



City of Helena

## GOLF ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY February 9, 2016



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|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pete Aspinwall        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Christopher DeVerniero |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dave Bauer            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arthur Pembroke        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kelly Casey           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lynn Staley            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Andy Cottrell ( <i>excused</i> ) |  |

### Ex-Officio Members

- Larry Kurokawa, Golf Course Superintendent
- Scott Longenecker, Head Golf Pro
- Amy Teegarden, Parks and Recreation Director
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

**LOCATION: City-County Building, Room 326**

### 1. Call to order/establish quorum/review agenda

### 2. Approval of minutes: January 12, 2016

- With no corrections, Lynn moved to approve the January 12, 2016 minutes as presented. Kelly seconded. Motion carried.

### 3. Old business

#### Review Draft RFP and Develop Scope of Services

- Pete asked committee members if everyone had a chance to review the RFP. All stated yes so he asked members to go around the table for comments.
- Regarding additional items or deliverables to include, Chris stated that he made his suggestions in red on the Request for Proposal. He thought the scope of services is a good start – to the point – doesn't need to be any more than this.
- Amy was looking for feedback on purpose and scope of services. She felt there was a little bit of disconnect. She was asking committee members look though the RFI's for specific deliverables and services that the consultant provides that we would want to make certain are included in our scope of services. However, Amy added that what we have presented are good notes to keep and we can use this when we evaluate them on their RFP.
- Lynn didn't have anything else to add. Amy put together some great ideas.
- Kelly suggested we include guarantee that the business selected will need to present to City Commission. Amy stated this is often times a requirement. Always part of the scope of services; however, this could be something we may want to include. We could call it "Presentation of Recommendations" and Amy added she believes the presentation should be given to both the Golf Advisory Board and City Commission.

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- Pete, Scott and Dave all said they think the RFP looks good as presented.
- Larry – are we looking for any specifics or just general information?
  - Pete – justification to move forward with improving the facility at Bill Roberts (i.e., shop expansion). Part of what this consultant will do is look to the board and Scott for guidance.
  - Pete added that he would really like a third party consultant to look at our administration fee and see if we are in line with services provided. He has had conversations with a number of public sector executives who have talked about personnel costs (how much that is) vs. our administration fee. They have told Pete that ours is high and way out of line. That is why it is so important to bring in an impartial third party. This is a hindrance and the reason it is so important for us to review this is because this golf course is supported by the golfers. It is not supported by taxpayers. With an administration fee that is out of line, it amounts to a surcharge on the golfers.
  - Dave agreed and added that we did look at fees from other golf courses, and we were the highest. Pete – this would be a nice thing to verify.
  - Amy reminded committee members that we did reduce this amount by \$16,000 this year.
- As Amy reviewed this document, she made a few more notes / deliverables.
  - Business Plan and Feasibility Study for expanding pro-shop services and year-round clubhouse.
  - Financial plan / strategy to reposition the golf course to year-round services and destination food and beverage services.
  - Pete – if we look at our options in front of us to expand the course and facilities, we are handcuffed. Our clubhouse is a wreck. We have an ADA audit that we can't pass.
  - Lynn – can we combine these?
  - Amy said the deliverable is the Business Plan/Feasibility Study and added that the other thing we might ask for is a prioritized schedule of recommendations (i.e., Basic Oversight and Structure, Physical Improvements and Operations).
- Art – his understanding when we originally discussed bringing in a consultant was that we would do an assessment to determine what we are doing that is good, and what is bad and how can we improve it.
  - Kelly – we were using this to figure out how to get to the end game of the clubhouse. We are asking the consultant to tell us how to get there.
  - Per Pete – through all the discussions we have had, operationally, the course is running really well and it continues to get better. What we are asking is what is holding us back? How do we get more money? We need to increase our revenue window. Rather than simply relying on the seasonal benefits, can we, through a better facility, an additional simulator, sales of beer, meals, etc., increase our revenue? What are the other areas we need to pursue?
- Per Amy – the consultant would also look at our particular market. Amy added that in the first paragraph of the RFP, it states, “Our intent is to take the information from the consultant evaluation and recommendations to construct a business case to expand (or not to) the facilities at Bill Roberts Golf Course”.

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- Art thought this was more of a step-back approach. Maybe look at the overall operations.
- Amy – we addressed these questions. Pete added that the facility is just the catch-all. Facilities include the pro-shop, the driving range, course, buildings, etc.
- Chris – do we want to limit scope or do we want it all encompassing? Chris doesn't believe facilities do capture everything. He suggested we add "facilities **and services**". Amy will add that into the request for proposal, first paragraph, after "business case to expand (or not to) the **facilities and services** at BRGC".
- Amy – where we have seen growth is in merchandise, the simulator and food sales. If we want to increase growth, we need to know what the areas we need to improve are. We already know what we are doing well. Because we knew this would be expensive, we decided to focus on expansion (or not expanding) and year round services.
- Dave doesn't want to see our work, efforts, and progress, (which has all been great), discounted. We don't want to spend a lot of money for something that is already in place. Mayor Smith had mentioned the golf course and expansion in the State of the City address.
- Amy – he showed pictures of the simulators and stated we may be adding more simulators as well as a year around restaurant. What we are missing is justification to do a business plan.
- Pete – we want the Business Plan and Feasibility Study for expanding pro-shop services and year-round clubhouse.
- Amy – they will have to look over the overall state of the golf course.
- Strategic vision for where golf course is going to go, why not have them take a holistic approach.
- Pete – at this time, we can't keep the clubhouse open year round. We don't have a big enough kitchen to offer year round food service. It limits us to what we can offer. And it is not ADA compliant.
- Chris – he gave three very targeted deliverables:
  1. Pricing strategy
  2. Revenue requirements for any capital improvements
  3. Alternatives / Innovations
- Don't narrow ourselves too much.
- Amy stated she will rework the RFP so that it is not just about expanding the pro-shop but she added that she doesn't want to spend the money to not get what we want.
- Pete agreed with Amy and added that in the end, we will be asking for a significant amount of money to make these enhancements, and we want the Commission behind us. Amy added that we will have a plan to show what our projected pay back is.
- Chris – do we have an idea of the cost of any of the bids? Per Pete – one consultant quoted a maximum bid of \$11K.
- Pete – do you think we should tell them what the cap should be (\$10K – 15K)?
- Amy stated we need to have a business plan in order to justify the expansion.
- Pete – this is a discussion we have been having for years – where else do we go to increase revenue? Simulator – success beyond what we thought it would be. We are capped at 40 teams with a waiting list. But we don't have any place to put an additional simulator. We also know that our kitchen is small, we can't heat the building year round,

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and most importantly, we are not ADA compliant. We also know that if we get rid of the building, we can expand the driving range. We are not without our own plans. We need an outside consultant to come in and confirm to us what we already know so we can build a case to the City Commission to expand.

- Scott – simulator is going great; however, we don't make money at \$27 an hour on the simulator. We make money with every person drinking beer and eating food. Right now, at \$27 an hour, it sounds great but we aren't making a lot of money. We need a facility where we can make money all year long. Pete – we are missing 8 months of revenue on the simulator.
- Dave – this is why it is so important to have the consultant come in and help. We need to have support from a third party.
- Amy – also thinks financial strategy is so important when setting our goals. They are experts at this.
- Pete – this is why it is so important to have the business plan.
- Kelly agreed and added how beneficial it would be to BRGC to have the pro-shop opened and stocked year round as well as having banquet rentals, video gaming, etc. These will all generate revenue.
- Amy – banquet facilities are a huge commodity in this area.
- Amy – let's go out with this now and if we can afford it, we will pay cash this year for it. If not, Larry has identified some of this as a capital expense for next year.
- Lynn also added that when we figure which consultant to hire, we can renegotiate.
- Amy will revise the RFP and send out.

**ACTION ITEM: Amy will revise the RFP based on the committee discussion and send out for consultant proposal.**

#### **4. New business**

##### 30-Round Punch Card Discussion

- Scott – after conversation with some of the golfers regarding the 30-round punch cards (particularly this issue of transfer), Scott feels it is a good decision to eliminate the 30-round punch card purchases. 95% of the issues discussed were regarding the fact that the 30-round punch card expires before the golfer has an opportunity to use them. We've had people not only discuss this issue directly with Scott, but some have even attended the GAB meetings to express their frustration. We already offer 10-round punch cards as well as season passes which are more likely to be used before a season ends.
- For administration purposes as well as customer satisfaction, Scott feels we should get rid of the 30-round punch cards. Start the customers at 10-round punch cards.
- Pete agreed that this is a good plan.
- Dave – because the pricing structure has already been approved, maybe we should do away with the 30-round punch cards next year.
- Lynn – what is the cost of the 30-round punch cards? Per Scott \$415. So if the golfer purchased three 10-round punch cards, it would cost them \$465.

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- How many do you sell? About 100. Scott added that again, many of the punches don't get used, and all that does is harbors bad feelings.
- Amy – and just because we have a resolution for approved fees out there, does not mean that we have to sell 30-round punch cards.
- Amy – Scott's other idea for next year is to make a proposal that 30-round punch cards are not as discounted as the 10-round punch cards and could be transferred. He added that for next year he would like to change the 10-round punch cards to where you purchase 9 rounds of golf and get the 10<sup>th</sup> round free but it would never expire. We will more money in 4 years if we don't offer the deep-discount right off the bat.
- Pete – think about return visitors to Helena. Great deal!
- Amy we wouldn't be able to implement this until we go before the City Commission.
- We can't afford to not have golfers come back based on a policy per Scott. Lynn added that when they leave they will tell someone else.
- Larry – outside of league players, who purchases the 30-round punch cards? Scott – some league, some couples.
- Art likes 30-round punch cards. What about the employees that signs up for payroll deduction to pay for the 30-round punch cards? Scott will visit with them. It is unnecessary in our fee structure. They are restricted passes.
- Lynn – would it be for this year? Scott – yes.
- When will this take place? Amy – this discussion is just to inform committee members that this decision has been made.
- As a board member, Art stated he is extremely displeased this decision was made without discussing this with the board first.

#### ADA Audit Discussion – Scott

- As time did not allow, we will move this item to the next meeting.

**ACTION ITEM: Jennifer will add the ADA Audit Discussion to the next agenda.**

#### **5. Reports**

- Parks and Recreation Director's Report
  - None
- Golf Superintendent Report
  - Last week we had skiers at the course; this week we are pushing water. Last year we opened February 10<sup>th</sup> – it really just depends on what the weather does over the next few days/weeks.
  - Larry has been working on new signage for the course and presented the new signs to the board members. They changed the trim color, got the new logo on all the signs, and decided to change the tees and flags from blue to black.
  - Pete – years ago, a group of golfers borrowed a laser transit from the department of highways and shot all the sprinkler heads on the course. There are still many that have the markings on them. Maybe this would be a good project for men's league. Men's league was approached in 2013-2014 or 2014-2015 and the project never got

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off ground. Everyone has GPS or apps on their phones now that can detect the same thing.

- Larry also stated he has purchased nine new flag poles with prisms in them, so hopefully the hand-held devices will pick these up a little better.
  - Larry then recommended that we sell the old signs as souvenirs at the pro-shop. Art suggested perhaps doing a silent auction for a couple weeks.
  - Amy mentioned she has been working with a gentleman with fast signs and he does a lot of video through drones. She asked if the board would be interested in creating some video of the golf course. The board thought this is a good idea. When asked about cost, Amy suggested you go to YouTube – Queen City Helena video and it shows video of the drones going through the cathedral.
- Golf Professional Report
    - Merchandise sales were up in January (\$5,000). Merchandise credits that were used. Most got used. Made every effort to contact all customers.
    - Golf simulator use is up 24%.
    - Winter league playoffs started this week.
    - Times open up to public
    - Club fitting
    - Up thru mid-march
    - If we get good weather early need to come down
    - Jorge resigned – Scott announced he is going to culinary school in Vancouver, WA. We have already received some great applications.
  - Men's League Report
    - Someone mentioned they heard we are going to be building a new clubhouse.
    - Someone mentioned they hear we are going to be building clubhouse
    - He made a very good point – you must have it all in line before you start talking to the public because there are many people in the community that would say they want to label the clubhouse as a “historical building”. Just reminded the committee to be cognoscente about this.
    - We should mention the decision on the 30-round punch card to men's and women's leagues – that they are no longer being offered.
    - Amy added that anyone of the board members can go to the leagues to discuss what we are doing with the consultant. It is her hope that whoever is selected will want to meet with the leagues as well.
    - Dave reviewed NGF's website and stated it is very impressive. As members of NGF, Amy also gets their monthly newsletters.
  - Ladies League Report
    - No league information to report; however, Lynn stated again how beautiful our new entrance sign is.

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**6. Public Comment**

- None.

**7. Next Meeting Date: March 8, 2016**

**8. Future Agenda Items**

- ADA Audit Discussion

**9. Adjournment**

- With no further business, the City of Helena Golf Advisory Board adjourned at 1:08 pm.

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