

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

Minutes of January 14, 2010

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

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

Council Liaisons James Azeltine and Lou Rasmussen also attended.

Also present were David Knox, James Kennedy and Mitch Harrell of Troon Golf.

Staff members present were Chris Claxton, and Tonia Morgan.

Tommy Davidson was present via telephone.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:15p.m.

Chuck Sipple moved to approve the November 18, 2009 meeting minutes. Tommy Davidson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

I. Introduction of Troon Staff

Chairman Fuller welcomed the Troon staff. He is glad to have them on board.

Mitch Harrell, Senior Vice President of Operations reported that he is glad to be here. He is excited about being involved with the City of Leawood, as well as Ironhorse.

Mitch introduced David Knox, the Interim General Manager. He has flexible availability and can be here as needed. He is a candidate for the General Manager job. There are a few things to work out internally before they can move forward.

Mitch reported that they will inform the committee quickly in this regard. In the meantime, David has done a lot of work, finishing the budget, working on business plans, marketing plans, staffing, pricing as well as merchandise programs.

Mitch also reported that David has a long history with Troon. He has been employed eight years. He understands how to draw the Troon resources as needed and is the right person for this situation.

Mitch also introduced James Kennedy as the new Superintendent. He is originally from Clinton, Missouri. He had the opportunity to tour the golf course with Pete Spratlin prior to taking over as the Superintendent. James wife is also a Superintendent with Troon.

David Knox reported that he most recently worked at the Equinox Resort in the Vermont area. He has been employed with Troon since 2002. He has worked in the states of California, Ohio, and Florida as well.

James Kennedy reported that he attended Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield, Missouri and worked at Branson Creek for five years. Most recently he was the Director of Agronomy at Talking Stick in Arizona. He is excited to make a difference at Ironhorse.

Chuck Sipple asked James where his wife is a Greens Superintendant.

James replied that she is currently at Moon Valley Country Club in the north Phoenix area.

Chairman Fuller asked the committee to introduce themselves the Troon Staff. Introductions were done and he reported that we typically meet monthly on the fourth Thursday.

Chairman Fuller reported that there are two members absent tonight. Tommy Davidson is listening in via telephone from out of town and Leo Morton. Leo is currently the Chancellor for UMKC which takes a lot of his time. He is in the Men's Club, Triple Crown, and plays a lot after work.

Chuck Sipple reported that this is his fourth year on the golf committee.

Chairman Fuller reported that Chuck is also a very active member. He also plays a lot at Blue Hills and is very knowledgeable about golf.

Steve McCartan reported that this is his first year on the committee. He enjoys playing golf and likes to play as much as he can when time allows.

Jud Alford reported that he and Steve joined the committee at the same time. He resides in the Ironhorse area. He was asked to by the Mayor to join the committee to incorporate his marketing skills. Upon joining, everything was changed and he hasn't helped much.

Bob Reid reported that he's been on the committee since 1992. He was President of the Kansas Golf Association and Missouri. He spent forty years doing rules work on the Nationals. He is happy to have Troon Golf on board.

Councilman Azeltine reported that he is the Councilman for Ward 4, in the southern part of Leawood, which encompasses a portion of the course. He is anxious to get going in a positive direction.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that he is Councilman for Ward 2. He has been on the committee since its inception and was active in the original campaign to encourage people to vote for the course.

Chairman Fuller reported that Councilman Rasmussen is responsible for everything that's happened at Ironhorse as a liaison. He was very supportive of it when we initially started and has continued to do so. Councilman Rasmussen has been there through thick and thin and should be commended.

Tommy Davidson (via telephone) reported that he has been on the committee for four years. He has a couple more years to go. He is currently a marshal and plays golf at Ironhorse regularly. He is looking forward to working with Troon.

Chairman Fuller reported that he has been the Chairman for eighteen years. He was on the Parks and Recreation Advisory board for twenty – three years. He plays a lot of golf and hopes to do more when he retires April 1. Ironhorse is a phenomenal facility.

Chairman Fuller welcomed Troon to Ironhorse. It is great name recognition. When Troon comes into an area, a course is soon known as one of, if not the finest in the area. There are high expectations.

II. Discuss Near Future Operational Plan/Draft Business Plan

Chris reported that she met with Troon staff earlier this afternoon.

Chris reported that Troon sent their press release out Monday.

Chairman Fuller asked if it is on the Troon website.

Mitch reported that it is on the Troon website as well as the Kansas City Golf website. It was also distributed to all of the local media outlets plus all of the Troons golf media outlets.

Chris reported that David recently sent a letter to the Ironhorse membership. He's received a few responses regarding the letter.

Chris reported that her priorities are getting the fees out and the budget meshed up. These two items will be a part of the business plan. They are on the fast track even though the weather is not optimal for golf right now.

Chris asked the Troon representatives to report on the short term goals.

Councilman Rasmussen asked Mitch his schedule for presenting the draft business plan to the golf committee prior to the next meeting.

Mitch reported that he would think it should be available. The budget should be finalized within the next seven to fourteen days. The business plan should be complete shortly after.

Councilman Rasmussen asked Mitch if there are any Capital Improvement Programs that he visualizes for 2011 at this stage in the game.

Mitch reported that they haven't gotten that far yet, but there was an approved capital budget that they are reviewing for 2011.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that he asked the question because within the next week or so, Council will review the Capital Improvement Program for 2011-2016.

Councilman Rasmussen asked Chris what business plan they are referring to. Is it the 2010 business plan. He also asked if Orion prepared a business plan for 2010.

Chris reported that Orion never submitted a business plan.

David Knox provided an Operational Transition Plan to the committee to follow along while he made his report. (The report is attached.)

Mitch reported that it is a "to do list" of what they are currently working on through the month of May.

David reported that staffing will be their first priority, with staffing James's crew first. The maintenance crew currently consists of an Assistant Superintendent, a mechanic and one other staff member who remained from the past season.

David reported that they are aggressively getting the word out regarding job opportunities. Hopefully the maintenance positions will fill quickly.

Chairman Fuller asked if the City is involved with their hiring process. What is their typical timing for hiring new employees.

Mitch reported that the City is not involved. Typically, from the time someone is chosen for hire, the process only takes a couple of days. The only thing that may cause a delay would be pre-employment testing.

David reported that their golf department is busy reviewing all the existing programs.

David reported that Amy Adent is currently the Senior Food and Beverage Manager who stayed on from Orion.

A staff meeting is planned for early February to define all of the changes, if any are being made from an organizational flowchart standpoint or a staffing guide standpoint with the remaining seasonal staff, especially for golf and food and beverage.

Mitch reported that Skip Maiwald was retained as the Director of Instruction. They will work with him to set up instruction programs.

David also reported that in regard to the report, the Upcoming Training/Audit Programs section refers to all that there is to complete with each separate department in the upcoming couple of months. The Proposed Procedural Changes section will introduce certain Troon standards that are important for the Troon brand to help the elevation to the best daily fee experience in the Kansas City area.

David reported that there are several marketing efforts listed that will also be included in the marketing plan which will come out with the business plan mid February. All of the different avenues will be addressed that they are using to get the word out about the change and the new management at the golf club.

David also reported that they are aggressively working on fees and programs before moving forward with getting ad insertions into magazines and figuring out how they will market certain promotions.

Mitch reported that any time they can figure out a way to craft a public relations statement, it will be distributed to the media. Once the permanent General Manager is selected, this will also be distributed. All opportunities to put Ironhorse in the spotlight will be taken advantage of. All advertisement will be approved by Chris.

David reported that they have spent a large portion of this week reviewing the current programs in place. They've discussed opportunities to improve some of the programs and to make sure that those coming back under the Triple Crown program as well as the IGA program. People should feel good about what they are coming back to. Everything will be clearly defined.

David doesn't anticipate drastic changes to the programs and fees listed on the report.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if there are any marketing contracts that carried over, or any additional commitments.

David reported that nothing was found long term.

David also reported that they have been busy reviewing all historical groups at Ironhorse to ensure that Troon is reaching out from the golf club to all contacts to meet with them to clarify which coordinators and events are ongoing in the area to provide them a quote. Hopefully this will bring their group back to Ironhorse.

David reported that his role as the current General Manager is to be involved in soliciting groups to Ironhorse and to have a group sales person on staff dedicated to building this segment on the tee sheet.

David also reported that there will be procedural changes in regards to the golf shop inventory. He has been working with Chris and the accounting team.

David reported that there are a lot of wonderful national agreements that Troon Golf carries that will result in some nice discounts for Ironhorse, and to the acquisition of merchandise for the gift shop.

Tommy Davidson asked if the inventory will be under Troon or go back to City Hall.

Chris reported that it will be under Troon. Chairman Fuller reiterated that the inventory has been changed from a management control of the City to Troon.

Jud reported that the golf committee meeting previously held at the Ironhorse Clubhouse was very intense. He asked how soon the committee will have a meeting at the golf course with the new management team to address the players and introduce them to the new plan. He suggests having the next regular scheduled committee meeting there to assist Troon with some of the patrons who are going to want to meet with them.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that he thinks this is a good idea but it is pre-mature to do so at this time. He would like to leave this decision to Troon so they are prepared.

Jud suggested getting in front of them and to do this soon. We should be proactive about the relationship we have with the Triple Crown and IGA members who play regularly.

David reported that they've discussed inviting the Triple Crown and IGA members to the clubhouse for a meet and greet social, and to present the 2010 program, in mid-February.

Mitch restated that a meeting will be scheduled towards the end of February. They need to get pricing done first to begin the pre-season programs with Triple Crown. They are on a fast track to get everything done.

Mitch reported that the February event will be a cocktail reception to introduce Troon staff and its programs. Sign-up sheets will also be available at that time. This may be a better approach moving forward.

Jud asked if Troon staff and/or Chris have discussed doing something for previous Triple Crown members to make them aware that they are heard and their concerns are understood.

Mitch reported that he met with Chris today and a formal recommendation will be made regarding fees. In his opinion Triple Crown fees should be reduced, as well as daily fee play. They will be minor fee reductions but they should make players happy. The goal is to bring them back to Ironhorse. Hopefully, it will send a positive message.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that one thing that impressed the City about Troons presentation was the “Joseph A. Banks approach” in regards to discounting. Once you discount players, it is hard to bring them back and it could be a potential problem.

Mitch reported that he understands, but there needs to be some loyalty. They are going to add value to the program by offering a National Troon Twosome Card that will be honored at other Troon locations.

Mitch reported that he also understands we are in a tough economy. Other facilities in town are either holding or going down a little in rate to gain more market share.

Jud reported that Troon needs to set the rates which they think are market compatible. In addition, something specific should be done for the previously existing Triple Crown members. They’ve felt slighted for two consecutive years.

Mitch reported that they have taken this into consideration. He suggests a five hundred dollar discount over what they paid last year and also add the Troon twosome card.

He and David will meet soon to outline everything they are currently receiving. After which, if there are additional bonus items or add-ins they can receive that will not be a perceived value will be a benefit to them.

Jud reported that this is great. At the end of the day, he wants to know that they were heard.

Chairman Fuller reported that the perception is that Troon understands the problem but in reality, the concern isn’t the program offered, or the fees; their main concern is that James provides them with a good course to play on. This is what they are upset about.

Chairman Fuller added that the problems weren’t created by the fees being too high. They were created by the inability to provide a \$70.00 golf course or a \$3500.00 fee. Things will not happen overnight, but the problem is their reception. They did not get the value of what they were paying. This is what they are holding the City accountable for.

Mitch reported that he understands. If we need to go deeper, he is open for suggestions.

Chairman Fuller reported that the majority isn’t concerned with what they pay, they want a marketable course.

Mitch reported that as long as James does what he is supposed to do, it should make things better.

Chairman Fuller reported that they put their money up front and we didn’t deliver. This is the main reason why Troon is here.

Jud reported that there were many unfilled promises without a value product.

Steve McCartan reported that towards the end, there was an adversarial relationship between that group of golfers and the prior Superintendent. On a personal relationship standpoint, if they get to know James may help.

Jud reported that it is an added benefit that it is under one management instead of a two.

Chairman Fuller reported that he's had many conversations with them and they have high expectations of Troon. They are disappointed for losing Orion who has been here for many years but they recognize the Troon name is here and personifies quality.

David reported that they understand this and are here to hear them. They will make sure to communicate the Troon mission statement to them.

Councilman Rasmussen met with Don Moore of the League of Kansas Municipalities (in regards to the liquor license) to get the state legislature to change the liquor laws . Lee Marick, who is in charge said that it's a no brainer, they didn't realize the problem.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that this will not affect the Troon contract. He asked that they refrain from feeling uneasy about what that they may hear in the back door about the City might try to get the right to have a liquor license. His hope is to make sure that in the future, if we choose to have a liquor license, it will be a lot easier to work through. He has contacted the Senators and the House Representatives. Scott Lambers is currently working on this as well.

Mitch reported that this would be a benefit for them. He would be happy if this happens. Mitch reported that they are really close to obtaining the liquor license. All forms have been submitted. He hopes to have the liquor license finalized by the end of January or first part of February.

Chuck asked if there are other events or private functions during the months of January and February that may be at risk if the liquor license is not finalized.

Mitch reported that there aren't any events on the books. Tournaments begin in March.

David reported that in relation to the upcoming Troon corporate visits that will take place (to support what is being done at a property level), Paul Hadreas is the Director of Food and Beverage from Troon corporate. He will visit in February. Guy Sugden is the marketing contact and will assist with the collateral and getting the word out. He will use the Troon network to get the word out about Ironhorse. He will visit in the March/April timeframe.

David also reported that Mitch Harrell will also visit several times through the golf season. Mitch added that he is available to come more often, if needed.

David reported that a representative from their HR team will perform a guest services training during the months of April or May to make sure staff continues to deliver the service level expected at a Troon course once the food and beverage and golf staff positions are filled.

David reported that Jeff Spangler, James's supervisor, the Director of Agronomy will make a visit once the snow has melted.

Chuck asked if any of the visits will coincide with the regularly scheduled golf meeting so committee members can meet them. They wouldn't have to meet all of them, but the key positions would be nice.

Mitch reported that this is possible. He will definitely arrange for a meeting with Jeff Spangler and possibly Paul Hadreas and Guy Sugden.

Mitch reported that his plan is to arrange his schedule to attend the golf meetings quarterly. This is an easy trip from Phoenix.

David reported that it is comforting from a corporate standpoint that Ironhorse will receive the support and wealth of resource that he and James can rely on.

David reported that he is working with Chris on the looking ahead at 2011 both from an operational budget and business plan as well and capital standpoint.

Councilman Rasmussen asked about the last item on the Operational Transition Plan report refers to 2010 in regarding the possibility of purchasing two new pieces of equipment.

David reported that it is two different pieces of equipment. If certain dollars are allocated for expenditures in 2010, James will look at the operations for opportunities to change what may be on the books from Pete's recommendations.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if the equipment is rentable.

Mitch reported that it is rentable, but the frequency of using it isn't financially feasible.

Councilman Rasmussen reported that he asked because the capital budget has been approved. This is awkward from a Councilman's point of view.

Mitch reported that they've discussed reallocating dollars within that amount, not going over.

Chris reported that it isn't unusual to allocate money from different lines to the current need.

III. Discuss Status of Outstanding Course Projects

Chris apologized for not getting the Aggressive Maintenance Plan "update" to the committee sooner. She hoped they all received it.

Chris reported that she recently met with them to discuss the plan and turned it over to James. It is an added benefit that Jeff Spangler and Mitch had visited the property prior to the snow.

Chris reported that she asked James to use the Aggressive Maintenance Plan as a point of information and he has the opportunity both independently, and working with Jeff, to create his own list of what needs to be done to get the course back up.

Chris also reported that she asked James to make the document "his document" and create a future plan for items moving forward.

Mitch reported that in speaking with Jeff there aren't any large dollar significant items.

James passed around his Agronomy Plan. His plan is a month by month calendar that outlines projects to be done. He has been busy assessing the course and gathering information. He looks forward to the opportunity to get on the course once the snow clears. Initially he would like to assess drainage problems, and to see/check areas that need to be trimmed and cleaned. He will also check the greens and get water and soil samples. He will build his plan around what the golf course needs.

James reported that he has also been busy working with David and Chris regarding the capital plan. He is interested in bringing equipment to the course to get some jobs done and make it as low impact to the golfer as possible.

Mitch reported that there is a lot of new technology to keep it low impact. He would like to avoid negative aspects without aerification. He will try to heal the course as quick as possible.

Chuck asked when the pipe work on #8 will be complete.

Chris reported that it is weather dependant but anticipates a two week completion date.

Councilman Rasmussen asked the final outcome of hole #5. Was all money received and all bills paid.

Chris reported that all the bills were paid. We did not receive any money as it was decided that the land received cancelled out the option for sharing the costs of the improvements.

Councilman Rasmussen asked where we are with the annual schedule for fencing.

Chris reported that nothing has been done at this time. Money is available for this next phase. She will talk with David and James about the areas that were projected for this phase. It is planned for this year.

Chairman Fuller reported that Pete had problems finding capable people on the maintenance side and retaining them. His main concern is where the new hires will come from in a relatively short amount of time.

James reported that the main concern is getting new hires on board within the next month to be ready for spring golf.

Jud asked if an ad will be placed in the newspaper.

David reported that they will use the Troon network to post jobs. They will also lean toward Chris to utilize the cities resources.

Mitch reported that they will draw all resources to get this taken care of. Most will be hired as part of a seasonal labor force. Some may be full-time.

Tommy reported that one of the biggest complaints is that the bunkers aren't consistent. Consistently will be a great benefit.

Leo reported that he agrees the inconsistency and how the bunkers handle water has been an issue in the past.

Mitch reported that this is a result of drainage.

James reported that he will do his best to learn the golf course and deal with these issues.

Steve McCartan reported that another big issue was the condition of the greens. There was a big debate if this problem was an inherent flaw when the greens were redone or it's a flaw with the Superintendents maintenance of them. Has a determination been made in this regard and is there a plan in place.

Mitch reported that they have suspicions of why the greens are in its current condition but in reality, it doesn't matter what the suspicions are or what the thoughts are about it. When he visited the course and saw the greens in November, they appeared to have healed well. They were in good shape. The weather and/or operator error could have caused the conditions in the summer. There was a turf loss in the summer but he doesn't feel it was construction related, and that there isn't anything structurally that would have caused the conditions in the summer.

Chuck reported that one of the big complaints was the crab grass in the collars and surrounds. This has to be different in the spring. There should be pure turf grass in the surrounds and no crab grass and dandelions.

Mitch reported that James will complete a pre-emergent program to take care of these things.

Leo reported that the turf on the greens never appeared to get thick enough which caused huge, deep ball marks. Also, the rough never was plush enough like golfers desire.

Mitch reported that he is striving for green grass. James has mainly seen a white course due to the snow.

Chairman Fuller reported that we've experienced an extremely cold winter. Will the snow blanket protect the zoysia and the greens? Does James anticipate any problems?

James reported that typically the ice causes problems and would affect the low lying wet areas.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if the budget is set up such that the food and beverage is a stand-alone item. The cost associated with food and beverage is identifiable and revenues to know if there is positive cash flow. And, is the same true for the pro shop merchandise.

Mitch reported that this is correct.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if David anticipates any problems integrating the reporting systems from Troon versus those that are city needs.

David reported that he received training on the quick version of Eden and Crescent and the reports that they will generate. He doesn't foresee any issues.

Mitch reported that they will look further into the financial reporting. He will meet with Steve Briggs from corporate IT after this meeting and advise him to work with the accounting staff at the City of Leawood to ensure that all the reports can be produced the way Troon has managed for years. The report will be informational for the golf committee.

Chris reported that since Troon came on board two weeks ago, they have been on a fast track meeting with appropriate departments within the city and have been quick learners.

Chris reported that we are here to be a resource to Troon. We want to be open minded to working with them and giving them every advantage available.

Chuck asked if the overall goal is to break even the first year. Do they anticipate losing or making a little the first year. And, if so, based on how many rounds.

Mitch reported that they are currently in the ballpark of breaking even the first year. They need to look at the budget again to make sure it is accurate.

Councilman Rasmussen reported the goal is positive cash flow. This is what the golf course had before the City took over. As a Councilman, in 2011, he is looking for a positive cash flow again.

Chuck asked if Pete is on call in case James has questions.

James reported that Pete has been extremely forthcoming and helpful. He has spoken with him several times.

Mitch reported that Shane has also been helpful.

Leo encouraged the Troon staff in their communication to effectively manage expectations. Troon has an opportunity to manage the expectation of golfers and to effectively manage how long it will take before things are as they expect them to be.

Honesty is the key; if it's going to be a year or two before the course meets Troon standards, this is fine, but patrons should know this. If it will take six months before a determination is made of the exact condition of the course, this is also fine, but being upfront is the best approach.

Mitch reported that this is realistic. Time is needed to figure exactly what you have to work with. Until spring arrives and growth is experienced, it is hard to determine.

Mitch reported he appreciates Leos comment on being upfront with patrons. Pete is not a bad Superintendent as he has known him for 20 years. This golf course is in a tough location and is difficult to take care of. It is along a creek bed and floods occasionally. There is also added humidity. Kansas City is a tough transition zone.

Mitch reported that there will be troubles periodically but feels confident they can do a good job. It should be understood that some things are outside their control. Growing grass is a lot of science and art. James will have his work cut out for him and will do a good job.

Mitch reported that they have good programs, great staff and a good support system. They will report to the committee every step of the way.

Mitch reported that James has a good relationship with the Superintendent of Branson Creek. Jeff Spangler is one of the premier agronomists in the country, is within a phone call away, and can be here within the next day if needed. Troon's plan is to take great care of the golf course. Everything else will be a byproduct of that.

Mitch reported that there is a lot of work to do which is why they are cautious about what they can promise but is confident they can and will do a good job. They appreciate the opportunity.

IV. Misc.

Councilman Rasmussen asked if the budget and marketing plan will be ready for review in February. Will the committee be notified of any CIP problems by next week.

Chris reported that this is the goal. It should be available by the next meeting.

Chris reported that the only thing CIP related that should be on the horizon is the work being done on #8. Recognizing there are eight additional bridges with the same concerns. She would like to consider getting the rest of them underground or at least look at their current state.

The reason this became such an issue is because of its location and the impact it took from the flooding. She would like to prioritize each one individually. She would not recommend completing one a year due to economics, but it is worth look into. Understanding the cost can average \$20k-\$30k depending on the size of the line and the relocation. There may be variation in the cost per bridge, but long term, this should be considered.

Chuck asked if all golf committee members that did not serve on the interview process received a copy of the RFP.

Steve McCartan reported that they received them.

V. Topics for February Agenda.

Chuck reported that Leo stated at the January meeting that Troon provide ideas of how they have seen other golf course committees work. It would be nice to have good ideas and suggestions how this committee can do their job more effectively. This will be good feedback.

Chairman Fuller reported that the next meeting will be the fourth Thursday of February.

A motion was made by Chuck Sipple to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 pm. The motion was seconded by Steve McCartan. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation