

IRONHORSE  
Golf Club



**GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of May 20, 2010**  
**5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall – Maple Room**

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

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 6:20p.m.

Jud Alford made a motion to approve the April 22, 2010 meeting minutes. Tommy Davidson seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Jeff Thomasson introduced Amy Adent, Food and Beverage Manager. She has been with Ironhorse since 2003. She is a wonderful asset to the golf course. He also introduced Tyler Neighbors, the new Cook. He has been with Ironhorse for nearly a month.

Chairman Fuller reported that the food was excellent.

The committee thanked them for the fine dining and tremendous service

**I. New Committee Members**

Chairman Fuller reported that Councilman Rasmussen and Councilman Azeltine will remain on the committee as Council Liaisons. They are currently in Israel on a sister city trip with the Mayor.

There are two new committee member appointees. Shaun Hickey and David Brucker will begin attending meetings in June.

Chairman Fuller reported that he was contacted by David Brucker. Unfortunately he will miss the June and July meeting due to his schedule. He is trying to rearrange his schedule so he is able to attend.

Chairman Fuller reported that he has received a lot of compliments about the course from a lot of the core group of players. He visited the course today and is also very pleased. When he arrived for the meeting tonight, there were approximately fifteen of the core group of Triple Crown members who have complained the greatest the past couple of years about the condition of the course. Several of them approached him and were very complimentary of the course conditions. They are very happy about the positive changes.

Chairman Fuller reported that he went to all 18 holes, and the greens are the best they've ever been. It is obvious that James and Jeff have prioritized what needs to be done to get the

course turned around. This is a tremendous improvement. The course is in the best shape he's ever seen. The rough has never looked better. Obviously there are things they can't get to due to the weather, but as soon as the weather turns around, he is confident the course will only improve.

Chairman Fuller complimented James for doing a great job bringing the course around. The changes are amazing. This year alone, in less than ideal conditions due to the rain and the cool weather, the course looks great.

James thanked Chairman Fuller for the compliment.

## II. Course Maintenance/Project Report

James reported that all equipment has been ordered. They are awaiting the arrival of several items, which should arrive soon.

Jeff reported that re-sodding of the collars has been postponed until the sod arrives Tuesday. They will begin with the green collars first to get them in shape. We have also been busy fertilizing the course.

Jeff reported that walk mowing made a big impact on the putting surface. They are also busy working on the irrigation discussed at the last meeting. They are currently working the chipping green area and the bunkers. The one along the road didn't have much sand in it. They are checking drains and putting fresh sand in. They striped the areas where people hit where the sand ends. They will resod the area as soon as the weather dries.

James also reported that he is getting a plan together for the entire golf course. His plan is to focus on hole #18 first and #14 are the two biggest with past issues.

James also reported that the pre-emergent has been put down on the entire property barring a few native areas that are tough to get to at this time. He will work on cleaning the area as soon as possible.

James reported that the pump for the fountain on #11 has been sent out to Douglas Pump for repairs. It should be back in approximately one week.

James also reported that he is fully staffed. He has sixteen employees. Two are from Arizona. One was a transfer from Moon Valley, and worked with his wife there for several years. James reported that they are well versed with everything on the course.

Chairman Fuller asked about the hand mowing. Riding mowers are quicker and faster, but have been a detriment to the course in the past. What is the percentage of hand mowers versus riding mowers on most courses?

James reported that typically the higher end courses hand mow. He reported we will ride mow in the off season, but this time of year, he will typically walk mow. The quality of cut is much better. Typically five to six staff can walk mow Ironhorse in 2.5 hours.

Chairman Fuller reported that the changes are great. A lot of pleasant, unsolicited comments are being made to the golf course. It speaks a lot for Ironhorse and for Troon. We've struggled with negative comments since we reopened.

Leo reported that he agrees that the greens are phenomenal. Even after they've been aerated they are great. His only request is that the fairways grow a little longer.

### **III. Operations Report/YTD Financial (Please see attached report)**

Jeff reported that the past four months have been impossible to generate any momentum with the weather we've had. It has been difficult to showcase the golf course as they would like. We should be able to make this up later in the year. Late summer and fall should be very good months barring extended weather situations.

Jud asked Chris, in relation to the Statement of revenues and Expenditures for the month ending April 30, why the budget line item for the General Administrative Expense under Operating Expense totaled almost \$61,000 in 2009 and this year it's \$54,000; how is it budgeted for \$29,000.

Chris reported that it could have been a reallocation of funds.

Jeff reported that a lot of money has been moved trying to get it in the right spot. When you are budgeting off of projections, it isn't any hard fast way to do it. In this first year, it won't be perfect science. From month to month, it could fluctuate as long as they stay within the budget that's approved.

Jeff reported that he will research it and provide a better answer at the next meeting when he looks at the G&A ledger and sees where the larger fluctuation comes from.

Jeff reported that several players have commented that they've played many courses and Ironhorse has some of the best greens around. We will be able to capitalize on this.

Jeff reported that they are at full staff throughout the operation. Formal leadership and guest services training will be June 8 and 9 for all staff. This will benefit the course tremendously.

Jeff reported that a 17,000 piece direct mailer will be sent soon to zip codes surrounding the golf course for a Father's Day promotion.

Jeff reported that currently there are eighty two Triple Crown memberships. A lot of people have also enrolled in the rewards program.

Jeff also reported that the first two junior camps are full for the summer. The First Tee is also going strong. All of the school programs will finish this week. It has been very busy.

Jeff reported that the practice facility has also seen a lot of activity.

Jeff reported that they have seen a lot of activity on the marketing and sales side.

Jeff also reported that he met with the Kansas City Chiefs Foundation program spearheaded by Priest Holmes. We are one of the top two proposals. He feels good we will be chosen. Until the contract is signed, he will continue to be hopeful.

Jeff reported that he is working with the Johnson County Public Works Department. They host a huge charity tournament each year in June.

Jeff reported that the Overland Park Chamber event will be held at Ironhorse in the fall.

Jeff reported that he is confident a lot of events will be held at Ironhorse late year. A lot of tournaments who walked away in the past have contacted them about re-establishing Ironhorse as an event venue.

Chairman Fuller reported that this is positive. Several tournaments along with The Kansas Golf Amateur pulled out due to the previous course conditions.

Jeff reported that he is confident they will overcome this. The IGA events have been well attended. The leagues are going great and are growing.

Jeff also reported that they've received a lot of new merchandise and still have a lot of old stock to sell, but they are wielding it down slowly. There is a lot of competition to sell clubs.

Chris asked if Aloft Hotel has sent any business to Ironhorse.

Jeff reported that a group attending a Sprint conference came out and played but he hasn't seen much activity from them.

Jeff reported that his goal for the months of June through August will be to contact/visit every potential business in Olathe, Overland Park and Olathe that may want to host an event at Ironhorse. He will contact Aloft as well. He would like to re-establish a relationship with as many companies as possible.

Chairman Fuller reported the Overland Park Soccer Complex is going to be extremely busy. This would be a great place to contact to introduce Ironhorse to the parents.

Jud agreed that the New Wizards Soccer Stadium will have many tournaments scheduled, and will bring a lot of business to the Kansas City area. It will be nice to establish a relationship with them as well. If parents are coming in for a weekend of soccer, this could bring a lot of revenue to area golf courses.

Jeff reported that they have implemented new menus, menu boards and table service/setting that were suggested. It has made a huge impact on the dining experience. Inventory control has been a huge benefit so far.

Having a new line cook and new equipment in the kitchen has also helped tremendously.

#### **IV. Discuss Course Use by High School/Colleges**

Jeff reported that he's done a lot of research the past couple of weeks. Currently Ironhorse hosts five (5) high schools and one (1) college.

He would like a better understanding of what other golf courses in the market are doing, what they are charging, the frequency of the access, how many times per week and how much practice time they allow.

He is acquiring a better understanding from a cities standpoint, what we want to be known for with regards to providing access to the schools and what is the right thing to do. As the golf course gets busier, this part of the business becomes harder to manage.

Jeff reported that we are definitely promoters of junior golf and this will continue. The children who play and the high school students are the fee paying guests five to ten years from now. But the right balance needs to be determined. If the goal is to provide all the access and be a good steward of the community, and provide the amenity for that purpose, we can continue to make it happen. But he wants to be more competitive with what is going on in the market. We need to make sure that we are maximizing the asset.

Chairman Fuller asked if he means charging more when he references maximizing the asset.

Jeff reported that he would like to charge more for the services we provide but he is uncertain exactly what the right price is. Either you have facilities that provide high school/college services and don't charge much money with limitations to access or they are very expensive.

In his opinion Ironhorse provides too much access. Trying to manage the golf course (and driving the rates and your ADR on a daily basis) and provide access to the fee paying guests while balancing this with access to what amounts to complimentary rounds of golf is hard to do. At Ironhorse, during the week on certain days, there is a perception that there are too many kids playing for a fee paying guest to want to play there. He's had several calls to inquire if the students are playing that determine if a guest will come out or not. His job is to provide revenue but he wants to make sure that he does it in a responsible way. He asks for input from the committee.

Jeff reported that the girls play in the fall and boys play in the spring and there are five high schools plus Johnson County Community College. Currently they get two days of playing privileges and two days of practice per week. They are literally at Ironhorse daily. The High School programs pay \$500.00 per season. They receive two days of practice, two days of play. They also receive one complimentary dual match and one tournament.

Jud asks how many there are per team.

Jeff reported that there are ten to eighteen per team. He wants to do what's reasonable and to be a supporter of junior golf, high school and collegiate programs but we need to make sure that it is beneficial for Ironhorse as well.

Chairman Fuller asked if they were all Blue Valley schools.

Jeff reported that they are all Blue Valley with the exception of Johnson County Community College. And, they receive more requests every year to add additional schools.

Chairman Fuller asked if they have set tee times. If a group of paying customers want to play, do the high school/college teams have to wait.

Jeff reported that they have set tee times in advance.

Leo reported that he has witnessed the school players. He has been there when they are playing and they have always been courteous and let him go ahead, but he is alone. They are usually walking, and the coach has a cart and is good about making sure players get through. They often drop off after the first nine.

Chairman Fuller asked what months the schools play.

Jeff reported that for the most part, they boys play March through May. They are out for the summer. The girls will start in September and play toward the end of October.

Chairman Fuller reported that the past few years it's been extremely hard to gauge or recognize if high school play is an imposition because regular play has been down. When the course picks up it will be more critical to determine how much it impedes revenue. The City and this committee have never established a specific policy, but it's always cooperated with the high schools, particularly Blue Valley because of the school boundaries.

Chris reported that this has been discussed before in regards to changing the fees, and the way the business plan reads in relation to the fees.

Chairman Fuller recalled that it was a discussion as to how many teams would be allowed. There was concern about the number of teams inquiring about playing at Ironhorse.

Jeff reported that in the proposed accepted fees by the City, it states a maximum of four teams at \$500.00 per season per high school. The junior college pays \$1,000.

Jeff reported that he has already been approached by the new Blue Valley Southwest High School as well as Avila College who both want access. He would like to provide as much access as reasonable. Most importantly, charging what the market will bare and maximizing the asset for the owner.

While researching, he found courses that charge \$175 per team to play. There are also teams who don't allow school teams access at all. Ironhorse offers a very good deal, for what is provided and the frequency they are allowed. He would like to make sure, as taxpayers, Leawood resident schools are served first. Other schools can utilize the course if they pay the fee with restricted access. On some days for four days per week, he doesn't have a place for paying guests. This is a problem.

Chris agrees with Jeff that the balance needs to be there. She would feel better if there is more criteria about what the objective is. Currently there isn't anything out there besides the fees. There isn't anything to determine who gets the slots.

Chris reported that the concern is, are they looking at Ironhorse because they enjoy playing at Ironhorse and the practice facilities are great; or are they coming because they are getting a lot of amenities for a very minimal fee.

Tommy reported that in his opinion, it is both.

Chairman Fuller asked if other facilities such as Meadowbrook are getting \$500.00 for school teams to play/practice there.

Jeff reported that we can't speak to what a private club does because they aren't a publicly owned facility. He is more interested to how we compare to Overland Park, Tomahawk, Heritage and St. Andrews. They are publically owned facilities funded by taxpayer dollars.

Chairman Fuller reported that we must remember that it is like The First Tee and Junior Golf, we are here to help develop golf for the future. The kids who play here have parents that pick them up and come to the tournaments. The parents know Ironhorse is helping their child. As they walk the course with their child, it may want to come back and also play here.

Jeff reported that he agrees but it is hard to quantify what this means. It would be nice to figure out a way to quantify these revenues. It is hard to determine that by hosting these programs we are getting a lot of ancillary business. It is a balance of what we provide today, how it relates to the revenue and the bottom line and what it means ten years down the road. There aren't any clear cut answers.

Chris thanked Jeff for bringing these concerns and feels they are very valid. She would like to table further discussion to the next meeting. This will allow time to get the minutes to the absent Council Liaisons and Committee members to consider the issue and have input.

Chairman Fuller reported that this will be discussed in detail at the June meeting. Tonia will get the information out to the Committee.

Chris reported that she will talk to the Council Liaisons at the June 7 Council meeting to inform them that this will be discussed.

**V. Misc.**

A motion was made by Leo Morton to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm. The motion was seconded by Tommy Davidson. The meeting was adjourned by a unanimous vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director  
Parks and Recreation