

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**Auburn Hills Golf Course Clubhouse**  
**433 S. 135<sup>th</sup> Street West**  
**September 10, 2011**  
**9:00 a.m.**

**Present:** Bryan Frye, Andy Solter, Randy Brown, Tom Roth, Cindy Claycomb

**Absent:** Cynthia Landers

**Also Present:** Doug Kupper, Director of Park and Recreation, Christina Butler, Clerk, Bryce Mumford, Fiscal Analyst, Don Harrison, Golf Division Manager, Robert Layton, City Manager, Jeff Longwell, Pete Meitzner, Ron Mosher, Troy Hendricks, Chad Mullens, Neil White

President Frye called the meeting to order at approximately 9:00a.m.

**AGENDA**

**Item 1A: City of Wichita Golf Course Enterprise Sustainability**

Frye announced that Cynthia Landers had been appointed as a Board of Park Commissioner replacing John Stevens (District I). He also announced that the replacement for Matt Goolsby had declined the appointment by Council Member Michael O'Donnell II (District IV).

Frye stated that the intent of the meeting was to discuss the City of Wichita's Golf Course Enterprise Sustainability.

Kupper stated that the Board of Park Commissioners would review the 71 golf course policy considerations offered by the public in the previous meetings. He also introduced a spreadsheet tool to be used during the meeting. This tool would allow the Park Board to plug in different scenarios and see how it could affect debt structure.

Brown stated that three things stood out from the public meetings: 1) let pros run the golf courses, 2) market the golf system better, and 3) offer creative pricing.

Kupper stated that the first City employed golf pro was employed at Auburn Hills in 2001.

Brown stated that maybe there needed to be more flexibility for the golf pros. He also stated that he did not join the Park Board to close parks and did not feel that anyone on the Board wanted to close a golf course.

Kupper stated that there were 15 discounts currently offered to golfers and that if all of those discounts were eliminated, the Golf Division could recoup \$60,000.

Brown stated he would like to see a seasonal discount offered to players who play in the extreme weather conditions (extreme heat or cold).

Solter stated that customer service was commonly mentioned in the public meetings. He asked how the Golf Division could improve the quality of service. He also asked if there was a survey that could be conducted from the golf community to see what they needed.

Kupper stated that improving customer service was a priority and that surveys were conducted at the golf courses.

Claycomb asked if Kupper or Harrison could give a history of how the golf courses were run when the golf pros ran the courses.

Kupper stated that the City and the Park Board had always determined the fees. The golf pros were responsible for concession stands, golf carts, pro shops and customer service. He noted that the contract pros had more flexibility. The City received 42% of the golf carts profits. He stated that the City took over the golf carts and the concession stands to make them more sustainable and the golf pros ran the pro shops. Kupper also added that the golf courses are tournament friendly and that Auburn Hills could handle a large tournament.

Brown stated that he did not think the golf courses needed to be "self-sustainable" and he felt the City could subsidize the golf courses in order to make them self-sustainable just as the City subsidized the symphony.

Kupper stated that fund balance was needed.

Layton handed out a document to the Park Board revealing that the City was thin on CIP dollars and there could be serious implications if the City forgave the Golf Division Debt.

Frye stated that the citizens reported they did not need or want all of the CIP.

Harrison stated that the contract golf pros were not forced out when the City took over the golf courses. The City chose to employ the golf pros and not contract them. Some golf pros opted not to accept positions with the City.

Kupper returned the discussion back to the list of Policy Considerations. He suggested that maybe marshalls could trade volunteer marshall time for tee times. He also stated that adding trail fees could be an option. He noted that the Golf Division has had 60 tournaments.

Claycomb asked if the Golf course fund had to remain an enterprise fund because of state law.

Kupper replied that it did not have to be an enterprise fund. It became an enterprise fund when the Park Board took over the golf courses. He stated that Topeka had just recently taken one of their courses out of an enterprise fund. He stated if that happened, the overflow would have to come out of the Park Board budget.

Claycomb asked if an option could be to ask the City to forgive the Auburn Hills debt and put the CIP on hold. She stated that she was not in favor of closing a golf course. She stated that a time frame needed to be established. She also stated that the ponds idea that was presented at one of the meetings was an intriguing idea, but was not sure how it would work.

Kupper stated that the Golf Division had always paid its way. He also stated that when Auburn Hills was originally planned, it was thought that it would pay for itself, but then 9/11 occurred, the economy took a hit, and the loss of jobs affected golf.

Solter stated that the Park Board was currently working under the reality of scarcity and fiscal problems

and that this challenge had been self-imposed. He noted that the problem had been on-going, but they had an opportunity to fix it. He stated that he liked the idea of re-purposing the golf courses by having multi-purpose uses such as trails. He suggested coming up with ways to utilize the space to meet golf needs and allow concurrent uses.

Frye stated that the debt for Auburn Hills would be paid off in 2015.

Brown asked what the total debt was for the Golf Division.

Kupper replied the debt was \$6.9 million.

Claycomb asked how the City's golf course pricing compared to other local courses.

Harrison responded that the City golf fees are approximately 95% of what others charge. He stated they compared their fees to Hidden Lakes, Sand Creek, Echo Hills, Cheney, Cherry Oaks and WSU.

Solter asked if a \$1 fee increase would really be a factor.

Harrison stated that in October 2009, there was a \$1 fee increase and rounds went down. However he noted that the economy was a factor in that decrease of rounds as well.

Frye stated that after reviewing the handout from City Manager Layton, it appeared that if the Park Board asked the City to forgive a portion of the debt, then the Park Board would have to remove Park projects from the CIP.

Solter asked what costs would be incurred annually.

Kupper stated that the courses would need regular repairs for upkeep.

Harrison stated that 10% was budgeted for the beginning of the year to cover the cost of repairs and upkeep.

Frye asked what the Board thought of privatization or out-sourcing the golf courses.

Brown stated that he was not in favor of privatizing or outsourcing the golf courses. He asked about the average income per round.

Harrison stated that the average income per round was approximately \$25.

Brown stated he would like to see an improvement in the experience for the golfers because it was something that can be controlled.

Harrison commented when green fees were increased in the past, there was a decrease in concessions and the pro shops.

Frye asked if there were other comments from the Board or the audience.

Longwell stated that he appreciated the discussion and that if the City Council did not like the recommendations of the Park Board, they could choose to go in a different direction. He thought that forgiving a portion of the debt might be an option.

Meitzner stated that a fee increase could be an option and that asking the City Council to forgive a portion of the debt could be another option, if the Park Board was willing to re-prioritize the CIP. He

also stated that customer service should be priority #1.

Frye asked if the Board should review the CIP or have Kupper give ideas to the Board.

**Motion by Brown, second by Frye, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED TO have Kupper's staff submit three to four scenarios of how to get the Golf Division sustainable.**

Brown suggested all scenarios should have the bottom line at \$500,000 with no course closings.

Claycomb asked that these be ready for review by the next meeting on 9/19.

Frye stated that an advisory committee could be created and directed the Board to be considering people to appoint.

Brown suggested that the committee be a standing committee.

Kupper suggested that the chairperson of the committee be a Park Board Commissioner.

**Item 2: Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:50a.m.

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**Bryan Frye, President**

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**Christina Butler, Clerk**