

MINUTES
DeKalb Park District
Public Meeting of the Golf Advisory Committee
November 20, 2019
River Heights Golf Course Clubhouse, DeKalb, IL

Public Meeting 6:00 p.m.

I. Meeting Call to Order

Golf Committee Chair Dag Grada called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Vince McMahon, Austin Sands, Adam Anderson, Dag Grada, Gail Krmenech, Dean Holliday, Randy Bourdages, Larry Schultz, Steven Burski, Tom Anderson, Tom Teresinski (Mr. Teresinski left the meeting at 6:20 pm)

Non-voting Members Present: Amy Doll, Doug Eaton

II. Action on the Agenda

Committee Member Holliday made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Committee Member Teresinski. Motion carried by voice vote.

III. Public Comment

Micah Stoddard spoke to the committee about his views for the success of golf. Mike Teboda also spoke about some ideas about improving the courses and generating revenue. David Barrow also shared an idea about increasing revenue at the courses.

IV. Approval of Minutes from 11/13/2019 Meeting

Mr. Bourdages made a motion to approve the minutes. Seconded by Teresinski. Motion carried by voice vote.

V. Old Business

a. Committee Goals

Chair Grada reminded the committee that the task of the committee is to produce a document that will guide the staff and board on advisement to improve the courses. The committee report is an advisement to the board and staff and that there are financial and legal advisements that will be considered. This committee is not setting policy but is giving advice to improve golf operations. It would be disingenuous to say that we would never do any one thing and to commit to things in that extreme long term.

Mr. Teresinski agreed with the idea that we need to operate at a break-even. Sycamore is subsidizing golf at some level. These comparatives are finding that golf is being subsidized in most communities. He thinks that it is reasonable to operate at a break-even, however to be able to generate enough revenue to fund capital improvements is premature.

Mr. McMahon asked if River Heights operated in the black last year. Ms. Doll indicated that the audited financial statements show that it did not. He asked how many additional tax dollars will the District be getting from the closing of the TIF? He asked for the answer to be provided at the next meeting.

Mr. Bourdages said that we should not be stating that we are going to be profitable. For the first year we should not be talking about being profitable. Chair Grada agreed and said that he has been trying to frame the issue as making improvements.

Ms. Krmeneč indicated that we need to establish how we are going to measure ourselves. We may want to revisit this once Mr. Teresinski returns information about the comparable financials of other municipal golf courses. He asked Ms. Doll for an update on the financial comparable information.

Mr. Holliday indicated that he has spoken to 12 to 14 people and none of them indicated that they wanted to close a golf course.

Mr. McMahon wanted to talk a bit about the Billy Casper golf report. He indicated that there were some very good suggestions and several errors. He noted several items in the report that seemed to be mistakes. Chair Grada indicated that he thought that for the purposes of the committee meetings it would be best to set the BCG Report aside for the purposes of the meeting. Mr. Bourdages and Ms. Krmeneč agreed.

A review of the goals was shared:

1. To generate sufficient revenue to fund the facilities operations and at an acceptable level of monetary investment.
2. To proactively manage facilities operations to control costs without sacrificing services to the public.
3. To provide capital improvements at the facilities within the available funding.

VI. New Business

a. Final Product Format

Ms. Krmeneč has volunteered to write the professional report with the understanding that it is not her report but the committee's report.

b. Discussion of Golf Marketing

Chair Grada indicated that in the interest of keeping things focused during our meetings we will break each meeting into different components. He understands that next week we will be ready to talk about staffing.

Ms. Krmeneč and Mr. Sands worked on evaluating the District's marketing and prepared a PowerPoint presentation that they shared with the committee.

They broke marketing into digital, email, and traditional categories. Ms. Krmeneč presented information about the Golf DeKalb website indicating that it is the most important facet of marketing. It needs to be updated frequently to get people to return. Overall the website probably needs some redesigning. She also presented information about utilizing the email database to stay in touch with customers.

Mr. Sands presented information about the social media platforms. He provided a comparison with Sycamore Park District's golf course presence on social media compared with DeKalb. Overall the golf course presence on social media is lacking.

Mr. Sands also discussed other marketing opportunities including directional signage on Annie Glidden Road and other signage opportunities.

Ms. Krmeneč presented information about direct selling tournaments and business packages. She discussed the possibility of sponsorship initiatives including corporations, small businesses, agencies, and individuals. She discussed cooperative marketing opportunities including deals with the hotels near the courses. She also pointed out that having a link to Golf DeKalb on the city's website is important under the "Living here" section of the website because it would also be marketing for the city.

Mr. Sands talked about creating a loyalty card or a rewards card or member only event. Ms. Krmeneč discussed the possibility of member only events. She also suggested offering golf clinics on a monthly basis and Mr. Sands talked about offering a clinic with a golf pro.

Ms. Krmeneč pointed out that we need to get more data and need to know who our customers are and who are customers aren't and we need to measure our return on investment.

After the presentation of the marketing ideas Ms. Krmeneč talked about the necessity of adequate staffing to implement. Mr. Sands presented the information about how posting a job description for an intern from NIU could be done. He also presented information about utilizing students in an NIU course for website development.

Mr. McMahon told them that they did a great job, but he stated that old people like him don't go on computers much and people that play during the week are retired and the way that they get most of their information is newspapers and you shouldn't overlook those traditional means of marketing. He suggested that the course should be marketed to people in the suburbs to the east because our golf courses are priced less than those to the east and they are close to I-88.

Mr. Burski indicated that we should also utilize the radio for marketing.

There was some discussion about the importance of a point of sale system and that staff are looking into it.

Mr. Shultz suggested that the golf courses consider offering demo days allowing people to come and try out equipment. He also asked if there would be any requirements on the District for having an intern. He stated that the assessment of the website needing improvement is spot on. Mr. Bourdages indicated that it would be very important that the website be easy to use on a mobile device to book tee times. Ms. Krmeneč pointed out that it might be worth looking at the BlueGolf app. Mr. Shultz indicated that he would look into it. Mr. Eaton suggested that utilizing story apps would be helpful in showing off the golf courses.

Mr. Bourdages suggested that we want to not use the word interim when talking about the hiring and staffing because we won't be able to hire someone quality on a short term or interim basis.

VII. Adjourn Public Meeting

Mr. Bourdages made a motion to adjourn, second by Mr. McMahon. Motion carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.