

Deerfield Park District
Golf Advisory Committee Meeting

Minutes of September 7, 2022

Call to Order

The meeting of the Golf Advisory Committee was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Director of Golf Operations Jason Mannina at the Jewett Park Community Center. The following were in attendance:

Present: Executive Director Jeff Nehila, Director of Golf Operations Jason Mannina, Golf Course Superintendent Mike Bavier, Head Teaching Professional Derek Domaleski, Park Board Commissioner Joe Cohen, Committee Members Sharon Edwards, Paul Franson, Seth Howard, Robert Klein, Casey Kremer and Dan Mazur

Absent: Kevin Butler, Jack Butler

(1) Review of Meeting Minutes

A review of the July 2, 2022, minutes revealed two changes with respect to those in attendance.

(2) Matters from the Public

No members of the public were present.

(3) Staff Reports

(a) Golf Operations

Golf Director Mannina reported that between April and May, the course was down 4,750 rounds from last year but has since caught up financially. Staff knew there would be a dip in revenues from last year regardless as people are returning to their pre-pandemic lives. Staffing needs are still being met despite losing some seasonal staff as they return to college. There is an ongoing sale at the pro shop and staff remains satisfied with their vendors. Club sales have been phenomenal for the year so far with the average sale for a set of clubs being \$3,000. The driving range is busy. Offering different size buckets has led to slightly less revenue but staff's main priority has been growth of the game which remains successful. Golf rates will come down after labor day to remain competitive in the area for this time of year. (Also as a result of the upcoming bunker renovation project and two temp greens) The entrance sign was recently power washed and looks well kept. As a follow up from the last Committee meeting, the air compressor has been put out. The railroad ties currently used for landscaping get dewy when wet and staff is looking into potential alternatives to prevent slipping.

A Committee member asked what specifically the round decrease could be attributed to. Golf Director Mannina advised the weather plays a significant factor and that playable days in April were about 70% less than what they were last year.

Another Committee member asked what percentage of income comes from passes as opposed to greens fees. Golf Director Mannina stated he will forward that information to the Committee member but that fees definitely account for the larger portion.

(b) Golf Course Maintenance

Golf Superintendent Bavier reported that maintenance staff has performed an incredible job this season and that there are big projects coming this fall with respect to the patio renovation. Staff faced many challenges this summer due to the weather but has consistently pulled through. In the summer months, maintenance primarily consists of routine mowing and preventative spraying with little time for projects. The condition of the greens was consistent throughout the year due to spraying, verticutting and growth regulators. Spraying will diminish in the fall. Grooming in addition to sand top dressing help keeps the greens pristine. Between routine maintenance, staff has been continually working on drainage improvements with positive results. The next deep aerification process will begin in November/December to vent the greens. Staff added drought tolerant landscaping such as perennials and tropicals to the front entrance of the club house for beautification purposes and to reduce hand watering time. Staff also added a wildflower area on hole 17 and is recycling dead ash trees by turning them into mulch. The new tee on hole 2 is nearly complete and will be usable by next spring. The bronze tee on hole 11 is being raised and staff is also working on enlarging the tee box on hole 12. Throughout fall and winter, staff will continue construction of the new tees, remove/renovate the 150-yard right fairway bunkers on holes 11 and 12 and winterize the irrigation system.

A Committee member stated there is a bush next to the bridge on hole 17 that is obstructing play and encroaching upon the bridge. Superintendent Bavier advised it may be best to pull the bush out.

Another Committee member requested clarification with respect to the entire renovation plan. Golf Director Mannina advised the plan pertains to bunkers and drainage and that this is the final phase of an eight yearlong project. Commissioner Cohen added that the Board opted to do this project in phases to minimize the financial impact to the course. The Committee member then asked if staff intends to invite the CDGA for a course review and rating once the project is complete. Golf Director Mannina advised that the CDGA has fallen behind in reviews due to the pandemic and that they are exploring alternative ways to rate a course such as drone footage, etc. Staff is interested in a review and will follow the CDGA closely. The Committee member asked if the elevation of the bronze tee boxes was also a rolling project as well. Superintendent Bavier confirmed this project remains ongoing. He intends to develop a priority list.

A Committee member then asked if staff intends to fully close holes 11 and 14 during the renovation. Golf Director Mannina advised that will be dependent upon the construction company but the plan is to use temporary greens once needed.

A Committee member asked if one of the tee boxes on hole 2 is unused because of adjacent resident concerns. Golf Director Mannina advised that the tee box was rearranged intentionally to slow the pace of play and lessen the bottleneck on hole 3. The Committee member stated he is grateful for the widening of the bridge on hole 17, however, he noted the rubber broke and it is a potential tripping hazard. Superintendent Bavier advised staff will replace. The Committee member concluded his remarks by commending Superintendent Bavier and his staff on the wonderful condition of the course. He stated the feedback he has received has been very positive.

A Committee member stated that he believes the first tree on the left of the tee box on hole 18 is dead and ready to be taken down. Superintendent Bavier advised he will investigate and take appropriate action.

(c) Learning Center

Summer Classes and Camps:

Head Teaching Professional Domaleski reported that the District's summer programming was successful despite a slow start in the spring due to the weather. Enrollment numbers saw a slight uptick towards the end of the summer. Overall, staff received positive feedback and will evaluate and adjust the summer camp schedule for next year as necessary.

Sunday Intro Classes:

Enrollment for summer Sunday morning classes for children golfers aged 4-9 was at 75 participants. These classes offer an introduction to the game for children and teach their parents how to interact and be involved with their child's golf development.

Fall Golf Programs:

Weeklong golf programming for children golfers aged 4-9 is running this fall on Mondays and Wednesdays. There are 13 participants enrolled. This class transitions into the Junior Travel League for more competitive children who anticipate playing in high school and exposes them to tournament experience.

Adult Beginner Classes:

Adult Beginner classes continue to be incredibly successful with six series offered. Participants often take this class with their significant other or a child. Staff is happy to grow the game by creating new players. There have been 47 participants throughout the summer.

Other Notes:

- Fitting Days with vendors have been a great success and an asset to the club;
- Instructors remain busy with private training lessons;
- Drew Barnes passed his playing ability test to become a member of the PGA.

A Committee member complimented staff on the driving range as she appreciates hitting off the grass. She expressed concerns over the driving range parking and suggested a bag stand near the range to drop off clubs and alleviate parking frustrations.

Another Committee member commended staff on growing the game for young children.

(d) FORE Restaurant & Bar

Golf Director Mannina reported that restaurant staff will start reducing hours as winter approaches and move to the Halfway House on Tuesdays.

The Betsie Salad was a hit at the PTC for the Ladies Luncheon. Golf Director Mannina continues to be impressed with the kitchen's creativity.

The Halfway House is incredibly profitable on the weekends. While there is still no draft beer, staff is considering other options for next year and may order larger wine bottles.

(4) 2022-2023 Competitive Market Analysis & Review of 2023 Proposed Rates

Golf Director Mannina reported that he conducted his annual Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) on neighboring area courses to benchmark where the DGC is at competitively within the Northshore. Rising inflation and minimum wage increases have had a substantial impact on DGC operations. Landscape materials have gone up 33% in the past three years and chemicals have gone up 20%. As a result, the District is approaching an expenditure of roughly \$120,000 a year on chemicals alone to keep the course in pristine playing condition. Replacement parts, fertilizer, seed, fuel and costs associated with capital projects are also up exponentially. Staff has cut expenditures where possible, however, revenue must also be addressed in order to remain profitable. While staff is comfortable with the existing green fees and dynamic pricing, staff is recommending that resident passes be increased by 10% and nonresident passes be increased by 20% with a cap on rounds for nonresidents.

Additionally, staff is recommending price increases on range balls as there have been ball theft issues, the price of balls is steadily increasing and there are significant labor costs associated with staffing the range.

Lastly, staff is recommending permanent tee time price increases. There was a brief discussion about the value of the unlimited cart pass. No shows have also hurt the District financially and staff is proposing a no show fee to curtail this behavior.

Commissioner Cohen expressed concerns over the lack of increase in daily green fees. Additionally, he proposed a cap on rounds be placed at 60 instead of 90. He cautioned staff against not capturing enough income as expenditures are increasing and believes slight increases would not prevent the DGC's demographic from playing.

Numerous edits were discussed, and recommendations were shared by the Committee.

Ultimately, fee recommendations will be discussed and approved at the Park Board's October 6, 2022, Special Meeting.

(5) 2022 Important Dates and Events

Upcoming important dates and events include:

- September 24 & 25 – Club Championship Weekend
- October 3 – Bunker Renovation (Holes 11 & 14)
- October 3 – Clubhouse Exterior & Deck Renovation
- October 22 – Chili Open & Deerfield Township Food Pantry Drive

(6) Other Items for Discussion

Golf Director Mannina advised that the new golf carts are expected at the end of the season. Additionally, he reminded the Committee that there will be temporary greens on holes 11 and 14 due to construction.

(7). The next meeting of the Golf Advisory Committee shall be held sometime in April of 2023.

(8). There being no further discussion, meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.