

**Deerfield Park District**  
**Golf Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Minutes of September 14, 2023**

**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: Brian Bradford, Lucia Liu, Jack Butler, Seth Howard, Robert Klein, Paul Franson, Faye Solomon and Board Liaison Joe Cohen

Absent: None

Staff: Director of Golf Operations Jason Mannina, Clubhouse Operations Supervisor Kris Oldeen and Head Teaching Professional Derek Domaleski

**(1) Review of Meeting Minutes**

A review of the July 13, 2023, minutes revealed no changes. The minutes were approved as circulated.

**(2) Matters from the Public**

No members of the public were present.

**(3) Staff Reports**

**(a) Golf Operations**

Golf Director Mannina reported that since the Committee last met in July, staff has created the design for the second hole tee box. The new tee box will be pushed further back than the existing and the existing will no longer be maintained.

Staff is working on improving the front door aesthetic of the clubhouse with new panels and intends to paint the fence near the driving range/putting green as well as beautify the area with natural landscaping.

The CDGA (Chicago District Golf Association) has changed their policies as a result of the pandemic and only rerates a course in person every ten years. The last time the DGC was rated was in 2015 and as a result, will receive a rerating in 2025. The rating system is heavily based upon yardage and the course should not expect to receive a large change in rating despite the bunker renovation project completion.

Merchandise sales have gone well this season. Club fitting days remain in high demand. Due to increased range usage, additional staff have been hired to maintain range operations. Staff intends to purchase a spare ball washer as a precaution for range operations. Grass tees will close October 9<sup>th</sup>. From a marketing standpoint, e-mail blasts and mobile app downloads continue to rise.

Staff has increased pace to ten-minute intervals and increased dynamic pricing. As a result, DGC has experienced an increase in revenue with less players which correlates to less wear and tear for the course. There was an extensive Committee discussion regarding range ball theft, estimates of balls that are lost to the buckthorn and water, the outside contractor that recovers these balls and potential netting to alleviate range ball loss.

#### **(b) Golf Course Maintenance**

In lieu of Golf Superintendent Bavier's absence, Director Mannina provided a brief overview of current course conditions. Despite some difficult challenges with the weather, staff were able to stay on track with maintaining the golf course combined with a sound chemical application program. Spray programs are completed preventatively during the summer months, and despite some tough stretches of challenging weather, staff were pleased to see very little breakthrough in turf diseases. The condition of the greens has been consistent. Putting surfaces have been smooth throughout the year as a result of preventative fungicide programs and applying growth regulators and wetting agents. Verti-cutting, grooming, rolling, and sand topdressing the putting surfaces are other maintenance tasks used repeatedly throughout the season. With respect to course projects, drainage improvements along with aerification and sand topdressing have helped drain the golf course at a much quicker rate after a heavy rain event. Drainage installation in fairways on holes 7 and 9 has been completed. Drainage installation on #18 fairway is scheduled to be worked on next. Greens were aerified in August followed up with sand topdressing. Drought tolerant landscaping including perennials and tropicals were planted to the front entrance and clubhouse area, along with the addition of wildflower and natural areas to the golf course to help reduce the amount of time spent watering and mowing. Courtesy rough around fairways and walking paths have been cut regularly since the end of July.

#### **Upcoming fall/winter maintenance notes and projects as follows:**

- Tee construction and leveling projects to begin on holes 2, 5 and 6.
- Landscape along fence between clubhouse and maintenance building as well as staining of the fence.
- Verti-cut tees and fairways.
- Deep aerifying greens, tees, fairways and short-cut areas on the driving range followed up with heavy sand topdressing on greens and tees.
- Fertilizer application along with snow mold prevention on greens, tees, fairways, and the driving range.
- Dead ash tree removals in wooded areas, tree removals on the golf course, and trimming out-of-bounds hedge rows and along lake edges.
- Winterize the irrigation system and pumping station.

#### **(c) Learning Center**

##### **Summer/Fall Classes and Summer Camps:**

Head Teaching Professional Domaleski reported that the District's summer programming and current fall classes/camps have been going well, in large part due to good weather conditions and excellent staff. Classes started in early May and will run through the first half of October. Staff is reevaluating camps and will adjust as necessary. Over one hundred (100) children participated in summer camp this year.

**Junior Classes:**

There are three junior classes that run in the summer. These include an introduction to golf program for ages 4-5 with a parent that specializes in fine motor skills and fitness, the junior master's program for ages 6-8 with a parent and the advanced master's program for ages 7-9. These younger classes focus on an introduction to the game for children and teach their parents how to interact and be involved with their child's golf development. There were roughly ninety (90) children in the introduction to golf program this year and enrollment was also high among the 6-8-year-olds. The 7-9-year-olds program was the least attended.

**Deerfield Feeder Program:**

The Deerfield Feeder Program is designed for junior golfers that are ready to take their game to the next level and continue to develop the skills that they have learned in the junior and advanced master's program. Participants are strongly encouraged to play and practice on their own in addition to scheduled class time. Each participant will also receive five buckets of range balls and one 9 Hole Twilight round of golf with a parent. This class was highly successful, and staff is pleased with the feedback received.

**Deerfield Junior Golf Academy Travel Team:**

The Deerfield Feeder Program transitions into the Junior Travel League for more competitive children who anticipate playing in high school and exposes them to tournament experience. It practices twice weekly. There are currently eleven (11) children participating in the fall travel team for DGC.

**Adult Entry Level Classes:**

There are several Adult Classes for those who wish to improve their golf game or are at beginner level. Staff is also offering a condensed class with a focus on short game, bunker shots and full swing which has achieved moderate success. There were requests for specialized offerings for women and seniors. The women's program had enough participants to run its first section, but the senior offering was cancelled due to a lack of participants. Staff has also added a Saturday class to boost enrollment as there is interest. Adult classes are roughly 70% full.

**Other Notes:**

- The Learning Center has achieved over \$9,000 revenue in programming year to date.

**(d) FORE Restaurant & Bar**

Golf Operations Director Mannina advised that staff have been exploring the feasibility of utilizing an outside food and beverage operator for the clubhouse. Staff is unduly burdened by maintaining both the food and beverage operation as well as standard clubhouse operations. Most importantly, staff feel they are unable to provide an exceptional guest experience, manage course revenues and fully monitor the safety of programming and guests to the best of their ability while splitting their time amongst the clubhouse and the kitchen. Through their research, staff have found the majority of local Park Districts have a service agreement in place with food service vendors and restaurateurs that pay rent to the District in exchange for operating food and beverage. Examples of local Park Districts with concession agreements include Highland Park, Northbrook, Winnetka, Wilmette and the Village of Glencoe. The agreements staff reviewed are

highly detailed and cover necessary items such as insurance, liquor licenses, revenue transparency, customer service standards, hours of operation, marketing, vendor access and special events to name a few. Additional benefits of a full-time food and beverage partner would include increased DGC exposure within the community and longer hours of food and beverage operation which would enhance DGC customer service overall without additional expense to the DGC's budget. Staff intends to present the recommended vendor along with their sample menu to the Board in the near future. Board Liaison Cohen requested an update with respect to staff retaining the DGC's liquor license as a precautionary measure. Golf Operations Director Mannina advised Riverwoods has stated DGC may maintain a liquor license in addition to the potential F&B operator by utilizing a different address for the course.

#### **(4) 2023-2024 Competitive Market Analysis & Review of 2024 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. Staff are proposing the following changes:

- A \$2 increase in weekend green fees for nonresidents and nonresidents.
- A \$2 increase in the junior rates for residents and nonresidents.
- A \$2 increase in weekday green fees for residents and nonresidents.
- A \$3 increase in the senior weekday green fees (18 holes) for residents and nonresidents. With golf carts, this increase will equate to \$50 per round for nonresidents and \$45 for residents. Despite this potential increase, DGC will be less expensive than nearby Heritage Oaks (Northbrook) and Sunset Valley (Highland Park) for seniors.
- A \$2 increase in the senior weekday green fees (9 holes) for residents and nonresidents.
- A \$1 increase in the junior weekday green fees for residents and nonresidents.
- With respect to the twilight pricing, staff is proposing the time be adjusted from 2:30PM to 3:30PM.
- A \$5 increase in the single rider cart fee.
- An elimination of the nonresident season pass.
- An increase in resident season passes from \$1,635 to \$1,915. This equates to roughly \$37 on average per round for season pass holders or less depending on how much the pass is utilized.
- An increase in resident senior season passes from \$1,001 to \$1,175. This equates to roughly \$18 on average per round for season pass holders or less depending on how much the pass is utilized.
- All passes will exclude Friday with the exception of the resident full pass.
- The twenty (20) week resident prepaid pass will be increased from \$962 to \$1,060.
- A \$2 increase in medium range balls (50 CT).
- A \$2 increase in large range balls (75 CT).
- For individuals who purchase the seven day resident pass, staff plans to implement a \$25 surcharge on 2<sup>nd</sup> daily rounds.
- 2024 permanent tee time members will be required to purchase a minimum 20-round pass. No shows will be strictly enforced as they cost the DGC over \$16,000 in potential revenue this year.

As mentioned last year, inflation and minimum wage increases have had a substantial impact on DGC operations. Landscape materials, chemicals and equipment have gone up exponentially. Expenses are rapidly approaching \$1.9 million per year. The Committee had an extensive conversation as it relates to the 16% increase in resident season passes. Director Mannina offered a \$1,250 household credit for \$1,000 in lieu of a season pass with upwards of a 30% discount depending on when the golfer chose to play which the Committee rejected. The Committee also expressed concern over the increase in senior passes as seniors live on a fixed income and took note of the exclusion of Friday on the senior passes. It was decided that the resident senior pass be reduced from the proposed \$1,250 to \$1,175.

Ultimately, fee recommendations will be discussed and approved at the Park Board's October 5, 2023, Special Meeting.

**(5) 2023 Important Dates and Events**

Upcoming important dates and events include:

- Cart Path Replacement (Partial) – Ongoing
- Club Championship Weekend – September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>
- ProAm Scramble – Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>
- Chili Open & West Deerfield Township Food Pantry Drive – Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>

**(6) Other Items for Discussion**

Director Mannina gave a brief report with respect to DGC items budgeted for in the District's Capital Plan.

**(7). The next meeting of the Golf Advisory Committee shall be held March 14<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at a location to be determined.**

**(8). There being no further discussion, meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Serbin  
Executive Administrative Assistant