

**CITY OF NORWALK
OAK HILLS AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 18, 2014**

ATTENDANCE: Clyde Mount, Chair; Paul Cifatte, John McKenna, Elsa Peterson Obuchowski, Jerry Crowley, Ernest DesRochers (8:30 p.m.)

STAFF: Shelly Guyer, Executive Director; Jim Schell, Golf Course Superintendent; Edward Ruiz, Golf Pro

OTHERS: Paul Cantor, Yvonne Lopac, Mr. Tom Arbron of Arbron Media Associates

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Mount called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES - NOVEMBER 20, 2014.

November 20, 2014 Special Meeting and Regular Meeting.

**** MR. CROWLEY MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2014 SPECIAL MEETING AND THE REGULAR MEETING.
** MR. CIFATTE SECONDED.**

The following corrections were noted on the Regular Meeting Minutes:

Page 1, under **Public Comment**, paragraph 2, line 1: please change “two years has been trying” to “two years she has been trying”

Page 4, under **Tennis/Restaurant Liaison Committee**, paragraph 1, line 2: please Change “Gene Erik – a delayed victim of 911” to “Gene Arick – a delayed victim of 9/11”

Page 4, under **Legal Committee and F. Human Resources/Policy Committee**, paragraph 1, line 1: please change “Mr. Waters” to “Mr. Kendy”

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2014 SPECIAL MEETING AS SUBMITTED AND THE REGULAR MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED WITH FOUR IN FAVOR (MOUNT, CIFATTE, MCKENNA, AND CROWLEY) AND ONE ABSTENTION (OBUCHOWSKI).**

PUBLIC COMMENT.

Mr. Cantor came forward and said that on the City website, the financials were not included. He said that he was concerned with transparency.

Ms. Lopak spoke about the recent posting of notices on various trees that will be removed. She said that the trees enhanced the area around the pond.

There was no one else who wished to address the Board.

ARBON MEDIA ASSOCIATES.

Mr. Tom Arbron of Arbron Media Associates came forward and introduced himself. His company has 22 firms, including social media, advertising and other firms as their clients. He said that his company hoped to help the Authority to grow. Having a 22% growth in 2014 is fantastic. However, he pointed out that Oak Hills does not have a Twitter account, which is vital in this day and age. Mr. Arbron explained that his role was as a salesman for independent research. While his company is only 9 months old, the company has already experienced some success. He then gave a number of examples of how the social media affects the advertising, such as Yelp, Twitter, and Google maps. Once upon a time, these services had a fee, but now they are basically free.

Regarding traditional media, in order to have growth, you have to go outside the market. He then explained that some of the companies just study the metrics for purchasing media. These companies study Nielson and Arbitron and know how to analyze the data.

Mr. Arbron said that Public Relations is also critical. One of key aspects for golfers is having good food. He suggested Max EX PR, for example and spoke about how that group handled an event recently in Darien.

Mr. Arbron said that the websites were fine, but somewhat dated. He spoke about a site called WIX and how the websites were rapidly evolving.

Mr. Arbron said that he had a background of 30 years in radio and is working on networking all the various media groups for the clients. He explained that he started his business because the companies didn't have a salesperson in Connecticut or were weak in the sales area. His income is generated from the various companies that he represents.

Mr. Mount explained that Mr. Waters, the marketing Committee member, was not present due to illness. Mr. Mount suggested that Mr. Arbron put together a plan and said that the budget was between 20 and 30 thousand.

Mr. McKenna asked about targeted mailings and email blasts. Mr. Arbron said that email blasts can be very effected if they goes out to those who were friends of the course. Others who receive an anonymous blast see it as spam.

Mr. Arbron said that one of his strong points is that he is connected to so many different companies and because he can collaborate with the various groups

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

Ms. Obuchowski asked if the two representatives from the Nature Committee could be introduced. She said that the following people have been asked to be on the Nature Area Committee: Mr. Anthony Carrano, Ms. Nancy Crowley, Ms. Peggy Holton, Ms. Lisa Meserole, Mr. Joe Tamburri, Mr. Steve Wallerstein and Mr. Bill Wrenn.

Mr. Mount wished everyone a great holiday season. He said that everyone should be proud of everything that has been accomplished in the last year,

PRO'S REPORT.

Mr. Ruiz updated everyone on the upcoming event. He explained that currently there are 15 volunteers, but there needs to be 25 volunteers for each club. He wished everyone Happy Holidays.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

Mr. Schell said that he was still waiting on the truck. He said that he had gone to Stanwich and that their roof was covered with solar panels. The manager said that they had been selected in a lottery and the panels were installed for free. This has also reduced their utility bills.

Mr. Schell explained that all the trees that were marked for removal were either dead or dying. The willows by the pond have started to die off and need to come down before they create more problems.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Mr. Guyer then distributed copies of the financial report. He then gave a verbal overview. The cart revenue was down due to wet grounds. The revenues have remained flat due to the I.D. cards that are now on sale. Overall, he said that the number of rounds have increased and the revenues have increase by 6%.

Next year's tournament schedule is being created. He said that the Norwalk Firefighters were returning, as was a tournament for a young burn victim. A date needs to be set for the Mayor's trophy. Mr. Mount will contact the City Clerk about this.

Mr. Guyer said that he would be out of town next week.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION.

A. Tennis/Restaurant Liaison Committee - Mr. Cifatti said that there was no tennis activity. He said that one of the group would like to increase their tennis fees. Mr. Guyer said that he would check on this since they lease the court. Next year there will be a tournament to honor Mr. Arick.

Ms. Obuchowski said that the before Thanksgiving, the restaurant had advertised that they would be serving a family style Thanksgiving dinner. She called the restaurant twice on Thanksgiving and there was no answer. This is false advertising.

Ms. Obuchowski said that she had looked at the Yellow Pages and there were different phone numbers listed for the restaurant in the books. She said that if they were not going to update the website, then they should take down the site. Mr. Cifatti said that he had made reservations and gotten a call about 10 days before Thanksgiving from the management saying that they would not be open since they only had Mr. Cifatti's reservation. Discussion followed.

Mr. Ruiz asked if there was a way to have a discussion about the tennis issues that the pro shop is currently providing service, such as handling the registrations. He said that he felt that Kings Highway needs to educate their customers about the various types of tennis memberships. Discussion followed.

B. Operation Committee - Mr. Crowley said that the Committee was in the process of changing the website and have had conversations with three different companies. Currently, Golf Now is the company booking the reservations. If the Authority was to decide with the full Golf Now program, it would have two tee times. Mr. Crowley gave an overview of the details for Golf Now, Kronos and Easy Links. The committee has not reached a final decision.

A discussion followed about the timelines needed to convert to a new system from Chelsea. Mr. Mount said that he had hoped to have a recommendation at this meeting, but it was clear that the Authority did not have enough information.

C. Finance Committee - Mr. McKenna reviewed the financials for the month of November. There was a 4.5% drop in revenue in November, some of which was weather related. There has been some flattening of the golf revenue from last year. The offset is an increase on the expense side. There were a number of one time expenses, like the boiler. Mr. Guyer said that the boiler should be under Capital Projects and this will be reflected in the December figures.

Mr. McKenna asked why the credit card processing fee had increased. Mr. Guyer will look into this. Discussion followed about the various line items.

Mr. McKenna said that over the next few months, the burn rate would be critical. Mr. Guyer distributed copies of a financial document that had the projections through to June. December has proved to be a fairly strong month so far and the coming week-end should net some serious revenue.

A brief discussion followed about the fees for the Mayor's trophy. Mr. Mount said that the boiler replacement was actually a Capital outlay, so the trophy funds should be used to pay for it.

Mr. DesRoches joined the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

Approval of 2015 Fiscal Year Budget - Mr. Guyer said that the Authority has been asked to submit a budget. The figures are based on taking the number of rounds through November and increasing the figure slightly. There have already been 200 rounds played in December. There were concerns that the budget would be overly aggressive but the figures have been done very conservatively.

**** MR. MCKENNA MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2015 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET.**

**** MR. CROWLEY SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Mount asked about the insurance policies. Mr. Guyer said that the insurance agent has been working for the Authority for years.

Mr. Mount also asked when the 2016 forecast was due. Mr. McKenna said that they were working on it and once it was completed the Authority would be on schedule again.

D. Legal Committee - No report.

E. Marketing Committee - Mr. Waters could not attend due to illness. Mr. Mount then distributed copies of a document to the Authority members for their consideration.

The COT ground signs are in place. Mr. Mount said that the indicator signs need to be spruced up. Mr. Mount asked if there were any figures on the 5 for 4. Mr. Guyer updated everyone on the number of I.D. cards that had been sold to date. There has been a strong interest in the non-resident passes.

The winter newsletter is approximately half completed. Mr. Mount listed a number of topics for potential articles.

Mr. Mount displayed a scanned copy of an article about Oak Hills that was in the Wilton newspaper.

F. Human Resources/Policy Committee - Ms. Obuchowski said that the policy was nearly completed. Mr. Mount said that it needed to be completed by March 1st. It needs to be ready for review by the February meeting for approval.

Master Plan Committee/Adhoc Driving Range Committee - Mr. DesRoaches said that there have been discussions with the State and the Committee is waiting for a revised document. The grant should be signed and approved in January. It will need to go to Finance Committee and then to the Common Council. The oil tank will be incorporated into the scope of work for the grant. The RFPs will need to be written after that. Ms. Obuchowski will lead the effort on the Nature Center.

Ms. Obuchowski said that some of the goals will be to clearly define the protected areas, installing signage, the rose garden and great lawn.

OLD BUSINESS

Oil Tank Update - This had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS.

Mr. Guyer asked about season passes. A brief discussion followed. Mr. DesRochers suggested that the Authority consider giving rewards points for customer loyalty. It was suggested that the members show their I.D. cards in order to receive credit.

The discussion moved back to the marketing issues. Mr. Mount said that he would be willing to call a special meeting if needed for the marketing issues. Mr. Ruiz said that he would set up an Excel sheet comparing the various marketing companies for booking tee times.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. DESROCHERS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. MCKENNA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Oak Hills Authority
Regular Meeting
December 18, 2014