CITY OF NORWALK
OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
FEBRUARY 19, 2015

ATTENDANCE: Clyde Mount, Chairman; Paul Ciafatte; Jerry Crowley; Elsa Obuchowski; Bill Waters; Joseph Kendy (7:55 pm)

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

OTHERS: Nancy Crowley, Nature Center Advisory Committee; Mr. Scottsman

Mr. Mount called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and stated there was a quorum present.

ACCEPTANCE MINUTES FEBRUARY 19, 2015

Mr. Crowley said that he found some sentences that were missing words in the minutes as well as a few other errors, and members of the Committee began to review them. Ms. Obuchowski suggested a motion be made to table the minutes until next meeting.

** **MR. CROWLEY MOVED TO TABLE THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2015 UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Scottsman said he was happy the club received the million dollars. He said he did expect that the pro-shop and cart shop would not be demolished or reconfigured and the 1st through 6th holes not be interfered with in preparation for the driving range.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Mount said, in response to the public comment, that the grant had heavily detailed specifications as to work to be done. He said the specifications included a new "Welcome Center," as well as repositioning of the First and Second Tees. He said any work done would be exactly as per what was requested and approved by the State, and that it had been vetted in detail by the State.

Mr. Mount said he had attended a meeting of the Finance Committee of the Common Council. He said they had been invited to talk about the restaurant and the debt. He said a plan was being detailed for the next Finance Committee meeting to review potential resolutions of the debt, get the burden off the Park and start to build the right kind of capital and have a capital improvement plan and working capital without having to use a line of a credit and not having to come back the city. He said the meeting had been positive. He said he thought the press coverage was positive, although the press made it seem like the Park had asked for the meeting, when it had actually been an invitation from the Finance Committee. He said if you looked at the numbers even the restructured debt would not work for the Park. He said there would probably be a meeting with the Mayor and Finance Departments before the next Finance meetings.

PRO'S REPORT

Mr. Ruiz said he did not have much to report and would wait for the Operations' Report to contribute more. He said the EZLink system was up and running.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Mr. Schell said some outside work was started and would continue, dependent on the weather. He said the truck had been running well and would soon be registered. He said he had found a small leak below his house which led to the sewage pit. He was pretty sure it was a blockage and would be fixed the next day. He said it would not cost more than $1,000.

Mr. Waters asked if Oak Hills paid for their own plowing or if the City did it. Mr. Schell said he was paid to do it for the Park. Mr. Guyer said he believed the City was only responsible for plowing Charles Marshall Drive.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. Guyer said the only sales that were going on at the moment on ID cards and that sales were slow in February because many people had already bought their cards in November through January. He said they were slightly off in ID card sales this year, 613 down from 638 but he believes this is due to the weather and people not being able to get to the Park.

Tennis /Restaurant Liaison Committee

Mr. Ciafatte said there was no report on tennis and the restaurant was preparing for opening and had booked some good events over the winter. He said he was surprised the restaurant was not doing anything special for Easter as restaurants at other clubs were fully booked.

Mr. Guyer said that the electricity oat the Halfway House was turned off due to non-payment. Mr. Guyer said as a result the Park had discovered that some of the irrigation systems ran off the Halfway House's electricity, which proved a problem. He said the Halfway House would be paying the bill, which was about $500, within the next few days.

Mr. Waters asked if the lease could be amended and get someone else to run the Halfway House. Mr. Gury said probably not. Ms. Obuchowski asked who had a key to the building. Mr. Schell said he had a key to the Halfway House but not to the restaurant. Mr. Mount said he would like to see last year's revenue. Mr. Guyer said he would ask. Mr. Guyer said the restaurant had reconfigured its menu and there would now be a Tapas menu and not a separate dinner menu and plan to push burgers and such more than they had in the past. Mr. Guyer said the restaurant had also mentioned they had a full catering schedule in May. There was some discussion about how the restaurant being open for special events led to golfers being turned away, which can happen if the Halfway House is open. Ms. Obuchowski asked when the lease was up on the restaurant. Mr. Mount said 2017 and that nothing could be done as that was the same year the Park Authority's lease was up. He said the Park Authority needed to start working on lease renewal soon.

<u>Operations Ad Hoc Committee</u>

Mr. Crowley said the EZLink system was running and a trainer had been there to help the staff. Mr. Ruiz said things were working well and the system was going to save him a great deal of time and the staff was being trained. Mr. Guyer said all members and rates were in the system and that a good feature was that pricing could be changed almost instantly. Mr. Waters wanted to know how long of a warranty there was on the hardware. Mr. Guyer said 38 months. Mr. Guyer said the next step was to email customers to let them know about the new system and how to change their login IDs. He said the EZLink Company was also going to provide a consultant to help with the pricing and promotion of Tee times to get more business.   He said the goal is to get up from 62% to 70% occupancy.

Mr. Ruiz said he had sat down with every available employee and is doing some restructuring to define roles better. He said he would like to have employees work longer hours rather than hiring more employees.

Finance Committee

Mr. Gury said Mr. McKenna had asked him to do the report for him. He said to be aware the end of month looked negative only because of the way payroll was allocated and there was no real negative bank balance. He said that revenues were down in February due to pre-sales of ID cards and noted that expenses were down as well. He said the bottom line was that income was only down $9,000 even though revenue was down $23,000. He said YTD numbers were still looking good, up slightly from last year. He said income from Golf was up almost 5% and other sales including the restaurant were up 2%, in part because the restaurant had received a rent reduction. He said Park was doing well sticking to the budget and net income was up $30,000 more than budgeted a 47% increase. He said the Park had also recently drawn down $60,000 on credit which should be paid back soon after the Park opening.

Marketing Committee

Mr. Waters said opening day was still scheduled for April 4th. He said the restaurant would be opened for breakfast. There was some discussion if this would be a sit down breakfast or a continental breakfast. He said he would find out. He asked if coffee and donuts could also be served outside. Mr. Gury said it would probably be too cold. Mr. Waters said the plan was to walk down with the Mayor and other guests to the first tee and perhaps allow the Mayor and others to speak, and then move to the administration building to talk about the Master Plan and answer any questions.

Mr. Waters said that Clipper Magazine had a type of bartering deal. He said a half page advertisement would cost 12 foursomes and a full page add would cost 24 foursomes. Mr. Mount asked about the circulation of the magazine. Mr. Gury said it was about 100,000 households through Greenwich, New Canaan, Darien, Norwalk, and Westport. Mr. Gury said a half page age might be a good option at no real cost to the club, just about $2,000 worth of course time. Mr. Ruiz asked if there would be time limitations. Mr. Waters said the Park could specify whenever they wanted including weekdays and other off-hours. Mr. Waters said it also might be a good way to generate repeat business and awareness of the Park.

Mr. Waters said the Park Authority had once again been invited to an event called Sports Talk, a dinner featuring local sports stars. He said if the Park purchased a table they would get advertising in the fliers and various local papers. Last year the Park purchased a table for 6 for about $1,000. It was decided by the Committee that although this was a nice event, the money might be better spent on something else.

Mr. Waters said he had met with the Hour with regard to different pricing for advertising they had put together. He said he would also look at what Hearst had to offer. Mr. Waters said the Hour also offered a paid “editorial” option where a statement or letter could be printed without public comment. Mr. Mount said he would like perhaps to use this option to share something with the public, like a letter about the Park he had written previously.

Legal

Mr. Mount said that Mr. Kendy would be running late as he was now teaching a class on Thursdays and would give the report when he arrived later.

Human Resource & Policy Committee

Mrs. Obuchowski reported the employee manual had been finished. Mr. Ruiz reported it had been reviewed with all presently available employees.

Master Plan Committee

Mr. Mount noted as Mr. DesRochers was not in attendance there would be no Master Plan report this meeting.

Nature Center Advisory

Ms. Obuchowski said the Advisory committee now had a vice chair: Bill Wrenn. Ms. Crowley said the committee had a meeting with city officials regarding grants. The purpose of the meeting had been two-fold: to give the city grant administrator information so she could help find grants to match the Park’s needs, as well as find out what grants were available. Ms. Crowley said the meeting had been highly successful and had resulted in plans for a future meeting with the Mayor.

Ms. Obuchowski said they were thinking of getting a local naturalist to lead a tour of the nature trail as soon as the weather permitted. She said in terms of grants the Center was thinking of getting money for descriptive signage and kiosks at the beginning of trails as well as small plaques identifying trees. Ms. Crowley said that at the meeting with the city it was brought up that ADA accommodations often received grant money, so it would be worth looking into. Mr. Mount asked how likely the Center would be to get a grant. Ms. Crowley said she thought quite likely but it would take time, perhaps grants would be awarded by next Fall.

Ms. Obuchowski said there were some ideas for transforming an old field of weeds that used to be some sort of driving range into a gathering place. She said one of the committee members was a graphic designer and artist had come up with a plan to conceptualize this. She also said an RFP for a landscape architect could be obtained. She asked if the website could include a page about the nature trails and Mr. Ruiz said he would do it if she could send him the material. She said the trail would soon have a link to the national "All Trails" site. Ms. Obuchowski said that when she was looking at the Park website she also happened to read the "rain check" policy and thought it might need some revision for the sake of clarity. Mr. Ruiz said it was being redone and the new system would help. Mr. Mount asked with regard to the landscape architect if it might be possible to get the work donated for free in exchange for signage and recognition of the donor. He said it would not hurt to ask to help stretch out the $50,000 budget. Ms. Obuchowski said this was a possible option but she was concerned the free work might not be done at the best standards.

Legal (continued)

Mr. Kendy arrived at the meeting at 7:55 pm.

He said with regard to indemnity and civil rights issues the City's Charter stated that it would defend lawsuits against City commissions and authorities and their directors, and that the Charter listed a number of commissions and authorities including (but not limited to), Transit, Housing, the Maritime Center and Parking Authority. In conclusion, Mr. Kendy said the Charter also stated that at the Mayor's discretion other City agencies could be covered. Mr. Kendy said the Park should push to be included in the City's coverage. Mr. Mount said he would reach out to the Mayor regarding this issue. Mr. Gury said the additional coverage would be helpful because the Park itself could not extend coverage until later in the year due to a previous $2,000 equal employment claim. He said he was also concerned about the cost of additional coverage.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Mount indicated the Committee had already covered Old Business during the course of the meeting and could move on.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Waters asked if the Council had come up with the $15,000 to pay for the Golf Foundation to evaluate the course. Mr. Mount said he would have more information at the next meeting. Ms. Obuchowski asked about the money. Mr. Waters explained that for $15,000 the Golf Foundation would evaluate the course and help to plan for long range feasibility as well as help evaluate the Master Plan.

Mr. Mount said as the Park was not on the City's capital budget plan this year he really wanted to get on the plan for next year. He said it would be important to put in the request to the appropriate parties to get on the budget next September.

ADJOURNMENT

****	MR. CROWLEY MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
****	THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Lund
Telesco Secretarial Services