

**Golf Commission Meeting  
September 28, 2020  
Minutes**

**Members Present:** Don Espach (Chairman) Richard DeLibro; Tom Cerulli; Angelo Cordone; Shelly Dowling; Joe Gaudiano (arrived 7:15 PM) ; 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 7:00 PM.

**Review and Approval of Prior Minutes:**

Review and approval of the Minutes of August 24, 2020 . . . A Motion was made by Mrs. Wheeler, seconded by Mr. Cerulli to approve the minutes as is. Motion carried unanimously.
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**Audience Participation:**

- None

**Director of Golf Course Properties (Doug Snyder):**

- The Knolls course continues to be in great shape. Aggressive aeration in the spring has reduced the need for disruptive fall aeration. The tees are in great health with the exception of some divots. The right side of #13 tee is closed for a leveling project. The front nine approaches have been aerated and seeded, the back nine will follow. The native roughs will be mowed and weeded for the fall. The bunkers will have some excess sand buildup blown back in. The ponds continue to be treated without chemicals.
- The Audubon work continues with Tashua working with the Town’s Conservation Commission on attaining Sustainable CT Bronze and Silver level certification. We have purchased several native pollinator plant packages at a discount from the Aspetuck Land Trust which will be planted around the clubhouse area. We do not use synthetic pesticides in any flowerbed and use a “Nature Safe” fertilizer on the course. We sort our trash appropriately. We do not apply pesticides to our ponds and have a 20’ no spray zone and buffer strip around the ponds to filter unwanted material from entering the ponds. We have also established a Monarchs in the rough area and installed a bluebird box trail.
- The irrigation system continues to show its age. A severe thunderstorm knocked out the system’s communications and resulted in some irrigation anomalies.
- The Town approved the posting of seasonal and gardener positions. Unfortunately we have not received any applications to date.
- The OSHA Lockout/Tagout consultation took place and identified very few machines requiring a procedure. They have all been addressed, the staff has been fully trained, and a safety bulletin board and manual area has been established.
- The golf course continues to follow all current COVID-19 requirements.
- The Tashua Glen course greens were aerated have healed. The tees will be aerated on an as needed basis. The #9 fairway suffers from a lack of soil and poor infiltration rates. A process of

topdressing and aeration at a cost of \$6,000 per year must be implemented to solve the problem. The roughs will be cut and weeded in the fall.

- Mr. Snyder also reported that invoices continue to be paid slowly. Both Mr. Snyder and Mrs. Plumeau continue to get past due notification from dozens of our vendors.
- All players are reminded to PLEASE REPLACE YOUR DIVOTS EVERYTIME.

**Green Committee (Frank Squicciarro):**

- The maintenance department is going to create a “living wall” out of the old logs between #13 and #14 as a pollinator habitat.
- The wall clearing project remains on hold due to staffing limitations.
- We are in need of a dozen new green surround heads for the irrigation systems. At a cost of \$180 each we will review the budget later in the year to determine if they can be purchased
- The Glen collars are looking fantastic.
- A winter project list was discussed including tree removal, tee renovations, creek restoration, fairway realignment and Glen vapor barrier removal.
- The Green Committee also began discussions on a 5-year plan and equipment review.
- The aeration plan for next year is to begin aggressively in April

**Director of Golf Operations (Bobby Brown):**

- The rounds and revenue remain strong for September with rounds exceeding last year’s play on both courses.
- ATK would like to move the golf course registration back into the pro shop beginning in October. The increased payroll to ATK to maintain customer service in both the pro shop and starter shed due to the pandemic has doubled the payroll for ATK. The Commission agreed on the move as long as all COVID-19 restrictions are followed.
- Mr. Brown asked the Commission to consider extending the current 10-day advance registration call in system until the end of the season. The in-person rack system usually ended in September; however, with play remaining strong, Mr. Brown felt it was in the best interest of the course to continue the 10-day policy. Although the pro shop does close at 5:00 PM in the colder, darker months, he stated he will keep the pro shop open on Wednesdays and Thursdays to accommodate the call ins.

Mr. Squicciarro made a motion seconded by Mr. Gaudio to approve maintaining the current 10-day advanced call in procedures through the end of the 2020 season. Motion carried unanimously.

- Tournament Update:
  - September 13: Men’s Club Member/Guest – most successful with 92 players
  - September 25: Darien Teachers – 31 players Glen
  - September 28: Orchards Women’s Golf Association – 51 players Glen
  - October 18: HBRA – 120 players anticipated
- All pro shop credit MUST be redeemed by December 15. Players have over two months to use their credit. Pro shop sales promotions are underway with discounts on clothing, golf bags and golf shoes.
- All rain checks issued in 2020 must be used by the end of the 2020 season.

**House Committee (Dick DeLibro):**

- CAS performed the annual A/C inspection in August as required in Domenick’s contract. For unknown reasons, CAS also opened the boiler doors to the golf side boiler. When the heat was turned on in September, the boiler would not fire. CAS was called for repair by Domenick as they were the last vendor to have worked on the boiler. CAS found that the oil pump on the restaurant side that feeds the clubhouse side had a bad wire. The oil pump was previously noted on many occasions in correspondence from both the Town Fire Marshall and the Commission as leaking and needing replacement.
- United Illuminating has replaced all of their parking lot and Tashua Knolls Lane lights at the complex with longer lasting LED lights. After replacement, it was found that the lights in the golf course parking lot were not working and the lights in the circle were leaning. The UI will address both problems.
- Mr. Gaudiano received an email requesting that the Commission repair a leak in his roof. The original Gralor contract (2001) states that the Commission is responsible for structural repairs. However, the 2005 modification to this contract, related to the clubhouse renovation to be performed by Gralor, states that the Commission is indemnified from any work done by Gralor. In 2006, Gralor hired both the architect and construction company for the renovation and there is documentation indicating that the roof leaked almost immediately after it was installed. Visual inspection of the roof indicates that numerous repairs have been made by Gralor over the ensuing years. The Commission has made no repairs since the renovation on that portion of the roof. The matter has been turned over to the Town’s attorney.
- After a power outage this year, the UI discovered a mismatch between the meter and the “jaw” at the Miklus Center. The matter requires a new meter (UI’s problem) and a new jaw (the golf course’s problem). An electrician will be called in for that issue and many additional minor electrical problems through the complex.
- The Town’s Fire Marshal inspected the restaurant on September 15<sup>th</sup>. A few minor violations were discovered which Gralor must remedy by October 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Mr. George Estrada of the Town will work with us to try to find an electrical engineer to inspect the clubhouse for grounding or power supply issues to try to alleviate the constant power outages.
- The copula and a few shingles have blown off the cart barn. A contractor will be called to make repairs.
- A winter maintenance list for the cart barn and clubhouse was developed. The majority of the work can be done in-house.
- Despite contractual obligations, Gralor has done no septic cleaning at the clubhouse this year.

**Concessionaire (Domenick Faustini):**

- None

**Finance (Joe Gaudiano):**

- August income was down by \$9,104 compared to the 5-year average. This was due to the effects of tropical storm Isaias and two other strong storms. Cart usage was down by 1,193 mainly due to the power outage which affected our ability to charge the carts. Knolls Rounds were down by 545 but Glen play remains strong with Rounds up by 677.
- September income is strong and income and rounds will be above average.
- Expense numbers for FY 2020 were presented and indicated a potential breakeven year. Final numbers will not be known until the annual Town audit.

- Mr. Gaudiano presented the Commission with a request to purchase a Fairway aerator with funding from retained earnings. Mr. Snyder reported that the current aerator is at least 30 years old and has broken down beyond repair.

Mr. Gaudiano made a motion seconded by Mr. Squicciarro to approve the transfer of \$7,327.49 from retained earnings into the Capital G/L for the purchase of a Fairway Aerator. Motion carried unanimously.

- Initial planning for the FY 2022 budget have begun. Several comments were made. The Finance Committee is switching from budgeting off gross income to net income to more accurately reflect income figures. This represents a loss of \$100,000 from previous budget plans. The \$1 minimum wage increase will represent a \$20,000 increase in seasonal salaries (although we will review all staffing requirements). In addition, a potential new contract for ATK will represent a \$15,000 increase, again primarily due to the state-required minimum wage increase. Other potential increases include those from a new golf cart lease and an advanced tee time reservation and point of sale system. Further, Mr. Snyder has recommended a capital replacement plan of \$100,000 per year for the next 10 years. The capital replacement plan for the House Committee has not been developed.
- Mr. Gaudiano then asked the Commission to consider these matters and think about an important question in the budget planning process. “Who does Tashua Knolls want to be known as”? Are we one of the premier public courses in the area? A discussion ensued on the issue. Matters such as rates, reputation, improvements and retained earnings were discussed. It was agreed that the matters are lot to digest. The issue that the golf course is an Enterprise Fund and does not utilize any Town tax dollars was also discussed. The 2016 Mission and Values statement for Tashua Knolls will be distributed to the Commission. Mr. Espach suggested that the best approach for setting the budget may be to determine the rates first and what the budget can accommodate second.

### **Correspondence:**

- Mrs. Dowling shared an email that was received from Mr. Stephen Meyer, Town resident, expressing his frustration at trying to get a tee time on the weekend utilizing the present COVID-19 call in process. Both Mrs. Dowling and Mr. Brown responded that they understand the frustration experienced by many golfers trying to get a weekend tee times. The matter is one of supply and demand. The requests for tee times are up significantly due to the number of customers being home during the pandemic. The bottom line is the call in system is a lottery. Some people get the tee times they request and some do not.
- A letter was submitted to Mr. Espach and Mr. Cerulli from Mr. Kevin Dyrek, President of the Tashua Knolls Golf Club. The letter was written on behalf of the Club’s Board of Governors and their membership regarding advanced tee time reservations. They are asking for a return to the “in person racking process”. In addition, if the policy is changes, they are asking that the new policy be implemented seven days a week. They also stated that they believe all clubs should be treated equally and that if block tee times will not be provided for all affiliated clubs, then block tee times should be eliminated for all. The letter resulted in an extended discussion regarding various issues including: (1) the three other Tashua clubs play on weekdays so maybe the Men’s club could be offered some block times on a weekday, (2) the Rules & Regulations give them six weekend

tournaments that they have agreed to for many years and (3) it was questioned whether there would be a conflict of interest for Commissioners who are members of the Men's Club to vote on the matter. In the end it was decided to ask the Men's Club to clarify exactly what they are asking for.

**Old Business:**

- **Golf Cart Bid** (Joe Gaudiano): Mr. Gaudiano and Mr. Brown have been discussing the new golf cart bid. They have decided to go out with a bid for a 5-year Commercial Lease for lithium battery carts. The reasons are the current low commercial rates, the lack of a balloon payment at the end of the lease with the ability to sell or keep the carts at the end of the lease, and the 5-year warranty of the lithium batteries. The bid should go out by the end of the week.
- **Advanced Tee Time Reservation Policy Update** (Tom Cerulli): Mr. Cerulli, Mrs. Dowling and Mr. Brown held Zoom meetings with two tee time reservation vendors – GolfNow and Lightspeed. Another meeting will be held with TSnap next week. Two additional vendor meetings are anticipated before a recommendation is made.
- **ATK Contract Update (Don Espach)**: The revised contract as recommend by the Tashua Knolls Golf Commission has been sent to Town attorneys for review.

**New Business:**

- Mr. Cordone reported that someone had removed Sr. Men's club signup sheets from the outdoor scoreboard and thrown them to the side. The sheets represented a great deal of work on behalf of the club. Mr. Brown responded that it is not known if vandals or another club removed them. However, the scoreboard was donated by the Kaulbach Trust for the use of everyone at the golf course. This includes all clubs and other organizations holding tournaments. All individuals need to respect the information on the scoreboard.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Mrs. Wheeler at 9:21 PM; seconded by Mr. DeLibro to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.
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Respectfully submitted,  
Christine A. Plumeau  
Golf Course Commission Clerk