). The report reflects the first fifteen days of November. The good weather played a huge impact on play.

Shane reported that the year to date revenue per rounds from 2006 to 2009 is down.

Shane also reported that tournaments are done for the year. He is busy booking tournaments for next year.

Shane reported that they operated a booth at the Business To Business Expo for the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce. It was a huge success. They received a lot of business cards to add to the e-mail database.

Jud Alford asked if e-mail is the only method of contact. Is anyone called on behalf of the golf course? If so, who contacts them?

Shane reported that he or Christine usually contacts those who inquire about tournaments.

Jud asked why food and beverage is down significantly on a percentage basis.

Shane reported that it's down across the board at every course they manage. He also spoke with Drumm Farm Golf Course and Tiffany Greens; it is the same at both places.

Shane reported that the merchandise is also down significantly.

Chuck Sipple asked if a lot of merchandise will be carried into 12/31/2009.

Shane reported that they are currently trying to move the inventory. They are marking items down to hopefully get rid of it by the end of November. It isn't beneficial to keep it because you will constantly have to mark it down. This also happened with the 2006 inventory.

Jud asked if the remaining items can be donated for a tax incentive.

Shane reported that he is unsure if this can be done as a City.

Chris asked Shane if the rentals/parties have declined like many things due to the economy.

Shane reported that they are slowing building this part of the business up. There are currently 4-5 Holiday parties booked for December.

IV. 2010 Fees

Chris reported a correction regarding the 2010 fees despite the discussion from the previous meeting. At that time, it was discussed that they would move on as proposed or keep them as they were. It has been decided not to include them on the fee schedule for the December meeting. At that point, the management company past or future will do them separately.

Chris reported that this is a directive from Scott, the City Administrator to handle it this way.

Chairman Fuller asked if the 2010 fees golf fees have been submitted for approval.

Chris reported that it has not. The ones submitted are on the Dec. 7 meeting.

Chairman Fuller asked if the Golf Committee will see the proposed fees.

Chris reported that she does not have the answer to this question.

Chairman Fuller reported that at the last meeting it was discussed that Orion submitted a fee schedule for 2010. Will it be presented to the golf committee for approval or recommendation?

Chris reported that the fees from Orion are no longer a valid because they did not receive the contract.

Chairman Fuller asked when the fees will be approved.

Chris reported that she doesn't have a specific date. A lot will hinge on the contract negotiations. She anticipates this will be finalized in January.

Chuck Sipple asked if the existing prices will continue until Troon, along with the City Administrator and Chris Claxton approves them without the recommendation of the golf committee.

Chris reported that this is correct, but there is a possibility that the committee will look at recommended future fees.

Chairman Fuller reported that he assumes the recommended future fees will need approval and anticipates it would be a recommendation from the golf committee.

Chris reported that this is also her assumption but doesn't have a firm answer that this will be the process.

Jud Alford reported that he contacted Chairman Fuller prior to tonight's meeting regarding the main function of the golf committee.

Chairman Fuller reported that he decided it would be best to discuss this tonight.

Jud reported that at the October meeting when discussing the interviewing process for the golf course maintenance and the supervision of the management contract and that only a few members of the golf committee would be involved in the interview and selection process. His main concern and question is what is the function of the committee if the committee as a whole is not involved.

Jud shared that he submitted an e-mail to Councilman Azeltine regarding this as well. They researched and it appears that the genesis of the committee was originally established as a liaison group to deal with homeowner issues around the golf course.

Chairman Fuller reported that the committee originally formed in 1993. He, Bob Reid, and Lou are the only members from the original committee. They were involved in the interview process of the architect and the contractor as well as the management firm and also made recommendations regarding the interviews of the contractors, the selection of the architect and the management company.

Chairman Fuller reported that when the committee was initially formed, their function was much broader than it is today. Originally, there was so much more to do.

Upon completion of the course and it was an operating entity, a lot of the committee involvement was limited to recommendations of the annual budget, monitoring of the development and control around the specifics of the golf course.

Since that time, it has transformed with a new City Administrator. Currently, there isn't as much activity and is more of a cursory group that approved budgets and business plans etc. This is a recommending body to the Council. Everyone is appointed by the Mayor with two Council Liaisons.

Subsequently as this has progressed, a higher degree of control was instituted by the City Administrator and/or the staff. And, this committee is more of an advisory group.

There have been discussions if the committee is a viable function as far as being needed.

Chairman Fuller went on to report that the Mayor has always been a strong supporter of the volunteer system throughout the City and has always been a strong advocate of maintaining the golf course committee.

Some staff and committee members have questioned if it is still needed. Each committee member has their individual expiration date of when their term ends, and none are within the same period of time.

It is his suggestion that until advised differently, there will continue to be a golf committee, which will advise, and whose function is to make recommendations of those things brought before the committee to forward to the Council for approval.

Leo asked if there is a written charter for the committee.

Chris reported that it is not. This is an advisory committee and not policy making. It has been discussed in the past to keep the committee but meet bi-monthly instead of monthly or; to meet only when there is something to be considered, much like the storm water committee.

Chuck Sipple reported that it (the committee) should be very important in the next six months as we transition to a new management company and discuss priorities and the establishment of new or revised policies. Or will the City take the lead regarding these aspects?

Chairman Fuller reported that he believes it is a fair statement to make that regarding the aspects mentioned, that the City will take the lead regarding policies and contracts, etc.

Jud reported that in his opinion the committee will have less of a role. Troon has been awarded the contract and have the responsibility of the golf course and are in charge. They may not be interested in hearing from people on the side who don't impact their contract.

Councilman Rasmussen shared that he wishes what Jud just said is true, but this is merely questionable. It is the belief of some Council members that when a contractor is hired, you hire them to do the job. Unfortunately, and historically, this hasn't been the case in regards to City operations.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that the same question was raised last night. In terms of the contract being drafted now, these issues will be a part of it. The language in the contract *may* be that the contractor and the City agree that the City Council will identify to whom the contractor will report to. All of the RFP's questioned who they report to monthly in terms of rounds played, revenues per round and food and beverage.

Councilman Rasmussen thanked Jud for bringing up an interesting point. This should be determined during negotiations of the contract.

Councilman Azeltine reported that he agrees with the statement Councilman Rasmussen made in terms of allowing a contractor to do their job, but this doesn't include having a body such as the committee as a feedback mechanism.

Councilman Azeltine reported that if the Council came through this committee in the beginning, in regards to separation of maintenance and operations, we wouldn't have gone through this in the first place.

He was elected in 2006 and every January the Council has a goal setting session. Each year he suggested taking a close comprehensive look at overall structures of committees. This was denied for three years, but this past year, he actually made the list, and it is now a goal of the City to take a closer look at this to make sure that it's efficient and we are accomplishing the things that should be accomplished.

Leo reported that all committee members were invited by the Mayor to consider being appointed which was voted upon by the Council. Upon finalizing the contract, it would be good to document what the committee responsibilities should be and if it's needed. All committee members should be clear of their role.

Councilman Azeltine reported that each commission should have a defined explicit mission.

Councilman Rasmussen reiterated the comment Chairman Fuller made in regards to the historic responsibilities of the committee.

Initially, we were an advisory committee who would look at the operations of the golf course and suggest to the City Council what the committee felt were significant economic improvements.

For example, watering the course, the question in the beginning was if it would be beneficial to pay thousands of dollars (\$60K) on a monthly basis to Water District #1, or to access water from the river, which had some implications as it was the outflow of the sewer plant.

Another example was security of the golf course. The committee made a recommendation to the Council regarding fencing and how to schedule it. The cost was \$50K yearly and this is being implemented.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that the committee is an advisory body but it is closer to the players and the operations than any Councilman.

Chairman Fuller reported that most on the committee members are employed and serve on a volunteer basis. Some feel their time spent isn't productive if they are not given the opportunity for involvement on major issues. At what point and time do you realize if the City wants an advisory committee.

Obviously, spending time with other committee members is enjoyable, but he isn't here to come together once a month and enjoy a good meal. It should be more than that. Although the Mayor likes volunteer groups, why have an advisory group if our input is not sought on major issues.

In many instances, there are certain things we can make recommendations on, but in reality, there isn't a recommendation made that can't be made by staff to the Council.

The goal moving forward should be to define more specifically the committee functions.

Councilman Azeltine reported that it is extremely important to have people who actually play the course giving their input. This is what made Ironhorse a special place and different than any course around. We may have missed this recently, but is confident we will get back to it.

Jud reported that he didn't bring it up to complain that the committee isn't getting to do certain things, but he would like clarification to understand what is expected. The RFP is the biggest decision regarding the course and the entire committee wasn't involved.

Chairman Fuller reported that upon forming the committee years ago, they made the decisions and all were involved with recommendations to the Council. Subsequently, during the interview process, two of eight were asked to represent the committee.

In the beginning, the City population and staff were much smaller and it was the responsibility to take control for four to five years while things were transitioning and increasing. Obviously, the functions have changed. If this continues, the question remains is there a need for the committee. He isn't suggesting giving it up, but it is an important question.

Councilman Azeltine reported that this is why it will be good for the Council take a holistic view of the city's entire committee structure to make better use of time of the governing body and to demonstrate more respect and consideration of the volunteers.

Leo suggested looking at other golf course committees and compare what we are doing. Also, Troon has dealt with various golf courses around the country and should be able to offer t input regarding this.

It is also helpful when you are at the golf course and players who know you are on the committee, have questions and become upset when you have specific answers for them.

Pete reported that while going through end of the year paperwork recently, he noticed that there are several citizen issues that may need to be addressed. The new company won't have an idea who any of the citizens are. He has been here eleven years and it seems like each individual house has its own issue.

Jud asked Chris if she expects the fees to come before the committee for discussion.

Chris reported that she thinks they will but is unsure.

Chris reported that the committee is here to make recommendations, and if the Council decides as a whole to veto it, they have that right to do so.

Chairman Fuller reported that if the committee isn't given the opportunity to comment and make recommendations on the fees, they are not needed. In today's business environment fees are one of the most important parts of the business plan and the goals for next year, especially considering the current economy.

Councilman Rasmussen suggested committee members contact the Mayor to share any concerns.

Leo asked if when establishing the guidelines for the RFP, did the City establish a goal to cover its expenses, capital, breaking even or making a big profit.

Chris reported that in terms of the RFP, this was not done. This should get ferreted out more during the negotiation process from a budgeting standpoint.

Councilman Rasmussen invited all committee members to attend the December 7th Council meeting.

IV. Misc.

Chris reported that the next meeting is scheduled for Christmas Eve. A tentative meeting will be scheduled for December 17. Early in December, it will be determined if there are pressing issues that need to be discussed. The committee will be notified closer to the meeting date.

A motion was made by Steve McCartan to adjourn the meeting at 7:10 pm. The motion was seconded by Tommy Davidson. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation