



**GOLF ADVISORY BOARD  
SUMMARY  
July 23, 2020**



- Pete Aspinwall
- Kelly Casey (*excused*)
- Jack Gregg
- Riley Kurtz

- Art Pembroke (*excused*)
- Judy Reddy
- Susan Skinner-Bannon
- Tessa Bailly

**Ex-Officio Members**

- Larry Kurokawa, Golf Course Superintendent
- Conlan Burk, Head Golf Pro
- Erik Sundquist, Food and Beverage Manager
- Kristi Ponzoso, Director, Parks and Recreation
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

**League Members**

- 

**LOCATION:**    **Via Zoom**

Time: Jul 23, 2020 12:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/99579340304?pwd=SVl5RmtUajdOU0xNZkxUzEwU28xdz09>

Meeting ID: 995 7934 0304

Passcode: 794702

One tap mobile

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Meeting ID: 995 7934 0304

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aRUuNXXB>

***Mission Statement: The Bill Roberts Golf Course is committed to providing a high quality, friendly, and affordable public golfing experience for all ages and abilities within the greater Helena community!***

**Visitors: Ryan Schwochert – 5<sup>th</sup> District Representative from the Helena Citizen’s Council. He will be responsible to report back to the regularly scheduled HCC meetings.**

**\*\*Kristi reminded everyone attending the meeting via zoom that they will need to identify themselves before acceptance into the meeting\*\***

**1. Call to Order/Establish Quorum/Review Agenda**

- Pete called the July 2020 meeting to order 12:09 pm. A quorum was present.
- The Golf Board is scheduled to present Commissions Administrative Meeting on August 5, 2020. The commissioners are requesting updates from all city boards.

**2. Approval of Minutes:**

- Approval of February 2020 Minutes (was not reviewed/approved)

**3. New business**

Golf Financial Report

- Pete reviewed the most recent financial report and spoke with Conlan yesterday. In looking at the numbers, Pete doesn’t feel the numbers look too bad.
- Conlan stated this year has been uncharted territory. No one knew what this season would look like in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In July, we are actually ahead of rounds in comparison to last year. We are definitely keeping pace with last year’s numbers. Conlan is excited to be able to begin reintroducing programs.
- Kristi agreed with Conlan. With everything going on, we are doing the best we can. It seems that we have been successful. The staff is working hard to keep costs down. We have received \$250,000 of general funds contribution. This money will need to be paid back to the general fund. We are in discussion with the city commissioners on how we are going to get the golf fund balanced. At this point, we are doing everything we can to keep expenses down and are working on finding new revenue streams. Hiring Erik to manage the restaurant will assist with significant improvement at Muni’s Grille. We need to remember that this will take a while from a financial standpoint.
- Pete asked if the course is alone as far as spending through reserves. Kristi stated the parking fund was hit pretty heavily due to COVID. We didn’t charge for parking downtown during the heaviest time of COVID. The Civic Center was hit hard as well. They receive a general fund contribution every year of approximately \$350,000. We are hoping the CARES Act will provide help with lost revenue. There were several weeks where staff was performing job duties strictly related to COVID (i.e., cleaning/wiping down playground equipment, etc.). We may be able to recoup personnel time for COVID related activities. This is definitely an unprecedented time.
- Pete’s concern is that the city commission understand some of our unique challenges as we are an enterprise fund. The conversation of privatization of the course concerns Pete. He may mention these concerns at the August 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Sue then asked if privatization is off the table? Kristi stated it is something we are considering. She believes that the HCC (Helena Citizen’s Council) recommended this to the commission as something to look at for the golf course.

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- HCC Representative Ryan Schwochert stated he joined HCC in February. The board met officially last evening. Ryan can review the notes from previous meetings and share that discussion with Jennifer to forward this information he does recall that this was discussed at one of the meetings.
- Kristi stated she understood that HCC recommended the potential of looking at a private company to manage the golf course and what that might look like. Kristi is in contact with other parks directors who have private companies managing their golf courses (Great Falls is one of those courses). Wyoming is doing so as well. From a financial standpoint, we may need to look very carefully at this option.
- Pete then asked that if any discussion is started in this direction, that the advisory board is included in the conversation. They want to be kept aware of what this could mean for the course.

### COVID Update

- Pete - What do we need to be doing in light of the COVID pandemic? Kristi stated it is a very challenging situation. She knows that Larry, Conlan and Erik are doing everything they can to keep the community safe. There was a tournament this weekend and Larry, Conlan and Erik spent an inordinate amount of time getting precautions in place. They had to get approval from the Lewis and Clark County Health Department which is quite a process. They implemented all the procedures and precautions that had to be in place for this event.
- Conlan – the biggest thing with the COVID pandemic at the course is how it will affect tournament play gatherings. On a day-to-day basis, we have incurred a little extra expense in man hours and supplies, but has not affected the course as a whole in its normal operations. There is a lot of preparation on the “big money days” (tournaments) in working through and with public health to ensure that we keep our visitors safe and healthy. We have tournaments scheduled that include teams from Great Falls and Kalispell that have cancelled out. As far as the mask mandate, there has not been many issues wearing them indoors. However, as we look into simulator season, we will need to get creative as far as limiting the number of groups at a given time and space in between groups so we can properly sanitize, etc. One of the things being discussed in an effort to avoid problems is to have two shorter simulator seasons as opposed to one big one (i.e., a 6-week session that will start earlier in the fall and end before Christmas and the second simulator session that would begin at a later time). This would give staff the necessary break in sessions to sanitize and prepare for the next one.
- Pete stated he thinks this is a good idea. The simulator is one activity that can be done in the winter where users can easily wear masks.
- Conlan stated that fall sports (collegiate and high school) are undecided at this time. Whatever happens with that will affect golf operations during the year. We don't know if we will have cross country or the high school golf tournaments this year.
- Erik was asked about challenges in the restaurant. The restaurant is always busy.
- Erik stated that we have seen the effects of COVID. Being closed the month of April had significant negative impact. May was slow as well; however, we have seen significant increase in visitors in June. Patrons are receptive to using the masks. We added shield

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protection on the bar as a reminder that COVID has not gone away. Our greatest challenge seems to be social distancing. We are having to remind folks that they must social distance.

- Revenue has been down somewhat for the restaurant this year as we had many more golf tournaments last year. Erik is getting great feedback on changes made to the menu and in the restaurant. In speaking of fall sports, we now have a partnership with Carroll and are discussing the potential of tailgating for the games (i.e., streaming games, having a special on the simulators, etc.). We have a new game room that includes shuffleboard and a Pacman table. We are constantly looking at new revenue streams and ways we can increase revenue.
- Pete mentioned that with the weather getting warm, what is the possibility of getting water at the turn. Conlan – self-serve is the problem this year. We can't allow this due to COVID.
- Larry stated that water access for the public is problem. He reminded members that we do have a water dispenser in the hall way as you come into the building. Players can bring in their own bottles and fill them. Anytime a golfer goes by the concessions stand, they have an opportunity to purchase water. Pete stated that he wants golfers to have ways to get access to water without slowing down play.
- Larry also added that people can call into the clubhouse ahead of time to place an order for beverages. We are unable to offer any type of self service. That eliminates the potential to put out coolers on the course.
- Ryan stated he has notice beverage carts are not out on the course. Is this due to staff or is this something we can change? The beverage cart is out on the course from 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm every Saturday. This didn't start until the beginning of June. We are running the beverage cart more than we have in the past.

#### Future Meetings

- The commission has set up a rotating meeting schedule where they are asking boards to report at the Administrative Meetings. They are asking for general information (such as projects we are working on, etc.). This is being done in an effort for the commission to have more contact with the boards.
- We also need to discuss facilitation of our board meetings (do we continue to use Zoom), note taking, etc. We also need to look at meeting every other month or on a quarterly basis. The amount of time it takes to prepare for these meetings is significant and we need to be cognizant of that.
- Kristi also sent out three different financial reports to this board and would like the members opinion on what they would like to see.
- Pete stated that he likes the format of these better than what we have had in the past. Sue stated it would be helpful to have these available more in advance. She agreed that these are much more simplified.
- Riley added the comparison from the previous year is really helpful.
- Sue asked Conlan if he could provide a report on how many rounds per day, per week, etc. have been completed. She felt this was interesting information.
- Conlan doesn't have a document, but does have the numbers. They are as follows:

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- 🚩 May 2019 we completed 5,338 rounds – May 2020 we completed 5,157 rounds
- 🚩 June 2019 we completed 6,589 rounds – June 2020 we completed 6,358 rounds
- 🚩 Month to day through July: 2019 we averaged 226 players per day and in July 2020 we averaged 253 players per day.
- These numbers are very encouraging!

- **Old Business**

- **Reports**

- Parks and Recreation Director's Report

- None.

- Golf Superintendent Report

- Larry stated the maintenance staff is staying safe and healthy in light of COVID. They are lucky as they can stay away from crowds and spend most of the day outdoors. Larry has staggered start time for crew. He requires his staff to wear their masks indoors and are allowed to remove when on the equipment. His concern is the requirements should an employee contract COVID.
- We got new three-phase pouring project done by Northwest Energy.
- We have purchased the beverage cart Muni's. The total cost was \$21,400
- Larry has planted two new memorial trees for the following families:
  - 🚩 Harold Wilcox – planted an Elm Tree between 6 and 7 fairway
  - 🚩 Van Jamison – planted a Helena Maple Tree on the dog-lake #7
- Larry is finding it difficult hiring employees for filling summer positions at this time. He interviewed six people and they all turned it down for various reasons. They can make more money on unemployment. With that said, his staff has been really busy.
- Per Pete and Jack - Despite being shorthanded, the course conditions are beautiful!!

- Golf Professional Report

- None.

- Men's League Report

- None.

- Ladies League Report

- Judy asked that Sue mention the fact that the new commercial on television does not mention the fact that Muni's is located at Bill Roberts Golf Course.
- Erik stated the biggest reason for this is that people have stated they didn't think they could come into Muni's because of a "country club" feel. Erik wants to get the word out that **anyone** can eat at Muni's. He wants people to understand that Muni's is a restaurant for all. Erik is looking at signage for the street as well.
- Pete state he will mention to Jim Pellegrini (President of the Helena Softball Association) to pass along to all the teams that play at Batch fields that BRGC is not a private club!
- Ryan added that he will encourage his fellow softball players to head over to Muni's.

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- **Public comment**
  - None.
- **Next meeting date**
  - September 15, 2020
- **Future agenda items**
- **Adjournment**

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