

**Golf Commission Meeting
August 24, 2020
Minutes**

Members Present: Don Espach (Chairman) Richard DeLibro; Tom Cerulli; Angelo Cordone; Shelly Dowling; Joe Gaudiano; Frank Squicciarro; Diane Wheeler

Also Attending: Bobby Brown, Director of Golf; Doug Snyder, Director of Golf Course Properties

Members Absent: None

Mr. Espach called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Review and Approval of Prior Minutes:

Review and approval of the Minutes of July 27, 2020 . . . A Motion was made by Mrs. Wheeler, seconded by Mr. DeLibro to approve the minutes with the following change on Page 5, second motion down “Motion carried 7 – 0 (Abstain: Squicciarro)”. Motion carried unanimously.

Audience Participation:

- None

Director of Golf Course Properties (Doug Snyder):

- The 2020 golf season has been unique. From an early start to the season, a Covid shutdown, a very rainy spring, a very hot and humid summer, a June drought, and finally a tropical storm with torrential rain, the season has provided many challenges. The conditions and increased number of rounds resulted in ever changing grounds requirements and proved ideal conditions for disease and weed growth. All were and are being addressed appropriately.
- All Knolls greens, tees, fairways, roughs, bunkers and ponds have continued to be maintained and treated to according to prevalent conditions.
- The Glen experienced its own set of challenging conditions. In addition to the weather and Covid affects, the record-breaking rounds on the Glen resulted in wear and tear on the course, as it was not built for the high volume of play it is receiving.
- The physical damage to the course from the tropical storm was minimal with only three trees coming down but lots of limb damage.
- The spring Covid closure gave the crew the opportunity to aggressively aerate the course with no interruption to golfers. This will allow us to use less invasive aeration methods this fall.
- The Green Committee has begun documenting projects for the winter.
- Staffing has been a problem with the Town-wide hiring freeze. However, we have just been allowed to post for additional maintenance employees and expect to have them on-board in 2 – 3 weeks.
- Due to the staffing shortage, garden maintenance was a low priority. However, with increased staffing, the areas will be addressed.
- Several of the maple trees and a few other varieties have leaf burn/salt damage from the tropical storm and dropped some leaves very early. This has resulted in earlier than normal leaf blowing.

- The Golf Course received two OSHA violations stemming from an employee complaint to OSHA on an early spring incident with a wood chipping machine malfunction. One violation was related to a PPE Hazard Assessment and the other to a Lockout Program. The initial fine totaled \$1,320. Mr. Snyder and Mr. Espach subsequently held an informal conference with OSHA and were able to have the fine reduced to \$660. The 50% reduction in the fine was the lowest possible reduction permitted in an informal conference. Further reduction, or elimination of a violation, could only be achieved through a formal contest. While we feel we could prevail in a formal contest, particularly with regard to the PPE Hazard Assessment, it was agreed that the time and expense involved prohibited us from pursuing the matter further. The PPE Hazard Assessment has already been abated. Mr. Snyder will work to formalize a lockout program (see next bullet). A check request for the fines will be submitted to the Town immediately with a note that it must be paid within 30 days to avoid further fines.
- Mr. Snyder has also scheduled OSHA Consultation Service to come in and inspect the maintenance shop to review our “Lockout/Tagout” situation. Lockout/Tagout refers to specific practices and procedures to safeguard employees from the unexpected energization or startup of machine and equipment, or the release of hazardous energy during service or maintenance activities. During this consultation, OSHA will recommend changes to bring us into full compliance but cannot fine us unless they come back later and we have not implemented the changes.
- Mr. Snyder reminded the Commission of his request for an additional \$6,000 per year to implement a plan to improve the lack of soil and infiltration conditions on #9 Glen Fairway.

Green Committee (Frank Squicciarro):

- The Audubon process is progressing in a limited capacity due to staffing shortages but we continue to work on the necessary documentation. We are also working with the Town on various best environmental management practices. The golf course has proved to be instrumental in the Town working to obtain Sustainable CT Certification. We are also on the statewide Pollinator Pathway list and have been receiving positive comments in the Town’s Conservation Commission meetings.
- The excess wood at the maintenance barn must still be addressed.
- The stonewall clearing project on #14 remains on hold due to staffing shortages.
- Emergency access points for the golf course are relatively clear and only need minor repairs.
- The Green Committee is also working on its FY 2021 budget recommendations in addition to its winter work list.
- After the August Green meeting, Mrs. Dowling was given a complete tour of both courses and the maintenance facility

Director of Golf Operations (Bobby Brown):

- The rounds and revenue remain strong for August despite the effects of the tropical storm. Due to the loss of power for four days, the phones and tee time reservation system were down and the course was walking only for two full days.
- ID passes for the 2020 season are almost identical: 1,695 vs. 1,727 for 2019. The revenue is up in the category due to an increased number of Junior Play Passes.

- The ATK and Tashua Knolls staff did a great job during the power failure. The pro shop was immediately set up under the porch and a generator was hooked up to allow us to perform limited functions. All monies were reconciled and accounted for perfectly. Mr. Espach thanked the entire staff for their hard work and dedication the entire week.
- Tee times continue to be sold out daily on the Knolls and in the prime times on the Glen. The Glen aeration during the Week of August 17th caused some slowdown and the \$22 special was implemented during the weekdays.
- The advanced 10-day reservation system remains strong with each call in lasting about 6 – 8 minutes. The Commission will monitor the play on the course and decide how long to continue the advanced reservation system for the year at its September meeting.
- The August 16th Men's Club Member/Member was one of the strongest ever and was the first shotgun held this season.
- The Men's Club Member/Guest has been reduced to one day on September 13th.
- HBRA and Trumbull Rotary are still planning to hold their October tournaments.
- ATK has purchased a new range cart and new limited flight range balls to maintain high service levels for customers.

House Committee (Dick DeLibro):

- A flush valve in the men's room and two faucets in the woman's room were not working properly. Domenick repaired both.
- Mondo Septic was called out and performed pumping on the systems at the cart barn, on-course bathrooms, and maintenance barn. It did take two trips to locate the access at the maintenance barn, which was "hiding in plain sight". The Town's Health Department was contacted to see if they have the original plans for the septic system at the maintenance barn, but they were not located.
- The septic tanks at the clubhouse have not been pumped all year.
- Domenick performed routine A/C maintenance on August 14th.

Concessionaire (Domenick Faustini):

- None

Finance (Joe Gaudiano):

- A preliminary update of FY 2020 was given. Estimated income is \$1,871,053. Estimated expenses are \$1,811,075. Estimated earnings are \$59,977. However, there are still outstanding invoices at Town Hall to be processed. The exact year-end numbers will not be known until the Town's annual audit is complete - usually in December.
- July numbers were up in all categories compared to the 5-year average. This includes total income up by \$47,263. Cart usage up by 357. Knolls Rounds up by 513 and Glen Rounds up by 1,352.
- August income is down by approximately \$23,320 as of August 15th. Knolls Rounds are down by 673 and Glen Rounds are up by 193. These shortfalls are attributed to the effects of the tropical storm.
- The 2020 golf season income affect from Covid is down by \$83,866 to date.
- The Town's Board of Finance approved the raise for the Director of Golf Course Properties.
- Mr. Gaudiano noted that the problem of past due invoices on the Town's end continues. He has brought the matter to the attention of the Town. Mr. Squicciarro asked if we are incurring any

past due charges. Mrs. Plumeau responded that we are on some invoices – particularly past due utility invoices.

- It was learned that the maintenance staff overtime salaries of \$12,579 due to their essential status during the Covid shutdown would not be covered by FEMA. However due to savings in other salary accounts, the total salary accounts finished the fiscal year at \$37,618 lower than budgeted.
- Mr. Gaudio met with Mr. Faustini to discuss opening up the restaurant for larger events as recommended by the state. He is allowed to hold events of 100 people outside and 25 people inside which includes his staff. Mr. Faustini is concerned about the possibility of the Town closing the clubhouse if customers don't comply with Covid requirements. Mr. Gaudio is asking for guidance from the Town.
- Individual Committee Chairman were asked to create a list of any items they would like to see added to the 2022 FY budget by the September meeting. Particularly important are any capital items or larger items that would have an impact on the budget.

Correspondence:

- Mr. Squicciarro received an email and photos from Mrs. Julie Jenkins, President Ladies 18-holers) requesting that the various gardens on the course and around the clubhouse be cleaned up and brought back to the condition they were in previous years. Mr. Squicciarro responded that the gardens became a lower priority due to staffing issues. However, the recent lift of the hiring freeze will allow us to concentrate on improving the conditions of the gardens.

Old Business:

- **Golf Cart Bid** (Joe Gaudio): Mr. Gaudio met with Mr. Brown to discuss any changes necessary for the golf cart bid. It is recommended that the bid go out with both Lithium and Lead Acid battery stipulations. Mr. Espach stressed that it is important that we try to have the lease term match the battery warranty. In addition, GPS options should be included in the bids. The bid will go out as soon as possible.
- **Advanced Tee Time Reservation Policy Update** (Tom Cerulli): Mr. Cerulli, Mrs. Dowling and Mr. Espach met to go over the material gathered from other golf course tee time reservation policies. This information will be compiled in a matrix. They also identified five software vendors who will make presentations. Mr. Squicciarro asked what other area courses still utilize an in-person "racking" process. Mr. Cerulli responded that the closest system to ours is Ridgefield, which uses an in-person lottery. It was also mentioned that Fairchild Wheeler might still utilize a racking process.

New Business:

- Mr. Gaudio advised the Commission that it should be aware of the fact that an excess number of Commissioners at any particular Committee meeting has the potential to constitute an illegal meeting. He stated that as a matter of course, notes should be taken including date, time, attendees and a summary of the meeting. He stated that this is done for Green and House Committee meetings. Mr. Espach will look into the matter.

Executive Session:

Mr. Espach made a motion seconded by Mrs. Wheeler at 8:32 PM to move into Executive Session to discuss contractual matters. Mr. Brown was asked to attend the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Brown left the Executive Session at 8:45 PM.

A motion to exit Executive Session was made by Mr. DeLibro at 9:17 PM and seconded by Mr. Cerulli. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Mr. Squicciarro at 9:18 PM; seconded by Mrs. Dowling to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine A. Plumeau
Golf Course Commission Clerk