

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 22, 2010
5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall – Maple Room

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

Leo Morton was absent. Tommy Davidson listened via tele-conferencing.

Council Liaison James Azeltine also attended.

Also present were James Kennedy and Jeff Thomasson of Troon Golf.

Staff members present were Chris Claxton, and Tonia Morgan.

Dick Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:10p.m.

Chuck Sipple made a motion to approve the February 25, 2010, meeting minutes*. Steve McCartan seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chairman Fuller read a tribute to committee member Bob Reid's accomplishments. Bob will celebrate his "90th" Birthday next week. Bob has served on the Golf Committee since it formed in 1993.

I. Course Maintenance/Projects Report

James reported that the equipment was approved the first part of April. All have been ordered and most have arrived. The cart path edger arrived today. They ordered an aerifier for the fairways that should arrive the first part of May. A tractor is also on order and should arrive at the end of May. Most equipment will be used for cleanup, and cultural practices to do aerifications and top dressing more efficiently. It will mainly benefit the fairway aerification.

James reported that there wasn't a vacuum on property. Ordering one will be a great addition to the course. It will assist with leaf clean-up in the fall and cleaning clippings after mowing.

Chairman Fuller asked if there are any major problems with aerification.

James reported that the major problems noticed so far is around the greens. Jeff Spangler, Vice President of Ergonomy did a site visit April 15. During his audit it was noticed that some of the heads are backwards and others don't give good coverage.

There are currently 4 heads per green. It should be at least 5-6 heads based on the size of the greens. This could be causing some of the existing problems.

A great example would be the back portion of #14; it has 3 heads on the smaller section of the green. The front portion of the green isn't receiving the same amount of water as the rest of the green.

Chairman Fuller reported that there were a number of greens changed completely. Were those heads changed correctly? Do they have the necessary amount of heads.

James reported that all greens on the course have four heads.

Chuck asked if this was in the green design.

James reported that when he reviewed the plans, it stated to "use existing heads". He doesn't believe there was an irrigation plan. He believes they used the existing locations.

Chairman Fuller asked if this is a major process. Will there be disruption in all heads or can additional heads be added.

Jeff reported that in some instances, it could be.

James reported that they shouldn't require major shifting. The sod will be stripped out and laid back down and should heal fast.

Jeff reported that the most important question is how much can be done in house and keep up with the daily maintenance needs of the golf course. It is best to do it during growing season to allow it to heal going into the off season. They will determine if it's best to do a portion in house and contract the remaining areas.

Chairman Fuller reported that in reality cost is a factor, but in the past the lack of staff to do both at the same time resulted in the detriment of the golf course. If an outside group can take care of this it will allow Troon staff to work on the course. We have a lot to get done in a short amount of time.

Jeff reported that it will work in our favor that a lot of contractors are looking for work. Now is the time to get the work done for the most favorable price.

James reported that he is researching pricing.

Jeff reported that James has done a good job in regards to maintenance of the golf course. In order to maintain an effective course, you have to be over every part of it daily, which James has done.

Chuck asked if the piping on the bridge on #8 is finished. Is it ready to go for the season.

James reported that the work is complete. The sod work was finished this week.

James also reported that he has ten full time and one part-time employee. He will add more in May. He's added one additional part-time employee who is a Leawood firefighter. He will work for the golf course on his off days at the Fire Department.

Jeff reported that it would be nice to have more firefighters on staff due to the way their schedule is arranged. They will be ideal for the course. They have a lot of down time. This would really take the pressure off staff to have competent back up. They are stable, structured

and detail minded. It would be nice to have the flexibility that they can work one – two days per week on their off days. They are very beneficial to have on the team.

Chris reported that she is uncertain if a full time firefighter can legally work as an employee at the golf course. She suggested the employee check with the HR department.

James reported that the greens aerification was completed and is healing nicely. Also- the landscape edge was mulched this week. The winter weeding was also complete at the end of March. For the past two weeks, his staff has worked on getting the pre-emergent applications on the rough in regard to the collars and crab grass control.

Councilman Azeltine asked how it looks.

James reported that the collars are rough. A lot of areas need sod. If he can find sod, he will get this done. It is hard to find.

Jeff added that the collars are a concern. If they can procure the sod necessary to get it done, and do the irrigation on the greens, we should be in a lot better shape than last year. They are trying to source it from any place possible and it isn't very prevalent now. They were able to get some zoysia sod for #8, but bent grass sod is hard to come by.

James reported that if the weather continues in its current pattern, the fairways will need mowing once per week. As soon as they fully green, it may require mowing more.

Chuck asked if the greens have completely filled in. There were bare spots last fall prior to the Troon coming on board. This was a hot button with many of the members.

James reported that most are filling in. There are still some areas such as #18, #13 and a small portion on #14 are taking longer. Once they begin the fertilizer program, they should fill in. They are top dressing on a bi-weekly basis. This, along with aerification should help tremendously.

Chairman Fuller asked if #18 will be in better condition this year. This is very important.

James and Jeff agreed that this is a major priority.

Chairman Fuller also asked about the back area on #13.

James reported that some of these problems are the heads and the way they are spaced. If all areas are receiving the same amount of water, a certain percentage will dry out. It is important to water all areas with the hose to make sure all areas are watered properly. It takes proper irrigation management. From now to mid June, they will work on getting good green grass to be able to survive during the hotter months.

Jeff added that for the most part, the only water the greens receive in a typical growing season is through a hose. It is impossible to water on Friday and expect the irrigation system to take care of the job. It is important to micro-manage the greens.

Jeff reported that the general consensus is the greens are healthy compared to the same time last year, but the irrigation system is stretched. In the event of an abnormal weather pattern, which is possible in Kansas, some of the areas of the rough and the greens can show stress.

Barring any unforeseen major catastrophic weather events, he is certain we will have markedly better greens this year than years past.

James agreed that there is a good healthy green to start the season. They will work on getting the problems areas to a healthy state moving forward.

Jeff reported that they have received a lot of positive comments on the course.

II. Operations Report/YTD Financial

Jeff reported that they are almost at the same level as prior years with annual pass memberships sold. Everyone has been cautious and a lot of nerves have been eased, but people feel confident that headway is being made in the areas that caused some of the concerns in the past.

Jud asked if the comments are primarily to manage the expectations and to be able to see progress without a tremendous change for this year, but with a much bigger change next year.

Jeff reported that this is correct. 2010 will be viewed as a rebranding and rebuilding season. They are not able to get it all back in one season. This will be a transitional year. The plan is to do everything in their power for a good 2011.

Jeff reported that due to the transition of operators some time was lost in the off season on the sales and marketing side.

Jeff reported Deercreek is closing to re-do their greens this summer. They are committed to sending Ironhorse some of their events. Hopefully, we can also capture some of their rounds that they will miss out on. They are one of our major competitors with the quality of their course.

Councilman Azeltine asked if Jeff is planning on speaking to the clubhouse operations.

Jeff reported that he is planning on doing so soon.

Jeff reported that Jake Iverson is leaving to work for Swope with Orion. Two new associates have been added.

Jeff added that a chef was hired. He previously worked for Lionsgate and a host services company for J.C. Penny's Distribution Center cafeteria along with Sprint Corporate. He will be a major asset for Ironhorse. All menus have been redone. More fresh items have been added.

Jeff reported that the golf shop will completely remerchandise inventory next week. All open to buy orders will be available for the remainder of the year. Troon does not do pre-books, or standing orders. Inventory is purchased as needed.

Jeff reported that guest service training will be done soon. The cost will be split with their sister course in Branson to keep costs down. This will be intensive training.

Jeff reported that Troon introduced a family golf program. With this program, any junior golfer with a fee paying adult can play for a reduced rate and use clubs free of charge. This will be a huge program at Ironhorse as many kids currently utilize the property.

Chairman Fuller asked when families typically play and what age is a junior. Ironhorse isn't an easy course to play; his concern is a child that hasn't played may delay experienced players behind the families. To make this a good experienced by all, it must be marshaled correctly.

Tommy Davidson and Chuck Sipple also expressed their concern. It is very important for the Marshalls to handle this correctly.

James reported that his experience has been great. He doesn't foresee any problems. It is up them as operators to manage the process properly. Depending on how it's communicated to families in regards to the pace of play and what's expected, most parents are cognizant of the fact that they are on the golf course, comingling with some that may be more experienced. If told up front, it should work fine.

Jeff reported that families usually play on Sunday afternoon. He would like to encourage Ironhorse to strongly consider augmenting the fleet with family carts that have four seats when we swap out the cart fleet at the end of the season.

Chairman Fuller asked what percentage of the fleet would be switched.

Jeff reported that they would switch out 3-4 carts. They would be dual use carts to shuttle patrons back from the driving range as well.

Jeff encouraged Committee members to review the new website. The E-blast was sent this morning. A little more than eighty have signed up for the E-Club. Direct promotions will be sent to the guests. The virtual tour option will be available soon. The web based tee sheet will go live within the next two weeks. This will be tied in with the golf channel. We should generate a lot of new rounds with this feature

Jeff reported that a lot of members are taking advantage of the Troon Advantage rates. A lot of players travel. This program has been highly utilized. They have received positive feedback in this regard.

Jeff also reported that Rachel is handling the sales and marketing calls.

Jeff met with two large operators of golf tournaments in the Kansas City area who expressed interest in re-establishing a relationship with Ironhorse and bring higher profile tournaments to the course if we can offer a consistent product. The meetings went well. He expects the Corporate side of tournaments at Ironhorse increase in the future.

Jeff reported that the Men's, and Ladies leagues, as well as the IGA began last Saturday. All programs have seen a fairly significant increase. Promotions have been offered to bring new guest to the club. Hopefully the numbers continue to grow.

Jeff also reported that the Men's Golf Association Saturday morning league has a lot of participation. They have received a lot of positive feedback. The Association events are being handled different than before. They are associating our major events with the major on the tour. Events are being done in conjunction with the British Open, U.S. Open, and the PGA

Tour Championship. They are hosting two day events and allocating a larger portion of the prize money available to those events. These events will be well attended. Registrations have begun.

Councilman Azeltine asked if Troon will contact members that didn't return to Ironhorse.

Jeff reported that beginning next week, they will have a campaign to cold call every event that Ironhorse hosted in the past six years that didn't return to try to regain their business.

Jud asked if Jeff has considered contacting Blue Valley School District in coalition with Field Day. It would be nice to incorporate golf with the outside sporting events.

It would also be nice to offer flyers about what is offered at the golf course. Many flyers are going home daily with the students about summer sport activities, but they are usually baseball, soccer or other camps. There should be something from Ironhorse.

Jeff reported that he will research this. This is a good idea. He wants to get more involved in the schools.

Jeff reported that the pro shop is doing well. They've had five weeks of solid activity.

Councilman Azeltine asked Jeff he has the autonomy needed to get it done.

Jeff reported everyone is working hard. He is confident that they will get where they need to be soon.

Councilman Azeltine reported that he can speak for himself and Councilman Rasmussen in his absence that they both feel strongly that as long as there aren't any audit problems, they should have as much autonomy possible.

Chris reported that Troon has taken over all operations of the golf shop.

Jeff passed around a Summary Income statement for Committee members to review. (see attached.)

Jeff reported that this report will provide a synopsis of the basic information needed to understand where the golf course stands financially.

Jeff reported that Finance created this report per Troons request. He would like a more intensive report from Eden. Finance is researching if they are able to provide that type of report. He would like to have a greater detailed report that mirrors the actual budget submitted and approved because it will be easier to manage if the reports are in the same format that everyone can work off of. From an organizational standpoint it will be easier to manage.

Jeff reported that there was no business in January or February. March had fifteen days of weather where golf could be played.

Expenses are being kept as low as possible in lieu of having no business in the early months.

Councilman Azeltine reported that he was intrigued with the Food and Beverage changes that were anticipated being made. Have any of the changes been implemented so far.

Jeff reported that they have implemented a lot of the key items in regards to the equipment Mr. Hadreas recommended. They have also made a lot of changes to the menu. The additions have been well received.

Chairman Fuller thanked Jeff and his staff for doing a great job.

III. Misc.

Chris reported that she met with Public Works about the overlay of the parking lot. David Ley met with Jeff who suggested some safety issues that needed to be addressed. There are certain times when people travel fast during the parking lot with lots of foot traffic, especially kids.

They discussed reducing the speed. More signage will also be added. The area on the east side in the middle of the lot will be removed and potentially add small speed bumps.

David Ley has suggested staggering the speed bumps. A sidewalk will be added on the west side of the lot. This will encourage people to stop walking in the lot or on the grass.

Chris reported that initially they estimated and budget \$225,000 to do the lot. The bid came in at \$110,000. This is a significant savings.

Chris also reported that a lot of grass clippings and branches are being tossed over the fence from private properties onto Ironhorse.

Jeff has drafted a letter; she will review it and it will be sent out to all homeowners who border the golf course as well as the Homes Association Presidents.

IV. Topics for May 27th Agenda

Chris reported that May 27th is the Thursday before the Memorial Day weekend. Most people travel which may result in lack of a quorum.

Chris reported that she will have Tonia poll the Committee in a couple weeks.

Tommy reported that he will be back from Arizona.

Chris reported that the next meeting will be held at the clubhouse.

A motion was made by Steve McCartan to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 pm. The motion was seconded by Bob Reid. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director
Parks and Recreation