

IRONHORSE  
Golf Club



**GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of February 25, 2010**  
**5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall – Maple Room**

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

Council Liaison James Azeltine also attended.

Also present were David Knox, James Kennedy and Paul Hadreas, Vice President, Food & Beverage Operations of Troon Golf.

Staff members present were Chris Claxton, and Tonia Morgan.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:05p.m.

Chuck Sipple moved to approve the January 14, 2010, meeting minutes. Bob Reid seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**I. Introduction of Paul Hadreas – Troon Corporate Food & Beverage Operations**

Paul Hadreas reported that he spent the day at the Ironhorse Clubhouse meeting with Amy and Rachel. He gave a review that outlined what he thinks should be done moving forward.

Paul reported that he reviewed firsthand how the food and beverage operations work.

Paul reported that while working with Amy today, he was able to evaluate her in regards to moving into the Food & Beverage Management position. Amy has a “can do” attitude and a positive energy. Troon usually hires more for attitude than experience.

Paul reported that he is responsible for evaluating the property and provided Amy with an action plan to move forward. He will provide support as needed and will continue to follow up with them periodically.

Paul discussed that he went through all current menus. They discussed the club as a whole- The annual pass members experience as well as their expectations. They discussed the type of customers who play at Ironhorse. What should be done moving forward? What can be done to elevate the experience?

Paul gave an outline of what he suggests moving forward:

- **Dining Room Experience:** This will take a modest investment. He will research a price and present a bid for approval through Troon’s General Manager.

- A. He would like to upgrade the dining experience and elevate it from a paper service. He suggests adding place mats to the tables. If dining inside, the dining room should have linen napkins, silverware and plates set. Amy will provide a complete inventory to determine what needs to be purchased and how much is on hand.
- **Menu:** The specifications were evaluated in relation to the current food served. Currently staff works together to prepare the food. The food quality will only reach a certain point because there isn't anyone on staff with culinary experience. Currently, most of the food served is pre-cooked and mostly fried.
- B. He suggests elevating the food experience and hiring a professional cook. This will incorporate recipes and food preparation and serve food cooked from a fresh state and add higher quality. Some fried foods can remain, but it will be better to also offer more fresh foods. Currently the chicken sandwich and the bratwursts are pre-cooked product.

In relation to the hot dog, the experience you look for in a golf course is the same experience as you look for in a ball park. You need a good hot dog. Orion sold 2600 last year so people obviously like them.

Paul suggests upgrading the existing condiment area on the buffet to create the ultimate hot dog experience. He would like to add chili, fresh grated cheese, peppers, and onions. People will enjoy it if they can make their own. It will make a great signature item.

Paul reported that he met their food purveyor today and asked him to bring four of the highest quality hot dogs they have to sample. It would be nice to invite some of the golfers, along with Amy and Rachel to participate in a blind test to select the best choice without favoritism. This is a fun way to get golfers involved. He also suggests serving soup as well.

Chuck added that he likes this idea. He is a member of a private club who offered a hot dog day. The chef provided half a hot dog in half the bun and you could eat as many as you like as long as you voted.

Chuck suggested inviting the IGA or major players and could be a fun event.

Paul is proposing that all orders taken at the counter receive a plastic number and if they are eating inside, the food will be delivered to them. This is elevating the service from people coming to the counter and standing around waiting for their food.

The beer should be served in a chilled glass instead of a plastic cup. He went through the glass wear and there are glasses on hand. Currently several types are used with different logos, when they are taken to the table. He would like to make it more consistent. Have

one glass used to serve. If they decide to take it to go, it can be transferred to a plastic cup.

- C. **Cooking Equipment:** He evaluated the cooking equipment and feels it can be updated slightly so staff can serve soup.

Currently, the dining facility is more of a snack bar. He would like to elevate it to a high quality snack bar. Once the equipment is upgraded, we will be able to do this.

Paul reported that he would like to try the above changes first before transitioning to a full restaurant experience. We can examine the changes this year and see if there is a market to bring people in during the evening hours. If so, a few entrée items can be added gradually. Good food is a conversation piece. Once the word is out, it will be a positive change for Ironhorse. He would like to concentrate on the food product and elevate it to higher quality. After the changes are implemented at that time he would suggest upgrading the inside of the clubhouse.

Paul also reported that they looked at the outside/event menus as well as the function menus. He noticed that there isn't a lot of avenue to upscale. A lot of the items are the same price. Whether the buffet item had a lot of food or a small amount, the same price is being charged. Once a cook is hired and the food can be prepared well, he would like to redo the menu and up-sell to outside functions.

Hopefully, all this will help increase some outings to a higher check average.

Paul reported that he will compile his findings into an action plan. He will list the initiatives and a timeframe to get it done and who will do what. He is working on getting pricing for the some of the restaurant equipment. He is looking for electric burners to add to the existing equipment.

Troon will introduce their service standards; the girls will visit each group twice per nine. They will stop, get out of the cart and approach the golfers and clean any garbage and empty glasses out of the carts for them. If it is a warm day, new glasses of ice will be given. It is a standard that each group will be greeted and interacted with by a staff member instead of driving up and asking them if they need anything and driving off. Through this standard everyone will receive good quality service at least twice per nine.

Chairman Fuller asked what this will add price-wise for the upgrade in the dining room.

Paul reported that it would be roughly fifteen percent.

Chuck reported that he would suggest partitioning off the dining area. The current seating arrangement looks like you are sitting at a table in a big hall. It would be nice to add a barrier so the dining is separate from the locker rooms, main entry and the pro shop.

Paul reported that he couldn't agree more. The current seating style reminds you of a sea of tables. It would be nice to cut up the dining room to create seating areas for each television. They also discussed this today.

Chuck asked Paul's thoughts on offering free popcorn. A popcorn machine could be added. Many golf courses offer this. Does this take revenue away from potato chips, peanuts and pretzels usually purchased in the afternoon?

Paul stated that Troon does have clubs who offer it, but the downside is, it is extremely messy and also smells. The upside is, once people start eating it, it isn't filling and beer sales will go up but it could hurt appetizer sales.

Chuck reported that instead of selling a small planters bag for a dollar, it would be nice to offer a bowl of peanuts or pretzels to share with their buddy for a small price. This will be more like home or a private club.

Paul added that we can create our own snack mix and offer it complimentary in a basket. This will encourage them to stay around. He agrees that this will give more of a comfortable feeling.

Chuck asked if breakfast will be served.

Paul reported that that most golf clubs don't offer breakfast, but this is a possibility. The cook will be there prepping for lunch during breakfast hours. We can research this in the future but this will not be a high revenue period. It is a tough meal period. He has found that most golfers prefer hot coffee and a muffin. The full breakfast works best with outings and groups.

Chairman Fuller asked in regard to upgrading the facility from a culinary aspect, how much equipment needs changing.

Paul reported that the changes are minimal. Once the burners are added, there is enough hood space to add more equipment. The burners are approximately \$500.00 each. They will probably add two. The element isn't working on the flat grill and needs to be replaced, but this is also a minimal cost.

Chuck asked if the Troon Rewards card can be used to pay for a round of beers.

David reported that the card isn't valid for food and beverage tallies. It can only be used for merchandise, lessons and golf.

David reported that it should be noted from a food and beverage standpoint in regards to the difference between Amy and her predecessor Christine is that Christine handled all of the tournament coordination in group sales in addition to running the food and beverage department. The group sales piece has been shifted back to the professional staff. He, along with Jake, the first assistant is taking the blunt of this group sales solicitation. Amy will be able to focus solely on food and beverage operations, as she should be doing.

David reported that in regards to the menu changes Paul reported earlier, there will be a specific, comprehensive menu for those interested in group play. This will be helpful as they are quoting prospective clients. There will also be a banquet only menu.

Jud asked if there is an opportunity from a sponsorship standpoint for a company such as Anheiser Busch or Boulevard Brewery to provide the glasses and co-label dinner wear with the Ironhorse label on it.

Paul reported that the positive side is you receive free product. The negative is you have to stay with the product. People who give you things aren't always the products that sell the best. Most need to promote the sale of something that doesn't sell very well.

Chairman Fuller asked if Amy has staff that previously worked with Ironhorse.

David reported that most food and beverage staff is new hires to the operation. Rachel and Kelsey are returning associates, but the three listed are the only returning staff members.

Paul reported that this is a positive. A lot of changes will be made that the old crew may not have embraced. New staff should transition well.

Chairman Fuller added that he is having a difficult time trying to figure how a cooks schedule will be factored in if there is more than one golfing event scheduled in a day. The cook could possibly work a twelve hour shift. .

Paul reported that it isn't unusual to have a few long days but it will weigh itself out on the other end when the days aren't as busy. The cook may earn overtime on a few occasions but for the most part it should balance out.

The downside to what we are looking for is there are a lot of cooks who will work two jobs. It is not unusual in the culinary industry to do this. They will recruit with their food preparers and also the culinary school at Johnson County Community College. There may be a recent graduate looking for a job. It would be nice to find someone out of college looking for their first cooking job and aren't expecting a high salary.

Chairman Fuller reported that he speaks for the group that they recognize the drop in merchandise and food and beverage the past three years. Part is due to the economy and part the play. After a while you get tired of the same things. The changes will be a welcomed addition to be able to look at things from a different perspective. A fresh menu will be great.

James Azeltine reported that if the quality of food is brought up to a high enough level, it will also generate revenue from the homes surrounding the course that aren't necessarily playing golf. They will appreciate having somewhere for their family to eat.

Chairman Fuller reported that it would be nice to have a system to pre-order and pick the food up at the back entrance.

Paul reported that changing the perception won't happen overnight but if you change the food first, people will start talking about it. It is a word of mouth business.

## **II. Recommendation of 2010 Program Fees**

David gave an overview of the report on 2010 fees, previously e-mailed. (*Please see attached*).

David reported that the proposed fees have been received well.

A proposed daily fee reduction of about \$5.00 almost across the board is being presented due to the negativity regarding Ironhorse and the course conditions and the value they receive for the daily fee they paid. Initially for the morning the rack rounds will include pre-round practice balls. This adds value to paying the daily fee.

David reported that this is consistent at other Troon facilities. When you pay the daily fee, it includes the cart and the practice balls. As many balls as you want pre-round. A golf shop receipt must be shown to the practice facility attendant.

David also reported that the same daily fee definitions on the first page are the same as last year in regard to prime and non prime. There was a reduction in rack rate of \$55.00 Monday – Thursday and \$65.00 on weekends. Twilight remains the same, \$45.00 which is a good rate for this market.

Leewood residents will continue to receive a \$10.00 discount off the rack rates.

Chairman Fuller asked why the Golf Association members aren't receiving the same discount as the Triple Crown members. For the past several years, there are Golf Association members who have paid members and they are paying the same amount as in the past. They aren't receiving a reward for loyalty as the Triple Crown members. A lot are one in the same.

David reported that they will reach out to the Ironhorse Golf Association players with the Troon Rewards Program to make them feel special and to make them aware that we want their continued business. He feels confident they can reach the Golf Association base and make them feel good for coming back and their continued loyalty.

David also reported that the Open House event for the Triple Crown members was successful. Approximately fifty-five people attended and currently twenty-five signed up. The overall reception of Troon's new mission was well received.

David reported that they attended the Kansas City Golf show this past weekend. Two hundred-twenty five people signed up for the Troon Rewards Program and email addresses were captured as well.

Leo Morton asked how the Troon rewards program works.

David reported that once signed up, you receive a card. Your information is stored in the computer. The nice upside of the program is you receive a free subscription to Golf Digest and there are huge grand prize drawings at the end of the year for all Troon courses.

Chairman Fuller reported that he understands the \$5.00 reduction but would have rather seen \$10.00. He doesn't think \$5.00 is enough to get people back to play under the situation the past few years. Many courses are reducing prices and are trying to remain near the \$50.00 range. How much flexibility do we have on fees if we find mid-year that our rounds are down and the fees have already been approved.

David reported in terms of managing golf courses, he has found that offering specials as needed to ensure that the utilizations numbers are as high as possible is a good approach so we don't have unused tee times going by the wayside. There are many avenues to do discounts/promotions that make sense.

Leo reported that the strategy David mentioned is workable. You don't change the fee structure. You offer promotions and specials.

Chairman Fuller asked if Troon can do this.

Chris reported that David is right. It is easier to do if it is a promotion. This was done last year.

Councilman Azeltine reported that from a Council point of view, he agrees that the promotions work best because as mentioned before, you aren't changing the fee structure.

Jud asked why there isn't an adult ten play card instead of seniors only. This would be nice to have to encourage them to come back and play at Ironhorse.

David reported that the rewards program will be used to serve this same purpose. Once a player reaches 750 points on their card, they will receive a complimentary round of golf at other Troon facilities.

Chris reported that she will try to research this as we did have this before and it was recommended to discontinue it by Orion. If she uncovers anything, she will send information to the committee before the next meeting.

David reported that generally, you have to protect Saturday and Sunday People will want to use them on Friday, Saturday and Sunday which is a disadvantage for Ironhorse. These are the times that will sell out. This may be why it was discontinued in the past.

There was positive feedback about the Troon rewards cards at the Triple Crown mixer. The National Troon Twosome card was offered as an optional buy special as a Triple Crown member for \$175.00. It is normally \$600.00 and gains you and any guest discounts at 43 different Troon courses.

There is enough value with the brand, that hopefully while traveling, they will take advantage of other courses. Branson Creek, in Branson, Missouri offers a discounted rate of \$37.00 per player if you have the membership card. Five-Six rounds at another Troon facility with the National Troon Twosome card offer will easily pay the \$175.00.

Jud Alford made a motion to approve the 2010 Golf Fee Schedule presented by Troon Golf. Leo Morton seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **III. Recommendation of 2010 Business Plan**

Chairman Fuller reported that the Business Plan is very well done. It is very interesting.

David gave an overview of the Business Plan.

David reported that a guest survey program will provide the management team feedback on golf course conditions, food and beverage and golf experience. This information is collected throughout the year and will be used as a quantifiable feedback tool. This will begin immediately with the 18<sup>th</sup> hole attendant. If the survey is completed, they will receive a ticket for a soda or beer in the Player's Grill. The feedback is very important.

David reported that additionally they offer an associate anonymous survey that allows the entire team to provide feedback on how the management team is doing.

David reported that section four of the Business Plan will list in detail a strategic initiative and the action steps taken to achieve it and how it will be measured.

David reported that there are a lot of great Troon standards that work really well at a lot of different facilities. The plan is to incorporate all of these at Ironhorse.

David also reported that any questions moving forward are invited to the Troon Management team. If the Troon golf standards are met, the Committee as well as all players will be happy with the product. Everything will be elevated to a higher level.

David reported that there is no equity in the club, no minimums on food and beverage. The Triple Crown is an annual golf pass. The vision is Ironhorse will be run as a daily fee course. The goal is for Ironhorse to regain itself as the Top Course in the region.

Chairman Fuller asked about the condition of the golf cars as discussed in the Business Plan.

Chris reported that Shane had also reported previously that they would be kept because they weren't bad enough to need replacements, but money would be spent on replacements of batteries, tires etc.

David reported that the biggest issue is alignment problems. According to the Club Car Rep., they really get misaligned when they hit the curbs on the course.

Chris reported that this has only been since mid year 2008 and last year. The curbs are fairly new.

Chairman Fuller asked if Skip will be the instructor for the Friday, Troon Golf Academy.

David reported that this is an exciting brand the company is trying to grow. Tim Mahoney is one of the Top 50 instructors in the world and is the Director of Instruction for all of Troon Golf. Skip flew to Arizona and met with him. A Troon Golf Academy will be launched at Ironhorse because Skip has such a huge following. There aren't many golf school offerings available in this area. There is a following in Kansas City for a Golf School offering and we are excited about capturing this opportunity.

Chairman Fuller asked if the aeration of the fairways and zoysia will require leasing or purchasing new equipment. We haven't done much of this in the past and it is great.

James Kennedy reported that he is currently working on this. Chris provided him the equipment replacement schedule. He is assessing equipment replacement timeframes. Currently, we don't have good cleanup equipment or an aerifier to do the process without disturbing golf.

James reported that the cultivation equipment is not there. And, if it is, technology is advanced.

Chairman Fuller asked how many full time employees James has so far. James reported that he has hired two since he began working at Ironhorse. There was obviously bunker work that hasn't been done due to the weather. Will he have the ability to get the course back with the lack of employees?

James reported that they were slated to do five bunkers in the month of February and two employees were hired. But, once the warmer months come, he may have to increase the new employees at a faster pace. He has spoken with several prospective employees who are on hold until the weather improves.

James reported that they have been trimming trees and other work that can be done in the colder months.

Chuck asked the status of the water line on #8.

James reported that the work is complete. It has been pressure checked and all communication power checked. The electrician is coming soon to finish a few minor details when it warms up. The fence is in. Once the weather improves, sod will be put down and the area will be cleaned.

James reported that he has been busy reviewing the records until the weather warms up. Eric and Jeff have been huge assets to him during this period of transition.

Leo asked if the cart cover procedure to reserve your cart will continue since Troon has taken over.

David reported he doesn't anticipate a problem. This is usually during November through March. There are roughly eighty carts and less than a third is reserved. This should be fine.

Leo asked if there is a need for GPS on the carts. Everyone has them.

David reported that it is extremely expensive to do this. They will introduce laser link flag sticks, which is the same cost as any other flag stick on the course, should anyone want to purchase it. This gives accurate yardage from anywhere on the golf course.

In addition to the business plan, David handed out an Activity Sheet that outlined all things that have taken place since the last committee meeting.

David reported that his successor reports March 8. He is returning to Vermont.

Leo Morton made a motion to approve the Business Plan as presented. Chuck Sipple seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Fuller thanked David for his efforts over the past two months. He will be missed.

#### **IV. Misc.**

Chris asked David to report on changes in the golf shop. It has been a struggle the past few years to break even. Essentially, they have been busy transitioning the inventory operation to Troon.

David reported that every Troon golf property is assigned a retail manager. Ours is headquartered out of San Antonio, Texas. She is the support for retail operations. She will implement the Troon golf standards and the profit margin will increase dramatically. Procedurally and logistically everything will be handled in-house.

David reported that purchase orders will be approved by Chris and the City. Every aspect of the products will be managed by Troon. All sales and promotions will be managed by Troon once the merchandise has been on the floor for awhile. This will be positive change procedurally to allow Troon to maximize margins received on the retail operation. This will also relieve stress from Karry and others at City Hall who has been involved in previous years.

Chuck asked if Troon receives better deals than Orion was able to. And, can it be sold less than last year.

David reported that he can't speak on what deals Orion received but Troon golf properties receives some of the best pricing in the industry. They also have some National partners. How items are priced will be dictated on how they manage their cost of sales margins. All in an effort to deliver better margins for the City of Leawood in regard to retail operations.

Chris reported that she met with Finance and they are pleased with the merchandise plan Troon has in place.

David reported that his experience working at Ironhorse has been very positive. He feels very comfortable with the transition for Troon to get involved at Ironhorse.

#### **I.V. Topics for March Agenda.**

David reported that Mitch Harrell will attend the March meeting, along with the new General Manager, Jeff Thomasson.

A motion was made by Leo Morton to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm. The motion was seconded by Chuck Sipple. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director  
Parks and Recreation