

**Town of Fairfield, Connecticut
Golf Commission
Monday, October 17, 2011
7:30 pm
Eunice Postol Parks and Recreation Center
75 Mill Plain Road, Fairfield, CT**

Members Present: Jack Slane; Ryan Morris; Jordan Lustig; Craig Curley (7:55pm); Tammi Peterson; Drew Janis and Lou Albrecht

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Jim Alexander and Peter Grace

Vice Chairman Jack Slane called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

II. Act on Minutes September 12, 2011

Lou Albrecht made a motion, seconded by Tammi Peterson to approve the minutes as written. The motion, carried unanimously 6-0-0.

II- Communications-

1. Vice Chairman Slane acknowledged a letter from the Women's 9-hole League (see attached) asking for necessary facilities for the 110 member league when the new tennis/recreation building is built at the Old Dam Rd. facility. No action was taken.
2. Vice Chairman Slane acknowledged a letter from Ellen Everard (see attached) requesting that thought be given to a season pass of some type for carts. It was decided that this request would be taken up later in the meeting during the fees discussion.

III. Staff Reports

1. Pro Manager Report- Jim Alexander reported that it was a very wet month and rounds are still down: 900 at HSR and 500 at Carl Dickman Par 3. The revenue is down a total of \$35K which is a 15% decline. The State of CT is down an avg. of 8.5%. However, for the year, the Town is down 9% and the State is down 8.5%.

Mr. Alexander shared a letter from the Fairfield Special Olympics Golf Team thanking the Commission for the use of HSR. At Mr. Lombardo's request, Mr. Alexander provided a "rounds analysis" (see attached) of the first quarter of the fiscal year; July, Aug and Sept. (see attached). Taking hurricane Irene into consideration, the weekends had the biggest hit which is of course where most of the revenue is made.

He also reported that the computer is up and running in the Starter's Shack. It is wireless.

Mr. Lustig asked Mr. Alexander to account for the high number of complimentary rounds played at the Carl Dickman Par 3. Mr. Alexander explained that it is the Middle School Golf group. He believes that the staff was not putting them through the computer last year but they are doing it now.

2. Administration Report- no report due to Mr. Lombardo's absence.

3. Superintendent Report – Peter Grace reported that he looked into the Sept. weather at the request of Mr. Lombardo. In Sept, 2010 there were 9.97 inches of rain. This Sept, 2011 there were 23.18 inches, accounting for the "cart paths only" days and the loss in revenue as well. Mr. Grace also reported that following the tree removal they will begin the pond dredging that is scheduled. When Zach returns from another job in three weeks they will start on the 9th tee. Chairman Curley had

asked about the 12th tee however, Mr. Grace stated that he is hesitant to do that until the 11th is completed to be sure there are no issues that arise regarding the 12th. They are still awaiting permits before they can begin the 11th. Evidently, according to the Engineering Dept., the permits for 11 and 2 were different from other permits. Plans for the 11th hole were discussed. Mr. Morris asked and was told that after the reshaping on the 7th hole, the drainage improved.

Mr. Grace told the Commission that the bunker money has been depleted. He will now see if, after the pond dredging and drainage work, there is anything left to use on the additional bunkers. He expects that Mr. Lombardo will keep track of this as well. Divots were discussed and will remain a priority after the leaves are gone and at the start of the spring season. Ms. Albrecht suggested something that she has seen at other clubs. It is placed in the hand carts and it resembles a tennis can full of seed mix that you can use on the divots as you play. Mr. Grace will look into this. Mr. Janis stated that divots were also part of his report and that it would remain a concerted effort.

Taking up the Old Business item of the Chain Link Fence, Mr. Grace reported that in mid-November, they will be taking down the fence on the 8th hole but will leave the gate portion. They will rebuild the wall as it goes towards Hoyden's Hill and they will plant shrubbery where needed.

New fairway mowers should be arriving at the end of November. He has begun to create a first cut and a dew walk. This work will continue next spring.

As asked to report by Chairman Curley, they have been inspecting the range netting and have noticed no bird mortality.

IV. Greens Committee Report – Mr. Janis reported that divots continue to be addressed as Mr. Grace reported. He added that he, Mr. Grace and Mr. Alexander walked the course to discuss doing a first cut widening some fairways and creating some dew walks. They all agree that this will make the pace of play better and a more enjoyable golfing experience. He asked Mr. Grace if he would address cups that are being cut too deep. Mr. Grace will follow up.

V. New Business –

1. Sr. Citizen Age Review- Chairman Curley explained that Mr. Lombardo wanted the Commission to discuss following along with a possible decision by the Parks & Recreation Commission to raise the Senior age from 62 to 65 in a gradual manner. In Mr. Lombardo's absence, Joan Ryan let the Commission know that after a sub-ctte. met they are thinking of going in a different direction but Mr. Lombardo would still like a sense of this body as to their thoughts on the matter. Ms. Peterson felt that all the programs and Commissions should be consistent and if the age is raised for Recreation, it should be for Golf as well. Mr. Slane agreed. The public spoke and had no objections. No action was taken.

2. Fee Structure Review – Chairman Curley explained that over recent months, in the light of the poor golf numbers, some RTM members have been asking how the Commission plans to recoup the losses. He felt that if they could have a good dialogue this month and vote next month, these expected revenue figures could be used for the upcoming budget discussions and the information could also be put in the recreation brochure that is sent to print in early December.

Ryan Morris who sat with Mr. Lombardo, Mr. Curley and Mr. Alexander on two occasions, presented two scenarios of possible HSR fee structures (see attached). Mr. Morris began by stating that rates had not been raised in two years and two years ago the Resident ID was all that was raised. They felt that it was time to meet the raising cost base. He stated that Scenario "A" is aggressive, while "B" is moderate. The group that they are targeting is the non-resident community who contributes half the revenue base and they would like to encourage them to make HSR their home course.

Mr. Slane and Mr. Lustig both questioned if this fee increase is bring driven by the low rounds and revenue because perhaps it is going to correct itself after the economy turns around and improved

weather. Chairman Curley responded that the previous Commission had a plan to raise the greens fees \$1 per year but in the depressed economy this Commission had held rates flat except for the Res. ID \$10 increase. He feels it is necessary to now get back on track with other courses. Mr. Janis agreed that it's important to meet the rising costs and continue to provide an excellent product.

T. Peterson asked if they had not also decided not to touch the junior population. Mr. Curley agreed stating that he believes they are the future of golf.

Jim Alexander spoke about other courses and "the need to do something original but not too risky to get non-residents in here". Some questioned whether or not lowering to \$175 would anger and confuse the residents. Chairman Curley stated that they were looking for a number that would make it a "no brainer" for someone to make the decision to buy a season pass. In the end the residents are certainly paying much less. The issue of Fridays as weekend days was discussed and Mr. Alexander stated that while Fridays are the 2nd busiest day of the week, they are the 3rd highest revenue producer. Limiting it to Memorial Day through Labor Day was suggested.

Mr. Morris stated that they did not look at Carl Dickman Par 3 rates but he assumed that the Commission would want to follow along the same lines with whatever decisions are made.

Following lengthy discussion, Chairman Curley outlined the 6 basic decisions that the Commission will need to think about and hopefully be ready to vote on next month.

1. What to do with the Res. ID card... Take them to \$50 or somewhere in between?
2. Does it make sense to raise cart fees \$1?
3. Should they consider Friday play as weekend or weekday?
4. Shall they increase resident greens fees \$1?, \$2? Or leave as it is?
5. Shall they reduce the Non-Resident Season Pass from \$700 to \$175?
6. What should they do to Junior ID and rates?

Chairman Curley asked if the public had any input regarding the subject. Ron Wayne, 1680 Cross Hwy., remarked that other courses are going after the non-residents and now it is time that we do it too.

Vice Chairman Slane asked that they revisit the letter from Mrs. Everard under communications asking for a season pass for carts. Mrs. Everard was not present. The Commissioners did not feel it was a plan that they wanted to pursue. No action was taken.

VI. Old Business – 1. 8th Hole Chain Link Fence- Discussed during Superintendent's Report.

2. Mrs. Albrecht presented a sign that she had seen at another course regarding alcohol consumption on the course. It read:

No Alcohol Allowed on Golf Course unless provided by _____ (name of restaurant).

Coolers will be confiscated. Members thought "Coolers will be *inspected*" was a better way to go. They told Mr. Alexander that he is permitted to place those signs in the carts if he wishes.

VII. Public Input – None

Mr. Slane made a motion, seconded by Mr. Morris to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan C. Ryan
Recording Secretary