OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
December 19, 2013

PRESENT: Clyde Mount, Vice Chairman; Paul Cifatte; Ernie DesRoches; Elsa Obuchowski and Bill Waters.

STAFF: Shelly Guyer, Executive Director; Ed Ruiz, Golf Pro and Jim Schell, Superintendent.

ABSENT: Pam Works

INTERESTED PARITES: Walter Englert

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Mount welcomed the new members Elsa Obuchowski and Bill Waters. He called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Mr. Mount announced the resignations of three OHPA members and thanked former Chairman Bob Virgulak and Mike Corsello for their contribution to the Oak Hills Park Authority over the last 8 years and thanked Shannon Giandurco for her service noting that she was elected to serve on the Common Council.

Mr. Mount requested that the presentation on the driving range be heard before the public comment so that questions and concerns can be answered.
****MR. DESROCHES MADE A MOTION TO HEAR THE DRIVING RANGE PRESENTATION PRIOR TO PUBLIC COMMENT.**
****MR. CIFFATE SECONDED THE MOTION.**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Virgulak asked the Authority Members to review the minutes the November 21, 2013 meeting.
****MR. MOUNT MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 21, 2013 MEETING.**
****MR. CIFFATE SECONDED THE MOTION.**
****THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.**

AD HOC DRIVING RANGE COMMITTEE – TDRS presentation

Mr. DesRoches introduced Jim Deering, Doug Smith and Mark Curtain of Total Driving Range Solutions to address questions from the November presentation. Mr. Deering distributed specific site drawings and plans. Mr. Smith reviewed the reasons why TDRS did not choose to use the original proposed site and that after much investigation TDRS decided that original site was just not feasible for many reasons, all of which led to a cost that was double/triple to construct, the placement of the proposed site could only be constructed in one direction due and was close to property lines, it required removing 100’s of tree’s, loss in parking, removal of ledge and construction of retaining walls. He stated that TDRS is extremely confident that the proposed site is the right place and after the November meeting, TDRS continues to discuss ways to improve the proposed plan. TDRS answered questions and discussed concerns regarding adding bays, widening the range, a draft of a plan to modify the current putting area to include a practice and teaching area with traps, issues with the 1st and 2nd tee boxes and 6th green, and parking.

Mr. Curtain presented the design development plans noting that the driving range concept attempts to create a "park setting" that facilitates a full golf experience, trying to minimize congestion and provide the golf pro with a view of the first tee and practice area. The TDRS, staff and Members discussed the details of the driving range structure and subsequent changes to the course, relocating the admin, pro shop and cart barn and the master plan options for bathrooms and a shed for the range ball washer were discussed at length.

Mr. DesRoches stated that he has reviewed the notes from the 1999 master plan that an OHPA committee had researched. Mr. Deering asked the OHPA for a map of the Parks water and gas infrastructure in the area of the admin building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Mount asked that public comment be kept to three minutes.

Mr. John Sharkey stated that he sees the proposed site for the driving range to be a disruption to the course and a liability due to its proximity to the 2nd green. He believes that the proposed site is not in the best interest of the golf course and a larger range at the initial site would generate more revenue.

Mr. Sharkey stated that the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Driving Range Committee is a West Norwalk resident and possibly a member of its association and if this is true, it is a direct conflict of the interest and should not be allowed. He noted that the Chairman's insistence and strong support for the site proposed by TDRS seems to be very one sided and the golfers deserve to be protected and their safety considered.

Mr. DesRoches reported that he is not a board or dues paying member of the West Norwalk Association but he is a resident of the West Norwalk Association.

Mr. Paul Cantor stated that he is a dues paying member of the West Norwalk Association and frankly the West Norwalk association is not in favor of the driving range. Mr. Cantor stated that while it may be argued that a golf course benefits non-golfers because it constitutes an attractive open space, the same cannot be said for a driving range with five ugly nets. He noted that if a driving range were so lucrative they would be everywhere especially on the three area 18 hole golf courses. He believes that though a driving range might solve TDRS financial problems it is highly unlikely to solve OPHA financial problems that stem from the inability to increase golf revenue in order to maintain and operate an 18 hole golf course and loan debt. He noted that the significant decline in the number of the rounds is not the fault of the current OHPA but its Members are to blame for reiterating that the restaurant is the core of its problems and a driving range is the solution.

PRO'S REPORT

Mr. Ruiz noted that he provided his summation in November and is looking forward working with the OHPA in the 2014 season.

SUPERINTENDANT'S REPORT

Mr. Schell advised the Authority that the rain and snow have formed a layer of icy in spot on some greens which he may need to remove. He stated that he put up fences, tape and signs to restrict snow sledding but it was all pulled down. He noted that the sledders are going down rocky areas and he can't spend time chasing them or putting the fences and signs back up.

Mr. Schell advised the Authority that the new oil tank at the administrative building had been installed and the old tank would be removed tomorrow.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. Guyer distributed the 2014 meeting schedule and a list of OHPA Members can be prepared when they know if the Mayor will be making additional appointments. Mr. Mount noted that a couple of the meetings at the restaurant. Mr. Guyer replied that with proper notice that would be fine.

Mr. Guyer reviewed the November sales report and stated that it was an extremely good month compared to November 2012. He reported that the 2013 revenue rounds were up 32% and golf revenue was up 54%. He noted that on the fiscal year basis (July-Nov) golf rounds are up 12% and golf revenue about $98,000 or 14.4%. On a calendar year/seasonal (Jan-Nov), revenue rounds are up 4.2% and golf revenue is up about 5.8%. In spite of the horrible weather in March and April this year, and rounds being down by 1,200 rounds compared to 2012, OHP has surpassed the 2012 rounds. He noted that the financial picture is heading in a positive direction.

Mr. Guyer reported $2,000 in sales from the stocking stuffer 5-pack special and $1,700 in gift card sales. Mr. Guyer reported that they will end the 2013 calendar year with over 34,000 rounds and total revenue rounds of close to $35,000.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

Tennis / Restaurant Liaison Committee

Mr. Cifatte's noted that the tennis courts were closed for the season on November 22, 2013.

Mr. Cifatte reported the restaurateur is open Thursday through Sunday and has holiday and other functions scheduled. He reported that the restaurateur says the heating bills are very high because the building was not insulated well and they are having trouble securing insurance for structural reasons. Mr. Guyer noted that the restaurateur has liability insurance.

Greens, Facilities & Water Use Committee

No report.

Finance Committee

Mr. Guyer distributed the proposed rates and recommended that the rates not change in 2014. He noted that it will allow him to begin selling ID cards on January 1, 2014 and no public hearing would be necessary. Mr. Cifatte agreed that it is a smart plan and suggested that the public be informed as soon as possible.

Mr. DesRoches asked if Mr. Guyer can report the numbers of non-resident senior and non-senior cards had been sold? Mr. Guyer replied that he can't because the cards weren't sold separately. Mr. DesRoches noted that he thought seniors should get a reduce rate on the non-resident ID card to encourage senior non-resident play. Mr. Guyer noted that the non-resident pay the senior green fees and OH did and will continue to run senior specials.   Mr. Mount agreed that OH should continue with the senior specials and not change the rate this year. The OHPA discussed the suggested 2014 rate.

****MR. DESROCHES MADE A MOTION TO MAINTAIN THE OAK HILLS PARK GOLF COURSE RATE CARD AT THE CURRENT LEVELS, ALLOWING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO OFFER SPECIAL RATES AS NEEDED DURING THE GOLF SEASON.**
****MR. CIFFATE SECONDED THE MOTION.**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Guyer distributed the fiscal year 2014 budget forecast that is based on 35,000 rounds and assumes a conservative overall increase in rounds of 13% in 2014. The OHPA and Mr. Guyer discussed the budget, asked Mr. Englert to review the forecasted budget, specific line items, receive a list of capital projects and provide a best and worst case forecast budget scenario. Mr. Englert recommended that Mr. Guyer ask Mr. Baron how many years the budget should be budgeted.

****MR. MOUNT MADE A MOTION TO HAVE MR. ENGLERT REVIEW THE BUDGET TO PRESENT TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.**
****MR. DESROCHES SECONDED THE MOTION**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. DesRoches asked if Mr. Guyer had a chance to make an FOIA request for financials from other golf courses. Mr. Guyer replied that he hadn't yet.

Legal Committee
No report.

Marketing Committee
Mr. Mount stated that the OHPA Members should consider volunteering to run the committee.
He noted that he has requested a meeting with the Norwalk Hour to discuss ad space plan for 2014.

Human Resource & Policy Committee
Mr. Mount reported that Mr. Ruiz and Mr. Schell have committed to a two year contract.

Master Plan Committee
Mr. DesRoches stated that he would like to get a copy of the 1999 master plan which was extensively vetted and contains ideas which have been suggested recently. Once he combined the plans he would schedule a meeting to solicit suggestions from the public.

<u>OLD BUSINESS</u>

Mr. Mount recommended that Bradley Perano be allowed to proceed with the Eagle project he proposed with some caveats. Mr. Guyer advised the OHPA that neither Attorney Avery nor the OH insurance carrier had an issue with the project. Mr. Mount advised the Members that he would request that the Eagle Scout provide a complete plan, the plan be reviewed and approved by the OHP superintendent, and require that an adult scout or parent accompany Bradley at all times.
The Authority agreed.

****MRS. OBUCHOWSKI MADE A MOTION TO ALLOW THE EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT TO BEGIN ONCE THE STATED CAEVEATS WERE MET.**
****MR. CIFATTE SECONDED THE MOTION**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>

Mr. Mount stated that as acting Chair he would like to improve communications on the course. He suggested that the Greens and Water Use Facility Committee be removed from the agenda and in its place OHPA instead create a Golf & Park Operations Committee existing of the executive team and 1 -2 OHPA Members that meet once a week to resolve issues. Also, he would like to combine the Lega and Human Resources Committee. Per the By-Laws he can change the agenda items by requesting it a meeting and voting on it.

Mr. Mount noted that there are three openings on the OHPA and invited members of the West Norwalk Association to contact the Mayor to be appointed.

Mr. Mount advised the Authority Members that the Mayors Trophy will need a Chairperson. He is waiting for the Mayor's office to confirm the June 26, 2014 tournament date. The Authority discussed opening the Mayor's Trophy tournament to the tennis facility as well. The Authority discussed the election of officers in 2014.

The Authority discussed the King bid versus the TDRS driving range plan.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 p.m.
**** MR. CIAFATTE MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** MR. DESROCHES SECONDED THE MOTION.**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Dravis