

IRONHORSE  
Golf Club



**GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of February 18, 2016  
5:30 P.M. – Leawood City Hall – Maple Room**

Members attending: Dick Fuller (Chair), Mark Bodine, Leo Morton and Dr. Greg Peppes

Member absent: Alec Weinberg

Member absent but listened via tele-conferencing: Tommy Davidson

Troon Management Staff: Troy Newport, James Kennedy, Mitch Harrell, Ron Despain

Council Liaison attending: Lou Rasmussen

Staff attending: Chris Claxton, and Dalnita Holland

Chair Fuller called the meeting to order at 5:55p.m.

Dr. Greg Peppes made a motion to approve the October 15, 2015; meeting minutes. Leo Morton seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**I. Introduction of New General Manager**

Chair Fuller welcomed New General Manager Troy Newport.

*Current Committee members introduced themselves to the new General Manager.*

Chair Fuller reported the loss of one of the original member's to the Ironhorse Golf Committee. Bob Reid had recently passed away. Chair Fuller asked Chris if a memorial gift could be made.

Chris suggested that maybe a bench would be appropriate by #1 tee. A plaque could be placed next to the bench similar to the memorial at Brook Beatty Park. Bob was so supportive and contributed to the group until his health became an issue. He was well respected at Ironhorse and throughout the golf community.

Tommy commented that Bob had been involved with United States Golf Association doing a lot of the ratings. He had worked the Augusta, and the US Open. Maybe USGA would want to do something or help?

Chris added it's a good thought if someone wanted to check with them. Chair Fuller commented he will follow up on the memorial.

**II. Operations Report**

Troy reported that the total revenue for 2015 was down \$21,000, but overall operating income finished ahead of 2014. A drop in green fees revenue, due to lower rounds caused by difficult spring weather, made up the majority of the shortfall. January 2016 revenue finished behind last January by \$12,000 due to colder weather and fewer playable golf days this year. Despite the lower revenue, the operating income finished less than \$2,000 due to lower operating expenses. He really looks at the off season operations focusing on efficiency especially when there is less revenue. February's weather forecast is good for the next couple of weekends.

The Kansas City Golf Show is this weekend. Staff will be there selling preview rounds, Triple Crown Passes, and merchandise. Golf Now database provided an additional 27,000 names. Email blasts went out to prospects, present and past Triple Crown Pass holders reminding them March is renewal time and about other 2016 programs. Several 15 second spots are occurring on Sports Radio 810 promoting the Triple Crown Passes, golf outings, and golf show. These were already booked before he arrived.

Bret Myers is the Tournament Sales Coordinator, and he is well into his roll of selling outings. Sometimes the term “outing” is confused with “tournament”, but they are one in the same. The focus of booking and maximizing events is a big part of increasing revenue at the golf course. They will continue planning for renovations, and promoting additional space in the future.

Staff is looking into television advertising on cable, but hasn't finalized what company to film the footage; it needs to be updated. It can also be used to improve the website and fits well with the marketing plan.

New software applications will begin soon. The week of February 22nd the Jonas point of sale will be implemented and staff will be training. The reporting capability of the software is very useful and easy to use. He is familiar with the system. The following week EZ Links (a new tee time system) will be installed. This is a new concept for staff where pricing is based on demand of tee time. It is the best dynamic pricing model out there. It has the ability to set online pricing based on demand and availability. Going forward the plan is to adjust rates, and drive rounds to increase revenue.

The Troon annual trainers will be on here on March 8th. Everyone including James' team is involved in team building, leadership, and hospitality training. It will get everyone ready and on the same page for the upcoming season.

Chair Fuller inquired how does the lead time work in the new system. An example, two weeks into the season, a Tuesday has several open slots. Do you change and implement the price changes the next day?

Mitch responded pricing can be moved at any time there is a need. First start with a base price; determine what you want to accept; how and what the need is; and then change the price accordingly. The goal is not to change so dramatically and negatively affect the market either. After each tee time fills the next available time may have a slight increase. In this market the increases might be anywhere from \$.50, up to \$5.00. Price is based on how many tee time have been filled. Taking in consideration a few dollars here and there can turn into a significant amount of money over the year. The airlines have been doing this for years. Baseball and football teams have recently done more dynamic pricing.

Chair Fuller commented Golf Now has different pricing, depending on the time of day. Is this system similar?

Mitch commented it could be, Golf Now is not a dynamic price system, but you can go in and tell it to change the price based on your demand. It can tell the system to increase maybe in an hour.

Leo asked to what extent one manages the need of expectation. Playing certain courses one expects to pay more. It is a good surprise when it cost less, but not so good when it cost more.

Mitch added its best not to push above the rack rate on Saturdays during the season. The goal is to get players to book in advance.

Chair Fuller asked how far in advance you do you mean.

Mitch answered seven days would be great. Here you can look at a tee sheet two days out, and then it just explodes.

Council Liaison Rasmussen asked what different Troon marketing efforts were more successful than others so we can concentrate on those. What has Troon done at other golf courses in terms of onsite marketing?

Troy stated GPS system on golf carts does some promotions as you go from one hole to another, advertising is done on that screen. Businesses want to get their name in front of a captive audience.

Council Liaison Rasmussen inquired to what extent has other Troon operations had success or done different things. Goal is to get to 100%. The numbers seemed to have plateaued here.

Troy commented he will take a look and report back at the next meeting. A “call to action” is much easier to track than other marketing plans.

Leo added that halfway through a round he is ready to buy an additional game. Another approach is to think about what frustrates a golfer and market to that, or maybe something to actually purchase right on the cart?

### **III. Course Maintenance / Project Report**

James reported:

- A lot of work on cart path and ADA sodding
- All of ADA work was completed
- Completed hardscaping in parking lot islands
- Rock work and grading on new path on 18
- Redo landscaping working with Park Department at Bell and Mission front entrance
- Re-adjusted irrigation landscape in the accordingly
- Trimmed trees in front and added up lighting to trees
- Added lighting to the sign

Leo inquired about when exiting the course on Bell and trying to turn on to Mission Road from either direction is very difficult. Have others expressed the inability to see or what is being done?

James commented utility poles and the transformer power box are the problems. Dustin has also trimmed back and tore out spruces.

Troy commented he will take a closer look at the area.

Leo questioned if a mirror would help the visibility.

Council Liaison Rasmussen stated that this is a public works safety issue. He needs to call their action line and report the problem. Joe Johnson oversees the rules and regulations concerning visibility at each corner.

Greg added it might not be golf course property

Mark inquired about the fence leaning on 15.

James responded yes, it is under contract to be repaired. Additional work on other sections of fencing includes:

- Finished section on 11
- Some work will be done on 2 by Mission Road

- 4 panels by the clubhouse were damaged and are being replaced with all of the finials
- Plus one on 16 is being replaced

Council Liaison Rasmussen questioned if the gate issue had been resolved by codes that was on the agenda last time.

Chris stated it has not been resolved. She needs to carve out time and sit down with Patty Bennett & Scott Lambers. The playground is a different issue; it is codes and should be addressed.

James continued reporting:

- Fan installed on 5
- Bridges all completed

Upcoming projects:

- Pre-emergent application is in the processing being put down
- Tree trimming to finish
- Bunkers-the money is funded for this year
- Map of a plan draft of different liner types
- Flood plain will be a cheaper liner in case of water damage
- Out of flood plain is a more expensive liner
- Some areas potential reduction and design changes mainly on #4 with access off north side
- Bunkers are appropriate play. #9 reducing size  
Frames the hole

Chris asked James to go over the specific holes that Mitch, Ron, and James looked at today.

James reported:

- Hole 4 -small bunker being eliminated
- Hole 9 -the 2nd bunker on the far right side being reduced from 2,900 square feet to 800-1000 square feet

Ron added that they are always looking to keep the same strategy. If it is really out of play and more of a visual type of bunker, and seeing if you can reduce some of the square footage not only for construction cost, but also for long term maintenance. The bunker area is the most expensive to maintain.

- Hole 10 - reducing the one on left in fairway it is a visual bunker
- Hole 10 - remove the second bunker and removal of the sycamore tree
- Hole 14 - eliminate 1<sup>st</sup> on left side of fairway then reshaping the next one

Ron commented the first one is really low. Building up the second one to be able to see from the tee, brings more strategy into play. There is a lot of grass in that area giving it a better look. He doesn't like bunkers you can't see especially on a public golf course.

James reported:

- The green side on 14 - reducing the large lower bunker. It is the farthest away from the green, cutting it down by a third.
- Remove locust tree at access exit point for carts will be safer.
- #15 & 16 - not much change
- #17 - eliminate one tree next to bunker on the back right

Ron commented they will go through re-edging; some have gotten flat, and bowl them out a little more. Pushing back on the sides gives a gentle, more playable surface and it is easier to keep sand up.

Tommy added he would like to go back and address 14. The only thing that makes it a par 5 is the bunkers.

James commented the area was on the short left side of the fairway not the right side.

Ron stated the first bunker would go away, the second would become bigger and become more into play.

Mitch added reducing size of the huge one by 30% to 40% will reduce the time of maintenance. The second one would actually get bigger with a much better overall appearance.

Ron added the smaller one on right side of 18 gets so much water it can't be maintained. It will change to a grass bunker.

Chair Fuller asked if we have money to cover the bunkers

James answered \$325,000 is budgeted for bunkers.

Leo asked if this including putting in the sand.

James stated all bunkers will get new liners and sand. Changes are scheduled to be completed in 2016.

#### **IV. 2016 Business Plan "Draft"**

Chair Fuller asked if anyone had any questions.

Chris asked Troy or Mitch to highlight any changes or adjustments to the business plan.

Troy reported on pg. 3 he put in the 2015 actuals not the estimates that had been presented before. He did include the 2016 budget that had already been approved. The executive summary didn't have a lot of changes. Going forward staff will be using EZLink's, algorithms and Golf Now as seen on page 4. The software gives the ability to take advantage of the underutilization of their free marketing services.

- Direct mail, email blast and other promotions
- Getting people's attention with several new promotions
- Next 30 days will be working on an aggressive marketing calendar
- All facility comparisons same as earlier reported
- Redoing goals and objectives
- Develop and retain associates: The group is really receptive and he will continue to get them more involved. They are interested in learning about golf course management.
- More of delighting and retaining customer- on spot survey hasn't been done in a couple of years.

Encourage doing survey online or mobile to get some feedback, what they like, but especially what they didn't like about their experience and tackle any problems. He and Chair Fuller are looking at the existing customer base not just Triple Crown card holders. It is important to make sure they are happy and becoming more regular players, or Triple Crown holders. Giving incentives to both groups should supply us with referrals. The program will be finalized by next month.

Leo asked if a survey could be done right on the cart screen.

Troy asked Mitch since he has the same program does it have that capability.

Mitch responded he didn't think currently it was available, but will talk to Visage to see about the possibility of incorporating that idea.

Troy reported 25,962 in rounds, \$1.6 million revenue are the budget numbers for 2016. A combination of good weather, aggressive marketing and dynamic pricing will make a significant impact. Continuing to get the word out, and staff coming up with ideas for a new ladies and junior league. Troon has 3 different incentives it uses to solely grow the game.

Council Liaison Rasmussen asked if anything will be done with food and beverage. Will there be any marketing change in the menu? Revenue is down for 2015, but expenses look flat.

Troy replied he can't answer for 2015, he wasn't here.

Mitch commented the food and beverage is not the problem. It is the greens.

Troy added the ordering app within the GPS is something that has been successful and they will try to continue this year.

Chris commented the app was started midway to the end of the season. We should see more value when it is used a full season.

Troy asked if there were any more questions. The goal is to actively try to get more players to sign up for Troon awards. It is to their advantage so they can get free rounds at other Troon courses. Continuing to keep building the database; when he came here it had just 300 members, now it is up to 3000. Those are names that have played golf in the demographic area we want to target.

Chris added that Troy and Mitch have discussed some fresh strategy that will make a difference, and she is encouraging them to think outside the box. Look at the demographic like the seniors, and ladies. They have somethings that they are working on that will do that.

Mitch added making sure we are relevant within the market, pulling our market share and insuring a competitive price. Important not to push ourselves out of the market needs. Look at segments: weekends, weekdays or seniors. It may be out of kilter with the rest of the market and will need to closely look at those numbers.

Chris added the stigma is still out there that the course is the same way it was 6 years ago. Let people know about the big changes that are taking place. Effectively get the word out about the bunkers and other improvements. The course is going to be in the best shape it has ever been in. Golfers need to come back and experience it.

Chair Fuller added he and Chris have had a good conversation with Mitch and Troy. They will have fresh eyes to take a look at what needs to be done, to improve our pricing and compete in the market place. James is doing a good job improving the course.

Troy added people will notice the different sands and coloration of the bunkers following the project.

Leo asked when the bunkers will be completed.

Troy commented the bunkers will be complete in the fall of 2016. We will only have 9 holes opened at any given time.

Chair Fuller asked for a motion to accept the business plan.

Leo Morton made a motion to accept the 2016 business plan.

Dr. Greg Peppes seconded the motion.

The 2016 business plan was accepted unanimously.

**V. 2017 Budget**

Chair Fuller reported that the 2017 budget is on the agenda. He and Chris have had a preliminary look and will be meeting with Troy. Since Troy is brand new, it is not really fair for him to go over the budget at this time. It is best to do some more research and bring it back rather than rush through it.

Chris added the budget is due on March 11<sup>th</sup> and it can be discussed during an online meeting or breakfast.

Chair Fuller added so much of the budget involves the bunkers and physical construction of the clubhouse.

Council Liaison Rasmussen commented that the subcommittee did a good job, but it has been dissolved. He reminded everyone to have a real concentration to sticking within the budget of the building and how it affects operations.

**VI. Clubhouse Expansion**

Chris added that everything on the capital list currently for golf should be completed in 2017. A September 2016 starting date for the clubhouse expansion gives us a full year for completion and Troon can start taking reservations for wedding receptions that will take place in September of 2017. The layout with boards will be available for them to have an idea of what is going on and they can plan accordingly.

Chris reported:

- The first meeting in January approved Continental to work with City and Troon staff overseeing the project and to get bid documents together.
- On the March 7th Council Agenda is the approval of an agreement with NSPJ Architects; mechanical and structural engineers will be under them; inspections are completed
- Permit for waste water went in the next day
- \$90,000 contract with Continental to oversee the project
- Architect and other engineers will be \$49,000 subject to approval
- \$1.8 million remaining still allows for around \$334 a square foot which still would seem high for the project.
- The resident meeting required by Planning went really well. The owners closest to the course were very supportive
- On track to get bids out in April. The timeline has only shifted positively, moving from Mid-October to September

Chair Fuller added we are thinking construction will take six months to complete. Continental is thinking it will be nine months.

Troy reported the staff is in the process of getting comparison venue pricing.

Chair Fuller asked how this will change the structure of the staff. Have you thought about hiring another person or will they be under Amy's direction?

Troy replied haven't really talked about it yet. Limiting the cost base is the first goal; they will attempt to provide every service for the customer, instead of having a lot of things brought in. The potential to have a successful profit margin is there. Depending on that success they will need someone to book weddings or have a part time banquet staff.

Mark asked is the opening in September 2017 or the ground breaking.

Chris replied construction ground breaking is scheduled for September 2016. She had moved money for the bunkers to be completed in September 2016. The bunkers started in early 2013.

Chris commented Troy's facility in Green Bay did a lot of weddings and he is very familiar with that type of operation. The current Ironhorse staff is by far the best positive overall team. They are really anxious to learn and more get more buy in.

Troy reported the team is very inclusive. Accountability and ownership is important to Troon. Staff is starting training with payroll system and taking ownership of their departments. They are more than he could have hoped for and very receptive.

Chris reported meeting with Howard Mann from Public Works about capital projects. There is still a lot of tree work to be done. Originally the tree work was budgeted every other year. It was decided to add \$5,000 to budget for every year. James and Dustin really work well together on tree projects. Appearance is important on Mission Road entrance; from lighting to landscaping all the way to the clubhouse. This needs to have a visual impact.

Chair Fuller added cooperation between Dustin and James saves time, equipment, and money. They have done a great job.

Chris added they want to keep entrance attractive but low maintenance. It will help keep James and his staff free to focus on the course.

James commented a lot of landscape was getting tired and at its age limit. He wants to eliminate lots of the mulch.

**VII. Misc.**

A motion was made by Mark Bodine to adjourn the meeting.

Leo Morton seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director  
Parks and Recreation Department