

**GOLF ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2015
MINUTES**

Members Present: Lonnie Yingst, Cam Cherry, Mark Johnson, Lori Muzzana, Kelly Gilligan

Staff Present: Joseph Petrella, Wade Altschwager, Keith Hollenback, Connie Caouette, Patty Rearden

Meeting called to order at 3:30pm.

Board motioned to approve the minutes from July 27th as written. Motion seconded and approved.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joe Petrella, Park and Recreation Director.

- Talked to the City Manager about plans for repayment of the golf courses debt. He did not want to commit to anything yet. Instead, he would like to have staff come up with a plan at the end of the year on repayment of the debt.
- “Tell Us About Your Experience” boxes will be out at the pro shops and other Park and Recreation facilities. Joe and the administrative assistant have the only keys.
- Hawks – we received permission to remove the hawk nests from wildlife services. We have had very few swooping complaints.
- We have started on goals for the golf courses and will be working on a five year business plan. Need a strategy on how we approach the courses. We will pull the Board in on the process after we have the initial draft completed.
- Connie will do an analysis of the pro shop -- wage structure, supervision, needs etc. Will look at options to create a position higher than cashier and look at different type of employees so that we have a supervisor on at all times.
- Stats – play has been up, and revenue is up through July. We are holding the line on expenses and are operating in the black.
- Maintenance will be working on a maintenance plan and will address the proper level of care for each course.

MANAGERS REPORT

Connie Cramer Caouette, Golf Pro

- The Chamber of Commerce would like to change their September 18 rental date at Anaconda Hills to September 25. Revenue will be \$2,000 (close to double usual revenue average for that day).
 - Eagle Falls is tied up with Cross Country Meet; the course has to be cleared by 1:00 p.m.
 - Board had some reservations but did not oppose it.
 - It was pointed out that we will have complaints and it is a disservice to patrons to have both courses unavailable.

- Director Petrella voiced that he doesn't support it; because we are a public course, revenue isn't the only consideration. We also need to provide good customer service to our patrons and visitors as well.
- All agreed that it should be an administrative decision.
- Joe also advised that UGF has approached him wanting free tee times and use of other facilities.
 - We need to develop a Memorandum of Understanding regarding use of the golf course for cross country and golf, softball fields, etc.
- Events:
 - 1st Week in August
 - State 2 man Best Ball
 - Prepaid group outing
 - Taco John's Junior tournament at Anaconda Hills
 - hosted Rec Center kids at Anaconda Hills
 - Downtown Chicks outing
 - Hi Ho Tournament at Eagle Falls.
 - 2nd Week in August
 - Shotguns for Anaconda Hills Mens' League
 - Double Shotgun for Eagle Falls WIGS
 - Home Builders Tournament
 - Mens' League Evening League Playoffs with tee times at both courses
 - Great Falls Public Schools program
 - 3rd Week in August
 - Anaconda Hills Aerification
 - final evening of Mens' League Playoffs
 - Great Falls Public Schools Invitational
 - Army Guard Group Outing at Anaconda Hills
 - Loenbro Tournament at Eagle Falls
 - MAFB Group Outing
 - Great Falls Public Schools program
 - 4th Week in August
 - Eagle Falls Aerification
 - last night of WIGS League
 - Sletten Construction Tournament
 - Great Falls Public Schools program

Had a bear today near #9 tee just on the other side of the fence. Fish, Wildlife and Parks sedated the bear and removed it

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Eagle Falls, Keith Hollenback

- Been busy with tournaments: State Two Man Best Ball, Hi Ho, and Loenbro were the past three weekends; all went well.
- Started aerating today.
- Keeping up with general maintenance.

- Edging bunkers and putting sand in bunkers as time allows.
- With Parks' help, working on gopher eradication. Will see in the spring what impact it had and will start the program right away again.
 - Board members commented that they think it made a difference.
- Will lose a couple of staff the end of the month, which makes the first couple of weeks of September a challenge.

Anaconda Hills, Wade Altschwager

- General maintenance.
- Several tournament rentals. Calumet held their tournament right after we aerated, but it still went very well. Connie commented that it was also a very good day for revenue as they spent a lot of money with us above their rental fee.
- Aerated Wednesday and Thursday of last week.
- Somebody hit the gate Thursday night.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Golf Fees, Joe Petrella

- The FY2016 budget predicated on a 6% increase on golf fees. We think we can balance the budget without the full increase. Staff's recommendation is (fees' sheet distributed):
 - 1) Increase Joint fees and Eagle Falls' fees by 6%. Eagle Falls hasn't reached the market breaking point and have the cheapest rates in the area compared to other courses. The increase will still put fees lower than Bill Roberts in Helena.
 - 2) Increase Cyber Cards by 6%. Staff will review the percentage of discount and giveaways included over the winter. Also need to look at who was golfing prior to the Cyber Card compared to who is golfing now.
 - 3) Eliminate the couples' passes. We don't want to be in the position to determine who is a couple, especially in light of the changing laws.
 - 4) Continue with current Junior fees at both courses. Believe they are at market rate and can't bear an increase; plus many juniors don't play a full 18 holes.
 - 5) Continue with current rates at Anaconda Hills. Anaconda Hills is at a good market rate. If we increase the fees, we will drive business away. The fees are between Hickory Swings' rates and Eagle Falls' rates. May help to get golfers back that have strayed to the private course.
- The 6% increases are consistent with what we've done in the past.
- We will analyze all fees after this year while developing the five year business plan.
- Lonnie feels the courses are well maintained with the crew that we have; they are doing a great job.
- Mark agreed with the exception of the cart paths, which have been discussed extensively. We haven't been in a position to invest in cart paths in recent years.
- Bunkers are another area that the golfers would like to see better maintained.

Need recommendation from the Board, before going to the Commission for approval. Need to be ready to sell passes and gift cards before the holidays.

Board motioned to support the golf fees as presented. Motion was seconded and approved.

Special Requests from Leagues/Events

Connie presented the following guidelines for tournaments, course rentals and leagues:

Tournament Guidelines for staggered starts and shotguns:

- \$100.00 nonrefundable fee at time of request, \$5.00 per person “reservation fee”
- Shotgun start block of times will be held only if the coordinator submits a list of first and last names with a minimum of 100 players and matching deposit no later than 3 days prior to the scheduled event. Minimum of 50 players for nine hole shotguns.
- The city can provide 35 carts (not enough for 100 players).
- We allow a maximum of 5 balls in play per group (other than grandfathered tourneys).
- Support of golf shop and concession is not required, but encouraged.

Tournament Rentals:

- Anaconda Hills only.
- One fee plus the \$5.00 per person reservation fee.
- Prompts some Anaconda Hills only pass holders to request privileges at Eagle Falls for the day, which is not permitted.
- Have been very smooth and lucrative.

League Shotgun and Modified Shotgun Guidelines:

- Minimum of 36 to qualify for a full shotgun for both Ladies Leagues and Thursday morning Seniors at Anaconda Hills; WIGS still required to have 50.
 - Have come to an agreement with Ladies Clubs that has been working well.
 - Wigs numbers have been between 42 and 46 last two months, and Thursday seniors between 28 and 37 with an average of 34.
 - Coordinators who don't have to pay deposits in advance tend to estimate high to meet shotgun requirements.
- Special requests take a toll on operations. They also make staffing a challenge. It is important to stay within the established guidelines to maximize tee times/revenue and provide for good customer service to patrons and visitors.
 - We need to revisit some of the special concessions provided to the leagues and develop a policy that will serve the courses better long term. Staff will need to develop recommendations and bring back to the Board for their input.

Related Information Provided/Discussed

- Joe advised that NGF (National Golf Foundation) recommends that tee times can be made 7 days in advance for tourists; most courses are 7 days.

- Another recommendation to be looked at is to charge advance fees; if you don't show up you still pay.
- Also fairly unique to our courses is that you can use a season pass to play in tournaments and leagues.
- These are just examples of little things that change the course dynamics and revenue. Private carts are another example which is fairly unique to Montana and Idaho. This would be a difficult issue to tackle.
- There was discussion on appropriate consequences for people and/or organizations that don't follow the established policies and guidelines.
 - Joe advised that there was a Disciplinary Board at one time composed of two Board members and two staff members. All agreed that the Board should be reestablished.
- Staff will be working on a Five Year Business Plan for the golf courses. Keith and Wade will be working on a Maintenance Plan. These plans should be a great guide to improving the financial aspects of the course, provide for an efficient operation and a standard for maintenance for each course.

Next meeting September 29th. Cam will be unable to attend; Lonnie will Chair the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.