

**Golf Commission Meeting  
November 23, 2020  
Minutes**

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

**Also Attending:** Bobby Brown, Director of Golf; Doug Snyder, Director of Golf Course Properties; Paul Lupo, Assistant Golf Course Superintendent

**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 October 26, 2020 . . . A Motion was made by Mrs. Dowling, seconded by Mr. DeLibro 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 has suspended all mowing for the season. Some leaf blowing is continuing. Sand has been added to the bunkers on #3, 17 and 18. Next on the list for sand is #16. Plant protectants have been applied for the winter. All three aerators have been removed from the ponds, cleaned, serviced and stored for the winter.
- The Glen course mowing was suspended two weeks before the Knolls due to the different type of grass on that course. The newly installed collars are looking great. Plant protectants will be applied for the winter. Glen bunkers #7 and 8 will have sand added
- The Green committee approved the Knolls restoration plan.
- The maintenance department is preparing for the #13 tee renovation.
- The Aspetuck Land Trust plantings are in and mulched.
- The irrigation system has been blown out for the winter along with all on-course bathrooms.
- A part-time mechanic will be starting on November 30
- All maintenance equipment will be serviced over the winter.
- A maintenance department employee recently tested positive for COVID-19. Mr. Snyder contacted the appropriate personnel at the Town and our sanitizing procedures and contract tracing process was commended by the Town. No additional employees tested positive. Mrs. Wheeler and Mr. Espach thanked Mr. Snyder for the great job he is doing keeping the staff safe.
- We lost two trees from the wind storm on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The most significant one was to the right of #15 Knolls approach/fairway. The second tree fell behind #5 Knolls tee in the native grass area.
- Mr. Snyder recently co-authored, along with five other golf course superintendents, the Connecticut Golf Industry Best Management Practices (BMPs) to promote golf course sustainability.
- PLEASE REPLACE YOUR DIVOTS EVERYTIME.

- Mrs. Dowling was thanked for the use of her kayak that was necessary to remove the aerators from the ponds.
- The new flagpole donated by the Sr. Men's Club was installed and lighted. It looks magnificent and has received tremendous positive feedback. A huge "Thank You" goes out to all the Sr. Men's Club members who donated to the project.

**Green Committee (Frank Squicciarro):**

- The on-course pump house has also been winterized for the season. The water meter has been removed and is stored away for the winter.
- It has been observed that many more walkers are entering the golf course. Several have been seen during the times when golfers are on the course playing. As a reminder, there is **No Trespassing** on the golf course at any time for everyone's safety. Additional signage will be placed around the perimeter of the golf course.
- Most of the Glen course cart path rails need replacement. Mr. Snyder will look into purchasing the materials and doing the work in-house.
- The Glen access road will be re-graded when equipment is moved closer to the area for other work.
- The signage around the new flagpole will be re-installed in the spring along with new plantings.

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

- The State announced new golf course Covid-19 restrictions on November 8<sup>th</sup> limiting the shotgun size to 50 players. Our weekend shotgun program was subsequently suspended. The State then announced the total elimination of golf course shotguns on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Thanksgiving Day shotgun has been re-worked to tee times. Knolls tee times on Thanksgiving are now 8:00 to 9:20 and Glen tee times are 8:00 to 11:00.
- New rates and guidelines **MUST** be discussed for tournaments based upon the changing business landscape.
- The 18-hole ladies, 9-hole ladies and Sr. Men's clubs have all submitted their 2021 season events. All were within the approved Rules and Regulations and are accepted.
- Tashua Knolls will be hiring starters and rangers for the 2021 season. The job has been posted on the Town website.
- All 2020 golf shop credits must be redeemed by December 15<sup>th</sup>. All outstanding 2020 season rain checks must be used by the end of the 2020 season.

**House Committee (Angelo Cordone):**

- A letter was sent to Mr. Faustini on November 3<sup>rd</sup> requesting at least one septic pumping this year vs. the usual three yearly pumpings. As of this date, no pumping has taken place although Mondo Septic states we are on the calendar.
- Mrs. Plumeau reported that the Fire Marshal has spoken with Fairfield County Sprinkler and has made a recommendation to use FCS to perform the dry pendant testing. The requisition has been submitted and approved by Town Hall. FCS will schedule the testing.
- Mr. Snyder reports that he called several Town contractors on November 16<sup>th</sup> regarding replacement of the cupola on the cart barn. To date, no contractor has responded to his request.

- Mr. Espach has spoken to Mr. Estrada to request a contractor come out and assess the roof over the restaurant.

**Concessionaire** (Domenick Faustini):

- No report given.

**Finance** (Joe Gaudiano):

- October income and rounds were up over the 5-year average with the exception of rounds on the Knolls. At the end of October we had yet to make up the revenue lost during the Covid shut down in the spring.
- The unusually warm November weather has allowed play to continue to be strong. As of mid-November we had finally made up the lost income.
- A fiscal expense report was giving with the following notes:
  - Overtime salary is at 75.3% used with only \$1,973 remaining
  - There have been several unplanned expenses in the maintenance repair account including electrical and fire sprinkler work.
  - The Board of Finance approved our transfer of \$32,350 from retained earnings to capital for the purchase of an aerator and greensmower. As soon as the money is physically transferred to our account, the purchase requisitions will be submitted. As a reminder the Golf Commission voted in 2017 that retained earnings should be maintained at \$1 million.
- Three companies responded to our golf cart bid, Club Car, EZ-Go and Yamaha. Yamaha does not offer the required lithium batteries. Club Car had a GPS contract in addition to the lease which increased their cost by \$30,000. EZ-Go offered GPS in their lease and increased the buy out amount of our present fleet which made them the preferred choice.

Mr. Squicciarro made a motion seconded by Mrs. Wheeler to approve EZ-Go as the vendor for our new golf cart lease with the following terms:

5-year net balloon lease with first payment in August 2021  
 \$103,283.01 annual payments including carts and GPS  
 Buy out of \$244,500 at end of lease  
 5-year warranty on lithium batteries

Motion carried unanimously.

- Two rate proposals and corresponding budget options for the 2021 season were presented,:
  - Option A with a \$1 increase on green fees, \$1 increase on carts and a \$5 increase on ID cards. The proposed budget would need be reduced by \$41,500 in the area of projects and capital items. It is projected to make a profit of \$247 for FY 2021.
  - Option B which had a \$1 increase on green fees and a \$2 increase on carts. There are no budget cuts in this option and projects a profit of \$2,248 for FY 2021.
- A discussion was held among the Commissioners:
  - Mr. Gaudiano felt it came down to a matter of what type of course Tashua wants to be. A few months ago the Commissioners agreed we want to be seen as a premier club which certainly requires an investment in our equipment and our projects. In addition, he and Mr.

Brown stated that Option B would still keep us in line with other area courses. Mr. Gaudiano also believes that adopting a \$3 increase now will prevent any increase next year and possibly a year or two after that.

- Mrs. Wheeler felt Option A would be a better option in the current environment where many people may have lost their jobs and have reduced income.
- Mr. Cerulli felt that golf as a sport has been declining in recent years and that we wouldn't want to accelerate that decline by setting rates too high.
- Mr. Cordone felt that both options were too high and that we should consider taking money out of retained earnings to meet our operating budget. Mr. Guadiano responded that we won't know our current level of retained earnings until December. However, the seven week spring closure will be reflected in our earnings and we could very well fall below the \$1 million level. The Commission would need to vote to decide to go below that level.
- Mr. DeLibro felt Option A was the better choice.
- Mrs. Dowling felt Option B was her choice if we took the time to educate our customers about the reasons why the increase was necessary which would make easier to accept.
- Mr. Squicciarro also preferred Option B and pointed out that under Option A we are also asking residents and senior non-residents to incur the additional \$5 ID charge. He also felt that by cutting projects and equipment out of the budget we were sacrificing too much of what keeps Tashua a premier golf course for its customers.
- Mr. Espach felt that Option A was the better choice. An effective \$2 increase in fees (\$1 for the round and \$1 for the cart) is a significant enough increase to our customers; \$3 (\$1 for rounds and \$2 for carts) would be excessive.
- Mr. Espach called for a vote on the rates. Mr. Gaudiano questioned why we needed to vote at the November meeting when they rates will not go into effect until March 2021. We still have four months to see if we incur any additional unexpected expenses, learn what our present retained earnings are and learn our reimbursable services number for the next fiscal year. Mr. Espach and Mrs. Wheeler felt that since we must vote on the budget in December, we need to know our income before deciding on rates.

Mrs. Wheeler made a motion seconded by Mr. Cerulli to approve rates per Option "A" as provided in the "Tashua Rate Proposals" for the 2021 golfing season including:

- \$1 increase on all green fees categories
- \$1 increase on carts
- \$5 increase on ID fees

Motion carried 4 – 3 – 1. (Against: Dowling, Gaudiano, Squicciarro) (Abstain: Cordone)

- The budget for FY 2021 will be voted on at the December meeting.

**Correspondence:**

- An email was received from Ms. Tatiana Solovey, Assistant Town Engineer, stating that no permits are required for work re-leveling and re-sloping #13 tee on the Knolls.

**Old Business:**

- **Advanced Tee Time Reservation Policy Update (Tom Cerulli):** Mr. Cerulli provided a summary of the information from the five tee time reservation system companies (GolfNow, Lightspeed, Teesnap, Chelsea and ForeUp) including costs and features. The entire Committee, including Mrs. Dowling and Mr. Brown were in agreement that ForeUP was their preferred choice due to their impressive list of clients, their compatible features and pricing. There is money available in the current technology line item to make this change including any potential required hardware updates.

Mr. Cerulli made a motion seconded by Mr. Cordone to approve the software installation from ForeUP at a cost of \$500 per month beginning with installation. Motion carried unanimously.

- **ATK Contract Update (Don Espach):** The revised contract as recommend by the Tashua Knolls Golf Commission has not yet been finalized by the Town attorney. Mr. Espach has been assured that it will be completed.

**New Business:**

- Mrs. Plumeau presented a preliminary Golf Commission Meeting Schedule for 2021. As required under its Rules & Regulations, meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month unless a scheduled holiday requires it to move to the third Monday. Mrs. Plumeau asked if the Commissioners would like to move the December meeting from the fourth Monday (the 27<sup>th</sup>) to the Monday (the 20<sup>th</sup>) due to the Christmas holiday. The Commissioners agreed.

Mrs. Dowling made a motion seconded by Mr. Squicciarino to approve the Golf Commission meeting schedule for 2021 with the change of the December meeting to the 20<sup>th</sup>. Motion carried unanimously.

**Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Mrs. Wheeler at 8:11 PM; seconded by Mr. Cordone to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christine A. Plumeau  
Golf Course Commission Clerk