

Golf Division

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MINUTES

GOLF COURSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WebEx Meeting

June 16, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT: Laurie Steenrod, Chairperson; Jesse Stine, Vice-Chairperson; Adam Lyle, Jason Schneider, Matt Stephens, Doug Webb, Dorothy Shadrick, Elizabeth Hamilton, Brendan Wild

MEMBERS ABSENT: Perry Jowsey, Omar Montgomery

STAFF ATTENDING: Doug McNeil, Manager of Golf; Karin Rivale, Marketing Specialist; Suzie Jaquith, Recording Secretary

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Laurie Steenrod, Chairperson called the meeting to order at 5:15 P.M.
- II. CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS – Laurie remarked it was nice to see improving conditions on #10 and #12 greens at Saddle Rock. She noticed, while playing at Saddle Rock, there were some open tee times ahead of her and commented she hardly ever sees that.
- III. PUBLIC INVITED TO SPEAK – None.
- IV. COMMITTEE REMARKS -
 - Brendan Wild commented he played at Heather Ridge golf course and thought the conditions were great. He questioned why an older golf course like that could have such good greens while Murphy Creek seems to struggle with their conditions. He suggested more communication between the superintendents at our five golf courses. Doug McNeil replied he was surprised by Brendan's comment as he has received more compliments this year on the conditions at Murphy Creek than he normally does. Our team of superintendents have a great relationship. They communicate constantly and travel around to play each other's golf courses. Typically, Murphy Creek is the last course to recover from winter, but this year that was not the case. The greens have always been their biggest challenge. The environment and multiple varieties of grass make it more difficult than most courses. The different grasses grow at different speeds. Eric (superintendent) said when he came there it would probably take at least seven years to get the greens where he would like to see them. He is about five years into that plan. Doug likes what he's seen in recent years at Murphy Creek and is confident in Eric and his plan.
 - Matt Stephens remarked he played in the Meadow Hills Men's Club and felt the course conditions were coming around. There are still a few greens that are in rough shape but look to be improving. He asked about the size of the new cart fleet at Meadow Hills, knowing we may have had shortages at times during Covid. Doug replied the new cart fleet size is based on storage capabilities and the volume of play. Meadow Hills has been happy with their fleet size over the years.
 - Adam Lyle commented he has spoken with some golfers who noticed the condition of the greens at Meadow Hills following the prolonged ice coverage this winter. He knows the staff is working hard to get them back into shape. He welcomed the new committee members.

- Dorothy Shadrick remarked she has played at Meadow Hills and Murphy Creek and thought that despite some of the greens struggling, both courses were in decent shape. She heard there have been some staff shortages but did not notice the impacts and complimented the staff for keeping up on maintenance.
- Doug Webb remarked he has played since April on the Springhill Men's Club Tuesday Night League. He noticed the fairway on hole #15 went from being in decent shape to half of it being ground under repair. He has heard comments from golfers about the driving range being built on a slight slope. Doug McNeil responded that there are range related plans being discussed, primarily the addition of artificial turf for off-season use. Doug Webb commented golfers he spoke with like the new carts that came over from Meadow Hills. He also played at Aurora Hills and thought course conditions were good.
- Jesse Stein commented he played in a tournament 4 or 5 weeks ago at Murphy Creek and thought the course came out of winter in the best shape he's ever seen it. The green on hole #10 is coming back nicely at Saddle Rock, and it was nice to see pro shops accept cash as payment again. He has not noticed a cart shortage at Saddle Rock. He attributes it to a lot of golfers that invested in electric, remote-controlled push carts during the pandemic and continue to use them rather than passenger carts.
- Elizabeth Hamilton played Murphy Creek with a couples league and Springhill and Meadow Hills with the ladies league. She complimented Rose on organizing and running the couples league. She suggested better signage for the portable restroom right off hole #16 at Meadow Hills so that golfers are aware there is a restroom there to use. Doug will follow up with staff. She also suggested improving the lighting on the patio at Meadow Hills. Doug responded he worked with the concessionaire a couple years ago and an electrician was hired to install outlets to plug in more lighting. The feedback he received from the concessionaire was they were happy with the results. He will follow up with the concessionaire.

V. STAFF UPDATES –

- Doug McNeil, Manager of Golf, reported that Saddle Rock assistant golf pro, Mike Fengler, accepted the head pro position at the Pinery. Mike has been with the golf division approximately 30 years and was a big part of making the junior program at Saddle Rock one of the biggest and best in the area. He congratulated Mike on his new position. Grant Jackson was promoted to the full-time assistant pro at Saddle Rock. Doug announced he will be vacating his office in the city building and will work remotely on a permanent basis as part of the city's changing plans following the pandemic. He will continue to make rounds of the courses on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. He spoke with Tri-County Health and they have approved water coolers to be placed on the courses again.
- Suzie Jaquith, Recording Secretary, reported donations were received from the Saddle Rock Women's League for the Paul McMullen Scholarship Fund.
- Karin Rivale, Marketing Specialist, gave a report on marketing activities. Registration is open for the Senior Amateur and the Aurora Amateur using the new registration system. Junior camps are in full swing; new sandwich board signs will be utilized at the courses to help with messaging and directing golfers.

VI. FINANCIAL REVIEW – Doug McNeil, Manager of Golf, gave a Rounds/Financial Report update. Doug reported May was another good month when compared to last year when the courses were closed for a portion of May. Doug anticipates revenues will begin to slow as things continue to open and people have other recreational options. He feels golf is experiencing a new energy and interest by new people that should continue to some degree into the future. It's a positive sign for the sport. Expenses for May were up compared to last May due to last year's spending limitations surrounding the pandemic and potential lack of business. Overall, things are trending toward another good year financially.

VII. DISCUSSION -

- Doug announced in-person meetings can resume for the committee, with the next meeting held outdoors at one of the courses. The last four meetings of the year will be held at golf courses. The September meeting will be a golf outing at Aurora Hills followed by dinner catered by the concessionaire. Suzie Jaquith, Recording Secretary, will work with course concessionaires to schedule the last 4 meetings.
- Doug gave an overview of the golf fund debt service and capital funding. Saddle Rock debt was paid off a few years ago. This year marks the final \$200,000 annual debt payment associated with the pump station built at Aurora Hills five years ago. The only other outstanding debt is associated with Murphy Creek's original clubhouse and golf course construction. The current payment is \$500,000/yr. Once the Murphy Creek debt is retired in 2026, the Golf Division should be well positioned to take on new debt in order to fund major capital improvement projects. Projects on the wish list include new irrigation systems for Meadow Hills and Springhill.
- Doug reported a new fleet of carts has been delivered to Meadow Hills and their older fleet has been moved to Springhill to replace their aging carts. Half of the new electric cart fleet for Aurora Hills is at the distributor and the other half should arrive within the next couple of weeks.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

- Laurie reported she has not seen the scooters at Meadow Hills for a while. Staff responded the reason is because they have been down for repairs, and with being short-staffed, repairs have been moving slowly. Meadow Hills has been without a mechanic for a few months. Staff was considering purchasing more scooters, but their prices have risen 60%. She asked if the snack shack was open again at Springhill. Doug responded that the damage caused by frozen pipes early this year has been repaired. They are waiting on a phone line and will be opening soon.
- Doug Webb asked about the overhang on the patio at Springhill. Doug responded a contractor has been hired to make repairs around the 20th of this month.

IX. GENERAL DISCUSSION –

- Doug Webb asked why the Premier card cannot be used in the mornings at Saddle Rock and Murphy Creek. Doug McNeil responded it is purely a business decision. It does not make sense for a business to allow discounts, which can be up to 20% with a Premier card, during times of highest demand. This is similar to what you experience with airlines and hotels. In order to be financially responsible and to put Aurora Golf in a position to be able to tackle capital projects, such as course improvements and new equipment, it is not a smart business move to allow discounts during these times. Doug Webb asked why credit book funds must be used by end of the year. Doug McNeil responded the decision was made based on so many people having just a few dollars on the books and this is a way to try and clean up the books.
- Laurie asked about the cart staging plan at Meadow Hills. She is a little concerned that having a lot of carts parked so close to the pro shop front door might appear unwelcoming if golfers think there is a tournament going on. Doug responded decisions are being made by course staff on ways to be more efficient. He is curious to know if others have the same impression as Laurie. Laurie asked why a fee is not charged for no-shows. Doug responded it is a challenge for most golf course operators. There were plans a couple years ago to migrate to new booking software that would have allowed for requiring credit cards when making reservations. This requirement would have made it much easier to charge no-shows. Unfortunately, the transition to that software was not successful. We continue to look at other options. Although it is easy to see the lost revenue associated with no-shows, there is another side of the issue that always has to be considered. There is no doubt some people would stop making reservations with us if they knew they had to give a credit card number and be responsible for charges if someone in their group did not show. The question becomes, do we potentially lose more from no-shows or do we require credit cards and potentially lose business from those that refuse to book with a credit card. Elizabeth commented how important it is for the leagues/clubs to remind their members of the importance of cancelling spots if someone is not going to play. Failure to do so results in someone else not having the ability to reserve that spot.

X. ADJOURNMENT -

- Doug Webb moved for adjournment and Elizabeth Hamilton seconded the motion.

Minutes approved by: *Laurie Steenrod* Jul 19, 2021
Laurie Steenrod (Jul 19, 2021 17:52 MDT)
Laurie Steenrod, Chairperson

Minutes prepared by: *Suzie Jaquith*
Suzie Jaquith, Recording Secretary

6-16-21 MINUTES_FINAL_sj_dm

Final Audit Report

2021-07-19

Created:	2021-07-19
By:	Suzie Gilroy Jaquith (sjaquith@auroragov.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAhKUleUyKlmMmU-Kae8OyNuEs00mDsMjH

"6-16-21 MINUTES_FINAL_sj_dm" History

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2021-07-19 - 11:48:02 PM GMT - IP address: 50.237.6.50
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2021-07-19 - 11:48:50 PM GMT
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2021-07-19 - 11:51:30 PM GMT - IP address: 73.95.202.133
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Signature Date: 2021-07-19 - 11:52:10 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 73.95.202.133
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