

MINUTES
DeKalb Park District
Public Meeting of the Golf Committee
November 13, 2019
River Heights Golf Course Clubhouse, DeKalb, IL
Public Meeting 6:00 p.m.

I. Meeting Call to Order

Golf Committee Chair Dag Grada called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Vince McMahon, Austin Sands, Adam Anderson, Dag Grada, Gail Krmeneč, Dean Holliday, Randy Bourdages, Larry Schultz, Steven Burski, Tom Anderson, Tom Teresinski

Non-voting Members Present: Mat Emken, Greg Bruggeman, Amy Doll, Doug Eaton, Heather Collins

II. Action on the Agenda

Committee Member Holliday made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Committee Member Teresinski. Motion carried by voice vote.

III. Introductions

Committee Chair Dag Grada began the introductions. Each person stated their name, whether they were an employee of the park district, whether they were a Park District golfer. Non-voting members also identified themselves.

IV. Public Comment

Sarah Slavenas expressed concern with how the board has handled employee issues.

Micah Stoddard, Jack Hoger, Ron Naylor, Justin Keck, and one speaker who did not state his name expressed their opinions about improving the golf courses, including ways to improve revenues.

V. Committee Guidelines and Expectations

Committee Chair Grada stated that the expectations for the committee are that members conduct themselves with civility, respect others' opinions, and not talk over others. Further, voting members will discuss and ask questions while non-voting will provide information. Mr. Grada wants to try find to a mutually amenable solution. A short-term answer is needed before the December 19th, 2019 Park Board meeting. After that time, the committee will discuss longer term solutions.

VI. Meeting Schedule

Mr. Grada said that the intent is for the committee to meet weekly on Wednesdays up until December 19th with at least six voting members in attendance to establish the necessary quorum. It was decided to move the November 27th meeting to November 25th to respect the Thanksgiving holiday. Meetings will always be held at the River Heights Clubhouse.

VII. Clarification of the Issues

Mr. Grada stated that every year he has been on the board, the District's auditors have expressed concern over golf and aquatics. Mr. Grada asked for consensus of the group that the golf operations are not operating at a sustainable level. If the group cannot agree upon this, then progress will not be possible. Everyone on the committee is here to improve the performance of golf operations to make it more sustainable.

Committee Member Teresinski stated that reviewing the numbers is essential as well as comparing the golf operational subsidy to other community area golf courses in order to resolve the problem.

Committee Member Schultz stated that many aspects of the Park District are not profitable, but that the committee can get golf profitable.

Committee Member McMahon inquired if staffing needs is the reason there is a hurry for the committee. Committee Vice-Chair Krmenek affirmed and also stated that how the course is managed has a direct impact on the budget. Mr. McMahon stated the need for a PGA professional at the course, improving marketing, and pricing rounds appropriately.

Mr. Grada received a consensus that the committee members are there to improve golf operations.

VIII. Establish Goals for the Committee

Mr. Grada said that there must be a recommendation for the board prior to December 19th Park Board meeting. The committee needs to start asking questions now, so that we can discuss two broad topics: management of operations and capital improvements.

Ms. Krmenek stated that the committee should set its goals first and state them collectively. There are a number of options, including self-operation, public-private partnership (full-service management, operating lease agreement, hybrid approach), staff internally for a year and then during that time decide if the District wants to write an issue an RFP for a contract or other options.

Mr. Bourdages inquired if there were any current or pending contracts with a golf management firm to run the courses. Mr. Grada stated confirmed that there is not. Mr. Bourdages indicated that there needs to be a commitment in order to get the right people in place.

Mr. Teresinski asked if operations and capital were the extent of the issues? Mr. Grada said that they are two board categories and can be broken down further if desired.

Ms. Krmenek requested that the committee take a step back and set the committee goals. She presented:

1. To generate sufficient revenue to fund the facilities operations and at an acceptable level of monetary investment.
2. To proactively manage facilities operations to control costs without sacrificing services to the public.
3. To provide capital improvements at the facilities within the available funding.

Mr. Grada stated that operations as a whole need to be more manageable and that there are pros and cons for the staffing options.

Mr. Bourdages said he wants to staff in-house with a three year commitment from the District.

Mr. McMahon agreed and added that the upcoming year should be an interim period and not included in the three-year commitment. Then, hire the right people moving forward. Self-operations will allow your fees to be more reasonable as well.

Mr. Tom Anderson said the courses need better management and proper funding, but he does not think maintenance has been getting what they need. Users want the courses maintained.

Mr. Teresinski said the interim idea is practical if you have reasonable internal staff. The parks department have resources that could be brought to the courses.

Mr. Bourdages agreed with the interim staffing concept and feels the committee needs a year to come up with a really good three-year plan.

Mr. Schultz stated that the courses have a lot of non-profits that use the courses for fundraising. A management company will not permit that. Mr. McMahon stated the high school and NIU teams also utilize the courses.

Mr. Schultz stated the committee can make the District's golf courses profitable.

Mr. Grada recapped that he's hearing a consensus that the committee does not want to hire an outside firm. Rather there would be a one-year interim period. Specifically, what does the management of the courses need?

Mr. Bourdages said you need to hire someone to come in before the course open and you need technology to properly market to golfers walking in the door.

Mr. McMahon said there is a retired PGA professional present at the meeting. He could give the Park District information.

Mr. Sands indicated a need for a Director of Golf and a marketing intern. Golf Dekalb's Twitter has very few tweets. Social media needs to be expanded to also make people aware of outings.

Mr. Grada posed that if the Park District supports capital and staff improvements, then where do we put the bar? How much is enough? How much is too much? We need to have some goal to achieve.

Mr. Teresinski said that the goals made sense and break even makes sense. It should not be that hard. He inquired again as to what other courses are doing and well as pointed out the tax subsidy in the recreation fund.

Mr. Grada noted the good suggestions for capital improvements, including cart paths. He inquired what figures and information the committee members would want? Playable days lost to weather was mentioned. Mr. Teresinski mentioned comparable course information again.

Mr. Bourdages asked if sub-groups would be helpful. Ms. Krmenek reminded the group that the committee must follow the Open Meetings Act, so there cannot be a quorum of members. Mr. Bourdages volunteered to be point person for staffing. Mr. Sands volunteered to be the point person for marketing.

IX. Discussion on Management Options

X. Discussion of Capital Improvements

XI. XI. Adjourn Public Meeting

Mr. Bourdages made a motion to adjourn, second by Mr. Teresinski. Motion carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.