AGENDA
GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2022
9:00 AM
CITY HALL COMISSION CHAMBERS
204 ASH STREET
FERNANDINA BEACH, FL 32034

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. BOARD BUSINESS

4.1 **CHAIRPERSON APPOINTMENT** - *GCAB members will appoint Chairperson due to the resignation of former Chairperson Lee Murray.*

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.1 June 8, 2022 Minutes

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

7. OLD BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.1 **FINANCIALS** - *General Manager Mike Cooney will provide an update.*

8.2 **NEXT YEAR'S GOLF RATES** - *This item is placed on the agenda at the request of Vice Chair John Pelican.*

8.3 **DISCUSSION - FILL GCAB VACANCY** - *This item is placed on the agenda at the request of Vice Chair John Pelican. Discuss filling the vacancy created by former Chairperson Lee Murray's resignation.*

9. MGA UPDATE

10. WGA UPDATE

11. MARKETING UPDATE

12. AGRONOMY UPDATE

13. 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: August 02, 2022

Submitted By: Caroline Best, City Clerk

COMMISSION ACTION:

MINUTES

GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

City Hall Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER: 9:00 AM

2. ROLL CALL: Chairperson and FBMGA Representative Member Lee Murray called the roll: Present: Member Lee Murray; Member John Pelican; FBWGA Representative Member, Sue Simpson; Member Lynn Sikorski; and Member Jim Rauschenberger; FBGC General Manager, Mike Cooney; and FBGC Superintendent, Blaine Ellerbe.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Member Pelican led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Member Pelican moved to approve the minutes of the May meeting and was seconded by Member Simpson. The minutes were unanimously approved.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT: Mayor Lednovich highlighted the importance of the Board advising on capital improvements and priorities for funding of the golf course. He suggested identifying the top three priorities for funding the golf course in the coming year. Commissioner Ross spoke next and referenced the City Commision voted to write off all the golf course debt of approximately $1.3 million. He also referenced the City no longer providing amounts from the general fund for golf course operations (which has been approximately $200,000 per year recently). This means that absent future changes, the golf course will need to be funded solely from golf course revenues. In response to questions from board members, Commissioner Ross described the use of amounts from the general fund, acknowledged it was reasonable for city equipment to be made available to the golf course, even if paid for in some manner by the golf course, to save higher amounts that would otherwise be paid to third parties, and acknowledged it would be unchartered territory if the golf course had bills due that exceeded its revenue come October 1. Chris Nickoloff, candidate for City Commission, Seat 4,

introduced himself and spoke. MIcheal Rudon highlighted the issues associated with maintaining the golf course with an extremely limited budget and complimented the condition of the course given its funding. Mr. Rudon spoke to the importance of having a written master plan for the golf course based on funding availability to guide planning for years to come.

6. OLD BUSINESS: Member Murray referenced an agenda item for the Recreation and Parks concept for changing the golf course being the proposal to add pickle ball courts to 1 North. General Manager Cooney stated that to his knowledge that proposal was on hold, no further action at present.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

7.1 Financials. General Manager Cooney reviewed the financials. Rounds played have been good given the heat. Toptracer has had profits for 3 months in a row. The lights for the range are still on hold. Manager Cooney is investigating dynamic pricing but holding firm for now and monitors the tee sheet 7 days out to see if adjustments need to be made.

7.2 Prioritized Capital Expenditures. General Manager Cooney and Superintendent Ellerbe discussed the items on the capital expenditures budget. After much discussion, the Board unanimously agreed that the first 5 items on the list were the most important as they related to maintenance of the golf course and should be the top priority:

1. Tree trimming and removal. Bid of $15,700 received
2. Sod putting green and tees boxes beginning with #1 and #8 South. Budgeted at $9000.
3. Primary Pump for Irrigation. Estimated at $15,000
4. VFD (variable frequency drive) for the Pumphouse. $8000 estimate.
5. Primer Pump for repair. $2,000 estimate.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT Mike Meadows raised the possibility of opening the bays on the driving range as soon as possible in the morning and cleaning up the approach to the golf course on Bill Melton and Via del Ray to highlight that people are approaching a golf course. Manager Cooney mentioned that people could hit balls without opening the covered area. Concerns were raised as to monitoring equipment if the covered area was opened.

7.3 New City Proposed Park at Golf Course. President Murray referenced a proposal from Common Sense concerning repurposing part of the golf course to a different recreational use. Jack Knocke of Common Sense had been invited to attend the meeting to describe the proposal but was not present. Chip Ross spoke on his own behalf and highlighted ongoing discussions to modify the golf course from a 27 hole course to an 18 hole course. He suggested the Advisory Board have a long-term master plan for the golf course to address such matters and concerns that are raised from time to time given the golf courses ongoing financial challenges. Discussion then followed as to the importance of a master plan being developed. Mayor Lednovich addressed the Board and said the golf course would remain 27 holes during his watch. He described the proposal for pickleball courts as being poorly presented. With respect to proposals to reduce the golf course to 18 holes he noted that closing 9 holes would not realize significant savings in maintenance costs and would have a negative effect on city residential property adjacent to the golf course.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT: Doug Pugh, Assistant Superintendent for the Golf Course described the efforts being made to more efficiently maintain the golf course with limited resources, including man hours devoted to various functions.

7.4 Update on Progress of Friends of the Fernandina Golf Course. Chairperson Murray provided an update on the embryonic activities of the charitable organization to provide an outside funding source.

7.5 Attendance at June 21 Meeting. John Pelican indicated he would attend the next CIty meeting.

7.6 Additional Item. Sue Simpson suggested the Advisory Board entertain a forum for the candidates running for council to hear what candidates have to say about the city golf course. Chip Ross said the more forums the better. Give questions to candidates ahead of time. Other suggestions. Mayor Lednovich also voiced his support for candidate forums/debate and made a few suggestions to limit response time and number of questions.

8. MGA UPDATE: Member Murray reported that the monuments on the course had been painted.

9. WGA UPDATE: Member Simpson reported that the womens' season was over so they had had no meetings. She had distributed to proposal from Common

Sense to the members and the response was overwhelmingly against it. She suggested more marketing for tourists and that rangers be considered for the course to monitor decorum and pace of play.

10. MARKETING UPDATE: Manager Cooney reported that Golfnow email blasts on Tuesdays and Thursdays, advertisements in Amelia Now and advertising racks a hotels continued to be used. He suggested having ambassadors promoting the course in the community. He is evaluating the fee structure and membership dues for the upcoming budget.

11. AGRONOMY UPDATE: Superintendent Ellerbe reported that green treatment had been accomplished in a single day and the greens were ready for play the next day. Soil samples had been collected and water quality was tested along with calibrating flow meters. They are ready for installation of sod on the putting green and the tee boxes on 1 and 8 South once they have the green light to purchase the sod. He is still short-staffed and actively pursuing employee hires. He was pleased with the results of the application of chemicals to treat crabgrass and goosegrass on the 1 and 9 South fairways that resulted in temporary discoloration of those fairways. It was suggested to puts out notices re such treatments so the resulting discoloration is not viewed as a maintenance issue by the uninformed.

In response to a question from Member Murray, Mayor Lednovich discussed coming to tour the course with Messrs. Cooney and Ellerbe He reiterated the importance of having a long-term plan for the golf course and highlighted the financial/funding struggles facing the City due to failure to fund needed capital improvements. Member Murray asked that notices at the clubhouse regarding “no tipping” be removed. In response it was noted that the impetus for the notices was the failure of city employees to report cash tips putting the City, as their employer, in awkward position. .

6. NEW BUSINESS:

6.1 *CIty Commission Regular Meetings Representation*. Member Murray suggested that a representative from the associations and/or advisory board appear at commission meetings to speak on behalf of golf course issues. Member Pelican volunteered to speak at the next commission meeting.

6.2 *Financials*. GM Cooney reported that it was another good month for FBGC. 3589 rounds in April with lots of walkers, though that did decrease cart revenue. Approximately 40% of golfers are city residents, the balance being nonresident locals and tourists. Top Tracer lost about $600 for the month. At present it is open 10am-7pm, a little later on Friday-Saturday evenings. GM Cooney has noticed relatively light activity in the mornings so is considering opening later - around noon - to save labor costs. Due to supply chain issues the installation of the lights has been pushed back to June. Food and Beverage had another good month with net profit of approximately $22,627, though that included the final payment from the car show. Year to date the overall FBGC/Top Tracer operation is running at a net profit of $135,000. GM Cooney stated that he is optimistic it can reach $150 to $200K by year end on September 30, 2020.

Membership costs, including the proposal to increase full memberships from $3,000 to $6,000, were discussed. GM Cooney indicated he has planned a membership drive but wanted to wait until the course conditions improved. He thinks the course has improved quite a bit and is close to being in condition for the membership drive to commence. Membership costs at Amelia River are presently at $5,000 and may be increasing to $10,000, with Amelia National at $10,000. Both courses have regular monthly dues as well.

7. AGRONOMY. Chairperson Murray moved Agronomy up on the agenda. Superintendent Ellerbee stated it had been a very busy month. Renovation of the putting green continued with sod coming next. He is looking to reduce foot traffic in the renovation area as people tend to congregate there. A fence of some sort is being considered. Mole cricket application has been completed. An aerification of the greens using “ninja” tines has been completed. They remove material without disrupting the putting greens as much as other techniques. While tees and fairways have already been aerated once, Blaine stated he would like to have second aeration in late July. The program Blain has the course on requires more water than the pump can produce at night, so he has been watering the course during the day as well.

As part of the budget process information has been obtained about amounts spent by other courses on maintenance. Amelia River has 88 acres and spends about $800K on labor and equipment/supplies. Amelia National has about 110 acres and spends $950-975K. Fernandina Beach Golf Course has 200 acres to maintain with approximately $400K.

It was noted that from early March to May 2020 the course was completely closed down due to COVID decisions made by the City, generating no revenue while maintenance costs continued to be incurred. And for an extended period after the course reopened mask mandates and one person to a golf cart restrictions also adversely affected revenue and increased expenses (more cart usage).

8. MGA UPDATE: Member Murray mentioned an upcoming tournament for the men's association. It was suggested that if golf course management determines that the West or South course needs to be closed to play on a Wednesday or Friday to improve course conditions, they need to do it and force the Blitz to play the North course more.

9. WGA: Member Simpson referenced the last general meeting occurred yesterday, with several positive comments acknowledging improvements in course conditions. The last regular game of the season will be next Tuesday.

10. MARKETING UPDATE: GM Cooney stated that weekly email blasts are sent by Golfnow regarding Top Tracer on Tuesdays and the golf course on Wednesday. He noted that approximately 4000 names are in that data base, primarily for NE Florida. He described the Top Tracer loyalty card and the Newsleader advertisements. A Thursday night league is starting for Top Tracer involving a two person best ball.

11. ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 11:11am.

Submitted by Jim Rauschenberger, GCAB Secretary

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Lee Murray, Chairperson

Jim Rauschenberger, Secretary