



**AGENDA
GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 11, 2022
9:00 AM
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS
204 ASH STREET
FERNANDINA BEACH, FL 32034**

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - 4.1 *March 9, 2022, and April 13, 2022.*
- 5. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- 6. NEW BUSINESS**
 - 6.1 **CITY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING REPRESENTATION** - *This item is placed on the agenda at the request of Chair Murray. Discuss GCAB representation at the City Commission Regular Meetings which occur on the first and third Tuesday of each month.*
 - 6.2 **FINANCIALS** - *General Manager Michael Cooney will provide a profit and loss update.*
- 7. MGA UPDATE**
- 8. WGA UPDATE**
- 9. MARKETING UPDATE**
 - 9.1 *General Manager Michael Cooney will provide an update.*
- 10. AGRONOMY UPDATE**
 - 10.1 *Superintendent Ellerbe will provide an update.*
- 11. ADJOURNMENT**

All members of the public are invited to be present and be heard. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate in this program or activity should contact the City Clerk at (904) 310-3115 or TTY/TDD 711 (for the hearing or speech impaired). All interested parties may appear at said meeting and be heard as to the advisability of any

action, which may be considered with respect to such matter. For information regarding this matter, please contact the Golf Course Manager.

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM
City of Fernandina Beach



SUBJECT:

ITEM TYPE: Approval of Minutes

REQUESTED ACTION:

SYNOPSIS:

FISCAL IMPACT:

CITY ATTORNEY COMMENTS:

CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION(S):

Caroline Best

Date: April 06,
2022

Submitted By: Caroline Best, City Clerk

COMMISSION ACTION:

GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

City Hall Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER: 9:00 AM
2. ROLL CALL: Chairperson and FBMGA Member Lee Murray called the roll:
Present: Member John Pelican; FBWGA Representative, Sue Simpson; and
Member Jim Rauschenberger; FBGC General Manager, Mike Cooney; and FBGC
Superintendent, Blaine Ellerbe. Member Jayne Paige was absent.
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Member John Pelican led the Pledge of Allegiance
to the flag of the United States of America.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Member Simpson made a motion to approve the
prior GCAB minutes and was seconded by Member Pelican. The motion was
unanimously approved.
5. PUBLIC COMMENT: Lee Murray recognized a request to speak from Mike
Meadows.
6. OLD BUSINESS. In response to Member Pelican's inquiry, Mike Cooney stated
that the proposed expenditures for a firepit and landscaping associated with the
Toptracer facility would not be made until they are included in the budget for
capital expenditures for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2022. In response to
questions from Members Pelican and Rauschenberger concerning the funds
allocated to the assistant superintendent position in the budget while the position
was unfilled, Mike Cooney mentioned that the persons currently employed as a
mechanic for the golf course had been appointed to a second position as assistant
superintendent - essentially holding a dual position as mechanic and assistant
superintendent. In response to questions regarding the ability to use amounts
associated with the assistant superintendent position while it was unfilled, City
Manager Dale Martin stated that unbudgeted expenditures of \$7,500 or more
required approval of the City Commission, while those under that amount
required Mr. Martin's approval. Mr. Martin also confirmed that the process for

preparing a budget to present to the City Commissioners is overseen by him in conjunction with discussions with various departments, including the golf course, and that at present plans are for no further subsidies from the City - that the golf course would need to be fully-funded from its operations. Mr. Martin also referenced that the recommendation of the Advisory Board that the Golf Course be managed by the City for another future year would be presented to the City Commissioners at its April meeting.

7. NEW BUSINESS.

7.1 City Manager Martin advised that no bids were received in response to the RFP for third-party management of Food and Beverage, effectively ending that process. Mr. Martin indicated that at this point in time he had no plans to put out any further RFPs on the matter.

7.2 Mike Cooney advised that the golf course received \$34,000 in rental (a 3% increase from the prior year), and close to \$25,000 from food and beverage, with respect to The Amelia Car Show (formerly Bonham's Car Show). A discussion followed as to the steps being taken to repair the 3rd Hole West.

7.3 Chairperson Murray stated that there was a vacancy on the Advisory Board due to Jayne Paige's resignation. Discussion followed as to candidates and confirming that individuals were residents of Fernandina Beach.

7.4 Lee Murray discussed forming an organization to provide financing for the golf course through a support organization. He has tentatively referred to the organization as "The Friends of the Fernandina Beach Golf Course." He referenced Friends of the Library and other similar organizations that could be a template. He will be following up on it.

8. MGA UPDATE. Chairperson Murray said the next tournament would be March 19. He mentioned some new members have joined and he wasn't aware of any leaving. He also mentioned that the MGA was now running the twice weekly Blitz.

9. WGA UPDATE. Member Simpson stated that the WGA was losing members, primarily due to the condition of the course over the last year and a half and due to cost. With respect to cost she referenced being able to play Amelia River on Monday's for the same cost, and some people joining Amelia River as members.

Members had also raised questions about the putting green. Blain Ellerbe indicated that until there were funds in the budget for eliminating contamination of the soil any actions, such as sprigs, would only be a temporary fix.

10. **MARKETING UPDATE.** Mike Cooney stated that the owner of the Golf Club of Fleming Island, Charles Raulerson, visited the Golf Course and discussed how he markets Toptracer at his facility. Mike also referenced steps to be taken regarding marketing the golf course and Toptracer to past customers through Golfnow. One suggestion made by Charles Raulerson that is used at his facility and at Blue Sky Golf is to increase the cost for selling range balls and charge less for using Toptracer. Mike indicated he would follow up with Toptracer to evaluate the differences in charging for range balls vs. Toptracer. Member Pelican observed that the key may be flexibility in all respects - charging, hours and marketing. Discussion followed on various marketing possibilities for Toptracer including loyalty cards, food trucks, happy hours and leagues. Member Pelican discussed having a ball machine to dispense balls without an attendant, similar to what is used at Fleming Island. In response to a question, Mike Cooney stated that the cost of such machines is approximately \$4,000 to \$10,000.

Member Rauschenberger referenced that Golfnow reviews of the course continued to be extremely negative and that there was no response from the golf course, which created the impression that the golf course didn't care and would be a negative for marketing the course on Golfnow. He suggested coming up with some standard response to such posts that would at least indicate that the golf course was aware of the issues and highlight steps being taken. Board Member Rauschenberger read some of the negative reviews.

11. **NON-AGENDA ITEM - FINANCIALS.** Mr. Cooney went over the financial statements. He highlighted a record number in February of rounds played, carts and greens fees. He noted that there were a couple of major equipment purchases in February that negatively affected overall expenses for the month/year to date. There was discussion as to the loss of range balls at the driving range and steps to mitigate it. Mr Cooney also referenced the possibility of renegotiating the Toptracer fee. High golf pro shop expenses were attributable in part to merchandise purchases that are expensed in stocking up the pro shop. Food and beverage expenses were unusually high due to purchases associated

with the car show and would be offset by revenue received in March. Member Pelican suggested membership drives at the midyear mark.

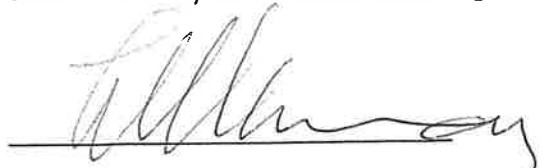
12. AGRONOMY UPDATE. Blain Ellerbe stated it had been a busy month for course maintenance, with all tees and fairways being aerified, compost material being applied, tree work on 1 and 9 South and the upcoming installation of sod on the tee boxes at 1 and 8 South. The focus for the rest of the year on tee boxes will be promoting growth until there is money in future budgets for more involved work such as rebuilding a number of tee complexes. A quote is also being solicited for the cost of root raking fairways and tee boxes to redirect tree roots that are adversely affecting grass growth without adversely affecting the trees' health. He referenced Tree Surgeons coming Friday to determine the schedule for major tree trimming. Member Murray suggested that Blain consult with Jacob Platt (city employee), as well as FB MGA member Ron Ferrell concerning the pictures they had taken of suggested tree trimming. Mr. Cooney discussed the possibility of having an adopt a hole or other program to encourage members to do basic maintenance (fixing ball marks and filling divots) during slow play. In response to a question from Member Rauschenberger, Blaine Ellerbe stated that golf course maintenance would be helped by being able to close a 9-hole course for a full week. He indicated that the current issue with doing so is trying to accommodate various groups playing the course regularly. Member Rauschenberger suggested that the Blitz follow the lead of the Women's Golf Association and be willing to play the North Course on a regular basis. Blain discussed the growing issues on 2 West fairway and stated that the fairway will need to be roped off once the growing season starts and sprigs are applied.

Lee Murray discussed a proposal to paint the monuments on each hole for \$75 per hole, which Blain Ellerbe indicated would be a good price.

13. NON-AGENDA ITEM - ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT: Mike Meadows was recognized and requested followup for the next meeting on the cost of a ball machine at the driving range.

14. ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:12am.

Submitted by Jim Rauschenberger, GCAB Secretary



Lee Murray, Chairperson



Jim Rauschenberger, Secretary

MINUTES

GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

City Hall Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER: 9:00 AM
2. ROLL CALL: Chairperson and FBMGA Member Lee Murray called the roll: Present: Member John Pelican; FBWGA Representative, Sue Simpson; Member Jim Rauschenberger; Member Lynn Sikorski; FBGC General Manager, Mike Cooney; and FBGC Superintendent, Blaine Ellerbe.
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Member John Pelican led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Member Simpson made a motion to approve the prior GCAB minutes and was seconded by Member Pelican. The motion was unanimously approved.
5. PUBLIC COMMENT: Lee Murray recognized a request to speak from James Dunphy, a non-resident of the City of Fernandina Beach and former employee of the golf course in food and beverage. Mr. Dunphy spoke to the overall poor condition of the restaurant and clubhouse facilities due to the age of the equipment and facilities. Mr. Dunphy brought pictures of the mold in the clubhouse.

Commissioner Ross spoke next. He highlighted that the lack of funding for capital improvements was due to a lack of funding commitments from City Commissioners in setting the budget for the City.
6. NEW BUSINESS: Lee Murray updated on the progress being made to paint the monuments on the golf course with funding provided by the Fernandina Beach Men's Golf Association.

A discussion followed as to creating a financial supporting organization for the golf course by concerned persons, tentatively referred to as the Friends of Fernandina Beach Golf Course. It was determined that the project should proceed

with interested persons without any further involvement of the Golf Advisory Board.

Member Rauschenberger discussed the recent Gulf Breeze court case. IN that case the City of Gulf Breeze turning over management of a city-owned golf course to a third-party without a lease of the facilities and lost its property tax exemption for the golf course due to the third party making profits from the operation of the golf course. He mentioned that the case highlights the difficulties of building in financial incentives for a third party manager to make capital expenditures.

7. MGA UPDATE: Lee Murray discussed the upcoming Club Championship.

8. WGA UPDATE: Member Simpson summarized ongoing matters/considerations for her members: 1) Complaints about food and beverage amenities and the general state of the clubhouse. Sue referenced in particular the need to replace the carpeting. 2) There is interest in an adopt-a-hole program for member involvement in working on holes. 3) Questions were raised as to drainage issues on the West course, including in particular 8 West. Blaine Ellerbe discussed the work done on the drainage ponds following the last major storm. 4) Sue mentioned continuing concerns about the status of tee boxes and fairways. Blain described the work that had been done previously to eliminate weeds and that fertilizer was being applied to fairways and tee boxes, with additional work about to commence on tee boxes and tree trimming. 5) A number of WGA members commented on having played the City of Sebring, Florida municipal golf course and suggested consulting with representatives of that course. 6) Lynn Sikorski referenced the red tee box on 8 North having humps that forced unfairly difficult tee shots due to tree growth. Blain Ellerbe referenced work being done both on that tee box and upcoming tree trimming to address the issue.

9. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT: Lee Murray recognized Fernandina Beach resident Mike Meadows. Mr. Meadows commented on possibly dredging the ponds for soil. He also complimented the volunteer work done by the MGA and WGA. Mr. Meadows expressed concerns about the forms being required by the City for volunteers to indemnify the City for any damage that might occur as a

result of their volunteer work. Discussion followed as to the possibility of creating a form geared to the volunteer work without making volunteers insure the City.

10. NON-AGENDA ITEM - FINANCIALS: Mike Cooney summarized the financials, noting that March is traditionally one of the best months for the golf course. TopTracer had its best month ever, making a profit for the first time. Mike stated that he was pleased with golf course revenue and would continue to monitor pricing on Golfnow for the upcoming summer months. Mike asked the Advisory Board to supply him with suggested capital improvement priorities for him to consider in putting together the upcoming budget. In response to questions about the poor quality of the golf balls at the driving range, Mike mentioned that 6,000 new yellow balls should be available soon, and that the lights are scheduled to be installed on April 27. Mike reported that as a result of City Commission action, the head professional golf position would become an independent contractor position similar to the tennis professional at the city tennis courts, sharing 20% of his lesson revenue with the golf club.

11. MARKETING UPDATE; Mike reported on the marketing efforts associated with Toptracer.

12. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT AND NON AGENDA ITEMS: Mike Meadows expressed concern about packets for meetings not being included on the City's website and the Golf Advisory Board not being asked for input before decisions are made by the City concerning the golf course. Mike Cooney reported that the cost would be \$8,200 for a ball machine at the driving range and that three bids had been received for new gas golf carts: Yamaha \$5050; Clubcar \$5400 and \$5695 for EZ Go. Mike has made his recommendation to the City Commissioners and is awaiting their action to submit the order. Delivery would take 6-9 months.

13. AGRONOMY UPDATE: Blain Ellerbere reported that all 27 holes had been aerified, tees and greens. Plugs had been applied to some greens and that the entire course was in the process of being fertilized. Blaine referenced that he would be verticutting fairways to harvest sprigs to put on particularly bad no-growth areas of the course and then rope off those areas to facilitate growth. Such efforts take a full growing season to bear results.

14. ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:26am.

Submitted by Jim Rauschenberger, GCAB Secretary

Lee Murray, Chairperson

Jim Rauschenberger, Secretary