

IRONHORSE  
Golf Club



**GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of November 2, 2017  
5:30 P.M. – Ironhorse Golf Course– Clubhouse**

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

Member absent: Adam Abrams

Troon Management Staff: Troy Newport, and James Kennedy

Council Liaisons attending: Jim Rawlings, and Chuck Sipple

Staff attending: Chris Claxton, and Dalnita Holland

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

Dr. Peppes made a motion to approve the May 18, 2017 meeting minutes. Leo Morton seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**I. Operations/Financial Report**

Troy stated Chris mentioned in her email today the October financial report will be available around November 10th. September was a really good month and a great indication of what an impact the new space has on the golf outing business. The previous three events would have been impossible to accommodate in the old space.

Chair Fuller asked how he was able to get those booking so late in the season.

Troy commented actually one booked in March and the other two in April. It is interesting watching how different groups use the space. It is unbelievable what a difference this space can make. It is great not trying to have tables all the way up to the front door or out on the deck. The area is useful to golf groups for silent auctions. The room fits beautifully especially with all the windows and the view.

For 2017, golf is up \$90,000. In 2016, golf outings totaled \$150,000. This year outings currently total \$240,000.

Chair Fuller asked what size is the largest party booked so far.

Troy responded the largest group was 200 people and food was served.

Council Liaison Sipple confirmed that a party of 200 fits nicely in the space.

Troy reported 225 is the shoehorn number for receptions. It is also the number of chairs currently owned. It is a little close from a square footage standpoint. One outing had 140 golfers, volunteers and others for dinner. The PGA outing didn't end up having as many golfers. The group came out in the morning; lunch was in the middle; ending with afternoon golf.

Troy has been here 2 years; the busiest months are June and September from a group activity standpoint. It also seems to be the busiest months for wedding receptions. Already all the Saturdays in June are booked for 2018. Except for the one that has a golf outing carved out. It has bumped up the activity level.

Chair Fuller inquired about any wedding reception on Saturday during busy golf time. How was the parking with the event and golfers?

Troy reported plenty of parking space especially since receptions normally are later in the day. Forty percent of the golf trade is gone by 4:00 in the afternoon. A big noon event or business meeting might be a little tricky trade out with golf. One of the first things people mention when coming in is how much parking is available for an event. There were two weddings the end of September on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. You can really see the revenue and rounds spike in September outing business. Tee times and rate analysis rounds were up 12% in May thru September. Greens and cart rentals are up 15 1/2 %.

Two major flood events occurred since they the last meeting. Troy wants to give credit to the grounds crew and James who did most of the repairs in house without an outside contractor. They accomplished this in a way that they were able to continue to do business. Closed only a day and a half, obviously on cart path.

Council Liaison Rawlings asked how is the interplay with the Lodge and then the inquiries spilling over to Ironhorse. He assumes the client calls the Lodge first; if it is not available, they are referred here. Is there good reception and synergy?

Troy responded yes, the Lodge is more of a carry-in facility. Bring your own alcohol with a day permit, hiring someone to do liquor. The facility here is more of a turnkey. It is for those who don't want to work all that day, prepping, setting up chairs and cleaning up afterwards.

Council Liaison Rawlings inquired has the response been positive.

Chris answered yes, they are already looking in the vicinity and going just a mile south isn't an issue. Chair Fuller does tours at the Lodge.

Chair Fuller stated the tours are every Wednesday from 5:00 to 8:00pm. Normally when showing the space the size of the party is discussed. A smaller group of 110 to 120 simply rattles around at the Lodge. He suggests those looking for a more formal space might be more comfortable at Vista 154. Chair Fuller gives them a brochure explaining it is less than a mile away if they want to look at the space. Troy's contact information is provided if they prefer to look at a different day.

Troy reported it works great because we already have staff here that can show the facility. The pricing is close enough and there really isn't any sticker shock.

A couple of things that they have been working on and tweaking. Previously a full basket of range balls were included with paid green fees. No one else was doing that in the market, and he thought we were giving too much away. We now give a warm up basket with 15 balls. It did lead to some additional revenue for the driving range. Looking at the financials, the driving range is up \$12,000. Half of the sales for the driving range pay by credit card at the kiosk. It works very well using a cell signal working 98% of the time.

Chair Fuller asked how many times the ball dispenser is filled on a Saturday. It always is busy out there.

Troy responded the machine holds 8000 balls. Normally it doesn't need to be filled more than twice a day. That operation is better than last year and it is making a lot of money. He plans to use synthetic mats for next year, as the feel will be closer to that of the golf course. The mats will not be like artificial turf on concrete.

Chair Fuller asked if the synthetic mats what are out there now. Troy is right it is busy morning and night.

Council Liaison Sipple asked what Troy did to improve the reliability of the golf ball machine. He remembers having trouble with it last year.

Troy responded it is a new one and doesn't jam up as much as the old one. The drum mechanism was different on the old machine. It was actually the golf ball that caused the problem being stuck in one of the tracks. This one is easier to access and fix. The one before, the design was complicated and James' staff had to be called to fix it frequently. The new machine will definitely pay for itself. In addition, adding the credit card processor has made a huge difference. Doing over \$12,000 this year, probably will need to be replace in three years.

Council Liaison Sipple asked will it be opened all winter. Based on the numbers Troy has seen how does October looks?

Troy reminded everyone that the course in 2016 at this time due to bunker work. He went back and looked at 2015 to compare. Member fees are a little flat for the year. They played three hundred rounds over that year and we didn't really have any activity in here. October might be a rather slow month for events, but golf-wise a good month. November and December should look different from a revenue and event standpoint. One large event and three weddings are planned in December. Overall, the gross revenue is up 13%.

Chair Fuller asked are rounds maxing out at 22,000 for the year or is it 25,000.

Troy stated only way to increase that number is to add to the outing business, if they have a marginal weather day they are going to play. Regular day of golf on a marginal weather day hits the bottom line hard. It is a balancing act with pass holders. People complain about Deer Creek being closed all the time for outings. On the other hand, increasing outings is a good way to increase revenue. Staff will work over the winter on calling people and doing some advertising trying to schedule golf outings. Weather is a big part and there are the soft months of golf outings in July and August. Companies do not like to book because of vacations. Those are a couple of challenging months.

## **II. Course Maintenance / Projects Report**

James reported:

- Installed landscape rock border along path at practice tees
- June was pre storm/flood doing their normal routine.
- Removed gravel from temporary path behind the clubhouse.
- Sod work was completed along curb by North putting green following concrete install
- On June 30<sup>th</sup> the course flooded creating bunker repair work and debris cleanup from fairways and rough. It was minor compared to July.
- Irrigation on the side yard outside door
- Parks hauled top soil leftover from a trail project and tied in drainage of three downspouts that were not in the original contract, it helped with drying up hillside. It drains well now.

- The creek was out of the banks on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>. The storm on the 27<sup>th</sup> received 6 inches of rain overnight. The water was the highest that James had seen. There were 5 greens, and 18 of the 48 bunkers went underwater during the peak of the storm.

Chair Fuller asked how the new bunkers or liners held up during the floods. Did they hold up as promised?

James reported they didn't find much severe bunker damage. The only damage he repaired was on 17. He has two theories: the creek water came up so fast the water came through the drainage line and it popped, or a golf ball fractured. The liner might have been exposed when trying to clean up and a golf ball hit it. He thinks the majority was drainage.

Troy added flood debris was up 2 feet.

James reported on 12, a rippling where the sub air valve is in the front. It has a check valve that has separated all of the fittings. Put together with rubber couplers. Water came up so fast and high, receding quickly, but left substantial damage around the property. The repair work itself was pretty easy. The landscape superintendent that did the project was in the area. He stopped by and helped James mix and patch the liner. Did do some inspection on liners cutting out pieces and checking the gravel didn't but there was no silt in the liner.

Troy added he remembers telling James early in the summer this was the big flood. He never dreamed there would be more than one.

Chair Fuller asked how they sold the system did it work.

James reported all of the bunkers out of the flood plain are back in shape. First thing was to get all of the debris off the course. Surprisingly it only took a couple of days. Removing silt was the most time consuming. He had estimated \$25,000 in sand, which is about 22 truckloads. The original prediction was based on square footage of the bunkers and completely replacing all of the sand. Surprisingly, were able to save more sand than expected. On some of the bigger square footage bunkers, the crew took off 1 to 2 inches and found clean sand. He was able to skim off the top and then refresh with new sand.

Chair Fuller asked was the removal all done by hand.

Council Liaison Sipple asked is there a process to separate mud from the white sand. Is there a machine to clean or is it a process?

James replied the work was mostly done by hand. The backhoe was the only machine used to drop the sand in. He is not familiar with a mini sand washing machine or station. Not sure how cost affective considering the time to load, clean, and bring it back. His staff did a great job. It worked out a lot better than he thought. Only used 4 truckloads of sand replacement costing \$8,000.

Tommy asked what was done with the soiled sand once it was removed.

James answered used the sand as a top dressing on the fairways.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if the fairways were aerated.

James answered he didn't have time with all of the 2017 flooding. In years past, crew has been consistent with those programs. It is ok to miss one year, next year hopefully have we will have a better weather season. On August 22<sup>nd</sup> there was another flood event. It rained 9 inches overnight but it came down over a longer period.

Mark commented he has lived on the course for 23 years. The water was definitely over three feet deep and the highest it has ever been.

Mark commented he is convinced that the gate on 12 was completely submerged. It is 16 feet high.

Chris mentioned the water at City Park was over the 12-foot high basketball goals. The water was moving quick.

James reported the tree contractor is coming out next week. Surprisingly, we did not have a lot of tree damage to affect play area during the flooding events

- September- need to prepare for numerous events and continue bunker repair
- October finished last bunker on 14
- Finish fall fertilization and seeding
- Prep for winter, cleaning up leaves
- Working on landscape plan
- Set up new software program. It gives a digital job board that posts everyone's job on a big screen TV or a cell phone. It provides several reports, one of which breaks down the payroll.

Council Liaison Sipple asked is this a 4 month period. Overtime wages are low considering all of the clean-up.

James reported this doesn't reflect payroll exactly but is close to it. Flood cleanup was \$5,900 in wages and storm tree cleanup \$4,000 to \$5,000.

Dr. Peppes inquired if the seasonal employees will stay longer. Can James keep them longer trying to get things done?

James answered he did add one more person. It did work out having extra person with all the flooding and extra work with the clubhouse. The peak of the season his staff totaled 18. Returning to school takes care of most of them. There are ten right now working part time hours and three will leave about mid-month. Six is the normal winter crew.

Chair Fuller asked about the erosion on nine. Is it about the same or worse?

Council Liaison Sipple asked is that the cart area by the green.

James answered it did get worse, not sure which flood it was. He sent pictures to Chris and Brett Haugland with Continental Consulting Engineers.

Chris added she thinks that was the first flood in July.

James stated it is where they put in the split rail fence; the soil has actually pulled away 3 to 4 inches from the cart path. It is not getting better.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how it could be fixed.

James answered he had talked to Brett. The least expensive option it to move the path.

Chris suggested putting in a gabion wall; it can't be seen from the other side. Good solution, cheaper way to go and very effective similar to what is down on Roe beside the creek bed. The wall has worked for over 20 years.

Troy commented it is a typical golf course situation. Mitigate the risk and then see what funds are available to fix longer term.

James stated it would be better for the golfer; the current cart path is so far away. It is at an awkward angle coming up the hill to operate equipment. Still needs to lay it back at the top for it to do any good and path is in the way of the damage. Afterwards, we can come up with a plan for the creek bank.

Dr. Peppes confirmed it is a good idea to move the cart path and then address the creek.

Council Liaison Sipple asked is that what a Continental recommended. Does the Corp of Engineers need to be involved if dealing with creek?

Chair Fuller asked is there a need to cut out trees. When they fall, do they tear out more of the creek bed?

James stated he thinks the smaller trees are left. The floods moved rocks and on 14 rocks went up on the grass. Now, we need to go back, repair many of the edges, and undercut along the cart path.

Council Liaison Sipple commented about the house a little bit north of there with leaning rod iron fence that still has debris. Does the fence belong to the homeowner or us?

James responded that is the homeowners.

Council Liaison Sipple asked when having storms of such magnitude how does James get rid of debris, logs, and branches.

James responded he stockpiles the debris over by the shop. Then a 50-yard gravel truck comes, loads and hauls it away. Occasionally they take a load on the dump truck over to Suburban.

Council Liaisons Rawlings asked with all the heavy rain did the new addition have any leaks. Requiring a punch list from the contractor. He doesn't see any stains on the ceiling.

James commented a small roof issue that he thought was from the heating and air unit. Before crews got the sod down the spout was just going onto the turf. We caught that early and tied it to the existing drainage. Protection is down until the rest of the sod work is completed.

### **III. 2018 Fee Recommendations - Troon**

Troy suggested an additional intermediate pass holder program for ages 39 and under. He went through the database and none of the Triple Crown holders are under 40. This business is always talking about getting a farm team, building and having young folks around. He recommends targeting this group with a \$1999 pass. It will not cost anything to implement the program. No restriction of play and once they turn 40 click them up to a regular pass. No changes to the current pass holders.

Council Liaison Sipple asked is a discount given to Leawood resident.

Troy responded he hadn't discussed a resident discount. The price is very reasonable; to make it lower to a Leawood resident might not necessarily be beneficial.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how many rounds do the pass holders normally play. Do they play 80 to 100?

Troy answered it depends on the group. Some play 10 others 100. Had some question over this the two years he has been here. The 39 and under group doesn't play as much since they are busy working and have school age kids. The primary purpose is to build a group of folks that will become pass holders. He estimates probably getting 5 to 10 new pass holders the first year. It is not as big of a jump up the year they turn 40.

Chair Fuller asked suppose someone normally plays with the same foursome he is 35. Not one is a pass holder, if one of them gets the foursome to join. Is there any kind of discount or incentive for him?

Troy answered no, currently not a magic number for those pass numbers. Not 200 or 150. Probably more around 100. We have 75 or 80 now. The more successful we are getting group business the busier the course. Then, if daily customers start hearing about the course being closed it becomes a balancing act.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how is the pass holder notified when the course is closed. Do they just come up and not be able to play? Is a schedule posted a couple weeks out?

Troy reported this is the first place he has worked that communication is regularly put out. Brandon Marshall, Head Golf Professional, sends out emails a couple times a week about what is going on at the course, including any changes in the availability. Troy is resistant to a calendar of the full course closings. An example is, if they see all of the outings in September on a calendar, they might change their mind purchasing a pass this year. They don't know what closed means. Too much information without the explanation has always been his concern. Many feel like they are members of a private club.

Council Liaison Sipple added a private club is a good feeling.

Chair Fuller asked if they are checking around other courses- is everyone holding the line.

Troy stated that the course has a rack rate of \$58 during the week and a weekend rate of \$72. Dynamic pricing bases the rack rate on demand. The lowest has been \$68 and \$81 the highest. The proposed change would be an increase inflationary number rack rate from \$58 to \$59 and \$72 to \$74. It helps being a rate leader outside green fees.

This helps on the marketing point particularly with outing sales it looks like they are getting a discount. Doesn't cost the customer anything they are charged normally. At one time Ironhorse was the second course in the market to use dynamic pricing, now everyone does.

Tweaked a little bit of the demand pricing in the past if you waited to the day of paid a real premium. This year moved that back a little to fill as many tee times. This is his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of dealing with dynamic pricing and it is easier to digest what they are paying. He thinks it is a great addition. An afternoon rate was wrong in the last year's fee schedule and that was corrected. The men's league on Tuesday will go from \$33 to \$35. They are still getting a great product with a cart.

Chris reported that the Council has a work session on Monday for fees. Troy and Kim Curran Superintendent of Recreation will be there.

Tommy Davidson made the motion to recommend and accept the fees presented by Troy. Dr. Peppes seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### **IV. Clubhouse Expansion Success to Date and 2018**

Troy reported he meets with Brandon, James, and Amy Adent the Food and Beverage Manager every Wednesday at 11:00. He brings that up because the other three managers on the property have been great dealing with the new construction and working around it. It has been helpful insuring that everything is getting done, and we are operational.

Chair Fuller inquired how is the kitchen working with increase.

Troy stated it doesn't increase the day-to-day food business all that much. Going forward will sell more events, but we are aware of limitations in the kitchen. It is not because of Amy's capabilities but the current kitchen space restrictions. Trying to be careful if it can't be done, don't do it.

Dr. Peppes inquired what the number is that we can serve.

Troy stated 80, and golf outings bigger than that the type of food is different. In house food and beverage has gone up in addition to rental and bar sales. He did hire a full time event coordinator who has been here over a month and a half. Troy is getting ready to hand over the contacts, tours and emails to her. This winter she is going to help Amy out in the kitchen being a dual person.

Troy commented he wants to go on record recognizing James and his staff on what an outstanding job they did getting the course back up and running. Ironhorse has the best staff and superintendent.

Chair Fuller added he played out here during that time and knows what all was done. James has done a great job. It was amazing.

Troy reported finding a wave board on the course the first flood. In addition, there was about 50 carp on the cart path flipping around.

Chair Fuller inquired if all of the grass carp were gone from the #6 irrigation pond. Wasn't duckweed the reason for the carp.

James reported he hasn't seen any duckweed like previous years. Restocked carp 2 years ago on #11. We now have a contract with Blue Valley Labs to come in. They have changed some of the treatments and it has helped.

Chris added changing treatment, and the carp helped.

Troy stated James always defers compliments to his people, but James is outstanding superintendent.

Council Liaison Sipple inquired are you purposely trying to reduce your merchandise levels and the sales are down as a result. Is that Troon's policy across the board or was merchandise inventory here too high?

Troy responded last year he had a conversation about inventory levels being too high. It became a mission to get the levels down. As a function, per square footage and items that were not going to sell needed to be marked down to move. Brett Myers is in charge of that program and he has gotten inventory total down to a more comfortable level.

Chair Fuller commented doesn't outing sales affect the merchandise sales. Tournament players always seems to buy merchandise especially if they haven't played the course before.

Troy responded some courses even more so, because they have an added-in requirement for events. Other places, when selling an outing might, require a \$5 or \$10 gift card per player. The prices of the outing is inflated. That isn't something they do here, but we have talked about it. Currently, we are encouraging buying gift cards for prizes. We are ordering less and being more aggressive in marking down if something isn't going to sell has worked.

Chair Fuller commented he notices lessons are down.

Troy answered Skip is handling about the same number. Whitney has been busy with PGA junior league, and new ladies league. He doesn't think they are turning anyone away. Overall, the facility is seeing a slight decline in lessons. Brett and Whitney are really staying busy.

Chair Fuller inquired are camps still popular.

Troy responded the 4-week long camps are all full.

Chris reported that we haven't made the decision yet but Parks & Recreation might turn over The First Tee program to Ironhorse.

Council Liaison Sipple asked what is the issue turning it over to Troon rather than City staff.

Chris added Kim handles the registration now. Works with the instructor and trying to work thru new contract with The First Tee office. If Troon wants to do this, that is fine. If they don't staff will continue to do it.

Troy stated logistically it makes more sense for them to manage from the property. The lessons are here and his staff already has a good working relationship with the teachers. He and Chris are talking about it, but at this point, it is not something that they would not want to do. It would involve labor and hours spent.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how many kids participate in the First Tee program.

Dr. Peppes asked is it possible to do more lessons.

Chris said they would like us to do more. When they are here, we have so many other things going on. There is only so much space on the practice area and the putting clock.

Troy added every space that they take up on the driving range costs the facility money and without reimbursement. He realizes you do need to use range to teach it properly.

Chris stated they have their own program. They want us to do more. Hopefully the kids will stay and play their golf here. Each group has 11 to 15 kids. Normally, we have a waiting list and we then move them into another session in fall or spring.

Troy stated he would bet the original intention of the par 3 course was for that purpose. It has now bled over into the driving range. Then they want to add 10 more kids per session. They seem a little less interested in using the par 3.

Tommy asked several years ago the committee recommended and approved a plaque or a memorial to honor Bob Reed. The City was going to do something. Whatever happened to that?

Chair Fuller responded that he had talked to Brandon and got the local PGA representative contact information. They expressed interested but did not say how much they are willing to contribute. He and Chris have talked and it needs to get it back on the agenda.

Troy added some people have put small stone plaques on the tee signs. Currently, we do not have anything like a bench out here. He had another individual inquire about a memorial for Jimmy Mills who passed away this past spring. He will administer whatever the committee and City decides to do.

Chair Fuller added Chris had suggested something like a bench similar to the one at Brook Beatty Park maybe for the putting green. He doesn't want to dedicate a bench that people never use or sees.

Chris commented about putting it out by the #1 tee.

Council Liaison Sipple suggested putting it out by the putting clock.

Troy added he is sensitive about placement of a tree out of consideration for James and the maintenance of the area.

Chair Fuller asked on #4, is the hole that has appeared a part of the tee box.

James replied it was part of the damage. The storm water comes in from the street and is tied into the golf course. The entire pipe is damaged. When Joe Johnson was at Public Works, he sent someone out to shoot video.

Council Liaison Sipple asked is the storm drain on the street up by Leo's house. Is it fixed now?

James commented the storm drain is between Leo's house and neighbor at a 90-degree angle over and then 90-degree down. The only correct way to fix this would be to dig it out and replace the pipe. Then it needs to be put back together.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if it is a 12 or 24 inch pipe.

James answered he thinks it is two 24, or maybe 36-inch pipes. You can see it from #8 green. Each rain event it washes out. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> time they have filled it up with dirt.

Council Liaison Sipple asked James is that on his list to do this winter.

James responded no, he had talked to Joe and to David Ley this year. It will be very involved.

Chris added she doesn't think it is on anyone's financial radar.

Chair Fuller stated it is a big tee box; it is just there all of the time.

Council Liaison Sipple stated next year is the City's year for stormwater repairs. It would be nice to do before May 1<sup>st</sup>. It is almost a safety issue out there on the tee box. Can it be fix for \$25,000? Is it just that section?

James responded the damaged pipe is from the fence to the creek. It is a long way, you need to cut out some of the cart path, go through irrigation, and restore the tee. This time of year, you would want to do it. Would need to reroute golf away from the area.

Council Liaison Sipple added maybe golfers could move over to senior or ladies tees.

Chair Fuller asked if anyone had additional comments or questions.

**V. Misc.**

A motion was made by Greg Peppes to adjourn the meeting.

Tommy Davison seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton, Director  
Parks and Recreation Department

DRAFT