OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 15, 2014

ATTENDANCE: Clyde Mount, Chair; Ernie DesRochers, Elsa Obuchowski, John McKenna, Jerry Crowley, Paul Cifatte, Bill Waters, Joseph Kendy

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

ABSENT: David Hollar

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Mount called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. A quorum was present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES.

Minutes of September 18, 2014.

**** MR. CIFATTE MOVED THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2014.**
**** MR. MCKENNA SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2014 AS PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

There was no one who wished to comment at this time.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

Mr. Mount thanked everyone for their attendance and support at the Council meeting the previous evening. The Oak Hills Master Plan was passed and now the Board will start to move forward. It has been reported that Atty. Beltz-Jacobsen has the agreement contract.

PRO'S REPORT.

Mr. Ruiz presented his report. He said that he appreciated the Board considering the various suggestions that had been presented. The golfing season is winding down. Mr. Ruiz will sit down with Mr. Schell to begin the planning for the 2015 season.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT.

Mr. Schell said that due to the wet weather, he put off doing the aeration. It has now been rescheduled for the 20th and 21st.

He compiled a list of equipment that potentially can be replaced. There needs to be a discussion about a truck and a plow. A wood chipper would be nice and allow Mr. Schell to do some tree work. Other items on the list included a tree sprayer, a second mower and fairway mowers. This is only a guideline list. Mr. Schell then gave the details on the condition of the various pieces of equipment. He pointed out that there were numerous pieces of equipment that were leased and when the leases expire, the Authority should consider whether they wish to purchase the items or lease again.

The truck frame is no longer safe and can not be replaced. The plow attachment also needs replacement. He then presented three quotes to the Board Members. He then explained that there was an offer for a dump truck with a leaf vac that was a year older than the current truck. Another option would be to hire a landscaper. He reviewed the details of this. Mr. Schell recommended that the Board trade in the current truck and use the trade in value towards the purchase a new truck.

Mr. Schell then suggested that the administration and pro shop should be moved into the restaurant. In his opinion, this should be a priority, even if it means that there would be fewer bunkers done. The Board should do as many bunkers and cart paths as possible, but the move should be a priority. Discussion followed about the details of this suggestion, the RFP process, and setting the priorities along with the remediation of the oil tanks.

Mr. Schell explained that ordering the truck would take eight weeks and the installation of the plow would add another week. A brief discussion followed regarding whether the purchase would be done through the City's Purchasing Department. This will be looked into.

**** MR. DESROCHERS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A NEW PICKUP TRUCK PLUS SNOW PLOW.**
**** MR. CIFATTE SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF A NEW PICKUP TRUCK PLUS SNOW PLOW PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Mr. Guyer presented his report. He distributed copies of the financial reports to the Board Members. He said that next year, the "Click It For Cassie" event would be held at Oak Hills. He said that in previous years, the organization had sponsored charity soft ball games, but had recently decided to switch over to golf.

Sales in September were flat and the revenues were down slightly compared to the prior year. He then reviewed the number of rounds in the various categories. There was an increase from 4% to 7% and the nine hole rounds continue to be a winner for the course.

Golf Now participation also has increased attendance. This has attracted patrons who otherwise might not come to the course.

The Whittingham Memorial outing went well with 117 players. The Southern New England Women's Golf Association has a Saturday shot gun event scheduled on the 18th. Discussion followed about the minimum participation numbers for the events.

A question was asked about the fact that the sales report shows more income than the P&L report. Mr. Guyer explained that the P&L is adjusted to reflect certain items, such as rain checks or the sales taxes on the carts. The income report shows just the raw revenue. Discussion followed.

A discussion followed about setting new metrics and utilizing the data from the past years. Mr. Guyer said that he would review the information and report back to the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION.

Tennis/Restaurant Liaison Committee – Mr. Cifatte said that tennis season was officially over. The players have been taking very good care of the courts. Mr. Schell will close down the bathrooms on the 16th for security reasons. There are a number of tennis players who would like to continue on until around Thanksgiving. Play has remained high. The courts will be closed down the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

At the restaurant, the lunches and dinners have dropped but they are continuing to host events. Event bookings continue to come in. A discussion followed regarding the fact that the restaurant needs to allow the golfers access whenever the restaurant is open. Mr. Guyer pointed out that according to the lease, the restaurant is allowed to close the main building if there is an event as long as there is food available somewhere else.

Mr. Guyer commented that the final numbers for the Mayor's Trophy was around $10,000. A comment was made that following the tournament, there was no entertainment. It was explained that the entertainment had cancelled at the last minute.

The discussion moved to potential amendments the lease and various ways to increase both golf rounds and restaurant patronage. Mr. Guyer pointed out that the business model was created by others and had been a problem for a long time. A suggestion was made about having a "Grab and Go" concession in the pro shop.

Operations Committee – Mr. Mount appointed Mr. Crowley as the chair of the Operations Committee. It will be important to look at the staffing and the labor and creating the plan during the off season. Mr. Mount said that he would like to see some labor streamlining done, and updating the computer system.

Finance Committee – Mr. McKenna presented his report. He said that the cash is down from last year. Some of this is because of payments that have been made and the loan from last year. The Course is looking to move the bank accounts with a secured credit line. Mr. Guyer said that the staff was considering Norwalk Bank and Trust. This agreement is being reviewed by Atty. Avery. Mr. Guyer explained the details of this. The payroll may be switched from Wells Fargo to ADP. Discussion followed.

Mr. McKenna said that it would be important to keep the increase on track. There are many different factors, such as the weather, the number of rounds and what the goals are for the course.

**** MR. DESROCHERS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO EXECUTE A $100,000 CREDIT LINE AGREEMENT WITH THE NORWALK BANK AND TRUST PENDING FINAL LEGAL APPROVAL.**
**** MR. CIFATTE SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIRMAN TO EXECUTE A $100,000 CREDIT LINE AGREEMENT WITH THE NORWALK BANK AND TRUST PENDING FINAL LEGAL APPROVAL PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

Legal Committee – No report.

Marketing Committee – Mr. Waters presented his report. He thanked everyone for their help with the marketing. He said that the suggested rate increase will be discussed under New Business. Mr. Waters updated everyone about the local re-branding effort and announced that there was a sample of potential logos in the appendix of the report. Discussion followed about the various logos. Mr. Waters said that this was something that the Authority members could work on during the next few months.

Mr. Waters then spoke about the promotions and said that they had worked out well. Cablevision, Nancy on Norwalk and various other advertising venues were mentioned. One suggestion was to have a beer or wine tasting during the off season. Discussion followed about other promotions to increase revenue at the restaurant.

Mr. Guyer then suggested pre-selling tee times. It was pointed out that this was similar to selling a football seat license where the holder has the right to have whoever they want occupy that seat. The holder could also turn around and sell the tee time to a third party. Mr. Guyer said that something like that could happen. A lengthy discussion followed regarding the pros and cons of selling tee time licenses and potential conflicts with the charter.

Mr. Waters reported that the course had lost a few tournaments this year because the groups had negotiated a price for the golf tournaments, but negotiations with Amar had fallen through. It was pointed out that Mr. Ruiz could not negotiate on behalf of the restaurant. It was suggested that there be some coordination between the course and the restaurant.

In considering increasing out of town revenue, Mr. Waters pointed out that according to DEEP, the Authority can not charge out of town golfers more than twice the town rate. It was pointed out that the playing rate in the courses surrounding Norwalk was higher than it was at Oak Hills. By increasing the number of out of town round, the revenues will increase. This would be accomplished by more regional marketing. It was also noted that any increase in the rates would require a public hearing. Discussion followed about various projections for out of town rate cards and the potential of having a senior rate for both residents and non-residents. If the cards were sold at $28.00 with cart revenues at $16.00, it could generate approximately $170,000 of incremental revenue based on 200 plus cards sold. It was suggested that seniors be given the same rate as a resident.

It was pointed out that marketing the discounted rate between January 1st through April 1st could be an excellent Christmas gift. This could also be an excellent way to get someone to come in to purchase a card.

The discussion moved to corporate gifts. It was noted that corporations now want to have their funds designated to specific programs, such as youth golfing.

Having a walk with memorial bricks was the next topic mentioned for the range. This is a project that will be explored.

Human Resources/Policy Committee - Ms. Obuchowski presented a very brief report. Mr. Guyer said that the health insurance was available to all the full time employees. There is no dental plan available at this time. A summary of the benefits is presented to the employees at the beginning of the year and the employees have two or three options to chose from.

Master Plan Committee/Adhoc Driving Range Committee – Mr. Mount thanked Mr. DesRochers for all his hard work on the Master Plan. Mr. Mount asked if the Mayor's Office has the contract. Mr. Guyer said that he had been told Atty. Beltz-Jacobsen had the contract for review. Mr. DesRochers asked if Atty. Avery could get a copy of the contract for the Board. Mr. Guyer said that he would ask. Mr. DesRochers said that the Authority should start to assemble bids for the subcontracting the work. The RFPs have to go through the City Purchasing process. It is expected that the golf course architectural plans will be done separately from the other projects due to drainage concerns. Another architectural firm will be needed for the pro shop and a decision will be needed for the contractor and the contractor will need to conform to the City's Prevailing Wage requirement.

The discussion moved to some nearby open space parcels that the City owns in the area. It was pointed out that each of the parks in the City serves a different function. Some have basketball courts and Calf Pasture Beach has the bocce courts. These City owned parcels may be used for other outdoor functions.

It was suggested that the Commissioners email Mr. Foley to find out how to begin laying the groundwork for the RFPs. A meeting should be scheduled in the near future to discuss setting priorities.

<u>OLD BUSINESS</u>.

Oil Tank Update – Mr. Mount updated the Board Members on the oil tank remediation. He said that the City really wants to complete this project. Both Council Members Kimmel and Petrini are concerned about this issue. Mr. Mount said that he had no new information on this issue. It was pointed out that there will have to be an RFP for the soil remediation.

Mayor's Trophy Update – Mr. Guyer said that the event had been very successful and brought in over $10,000. Mr. Mount asked for the names so that thank you notes could be sent out to sponsors and participants.

<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>.

2015 Rates – Mr. Guyer handed out copies of this year’s current rates and the suggested rates for 2015. He suggested an increase of $1.00 across the board for the greens fees and cart rental. There may be some exceptions on the nine hole rates. There is nothing included about tournament play. These increases could generate an additional $60,000 without any increase in the number of rounds played. The fees have not been raised in three or four years. The discussion moved back to the card rate for seniors and non-resident senior rates, charging a different rate for a nine hole league round and a twilight rate. Mr. Guyer pointed out that the nine hole rate was a consistent source of revenue. It was pointed out that the Board could include a twilight rate, which would change as the months progress. Questions were raised about how a nine hold round would be approved. Mr. Guyer reminded everyone that the rates can not be approved until after a public hearing. It was suggested that the Board members consider how to implement a twilight rate. Booking the Concert Hall or the Community Room for the public hearing was discussed.

It was the consensus of the Board members after much discussion that the carts would remain at $16.00 for the time being. Mr. Mount requested that the rates be emailed to the Board members before the public hearing.

**** MR. CROWLEY MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS ______________.**
**** MS. OBUCHOWSKI SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The Board members entered into Executive Session to discuss __________________ at 10:10 p.m. They returned to public session at 10:44 p.m. No action was taken during the Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. DESROCHERS MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MR. MACKENNA SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**.

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services