

**OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
February 19, 2014**

PRESENT: Clyde Mount, Chairman; Ernie DesRochers; Pam Works;
Elsa Obuchowski; Paul Cifatte; Bill Waters; John McKenna;
and David Hollar.

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

ABSENT: None

INTERESTED PARTIES: Walter Englert

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Mount called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Mount asked the Authority Members to review the minutes the December 19, 2013 meeting. Page 3, Executive Director, 5th paragraph, "The OHPA and staff discussed the tournaments..." Page 4, Finance Committee, 4th sentence; Correction: "Mr. Guyer summarized by saying that the..."

****MR. DESROCHERS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 16, 2014 MEETING AS AMENDED.**

****MR. WATERS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

Mr. Nick Pisano noted that the OHPA pays \$100,000 plus yearly for a restaurant that wasn't built the right way, problems with the restaurant lessor and the golfers aren't satisfied. He suggested that OHPA seriously consider building a driving range the right way otherwise it will not succeed and become another headache.

Driving Range Committee – Plan Update

Mr. DesRochers stated that Jim Downing, Doug Smith and Mark Curtain of Total Driving Range Solutions have reengineered the site plan that incorporates the public comment and will explain the updated site plan.

Mr. Downing presented the updated site plan and explained that the pro shop and administrative office would be located next to the restaurant to create a greeting area and relieve the traffic congestion and the practice green would be relocated to where the pro shop is currently. He reviewed the changes to the golf holes around the range and widening the range to add three bays and a golf performance center. Mr. Schell suggested turning the maintenance barn to the side to get more parking and having both a putting green and a separate chipping area. Mr. Ruiz commented that the 7th hole is one of the worse on the course and suggested it be moved back. The OHPA, Mr. Downing and the staff discussed the revisions and staff suggestions to the golf course.

Mr. Mount advised the public that they would have an opportunity to ask questions on the proposed driving range at a public hearing in March the location and date of which would be announced.

Mr. DesRochers advised that the driving range is very much a part of developing a new master plan similar to the master plan drafted in 1999. Mr. DesRochers advised that the public that the new master plan will not only emphasize the Park as a community recreation area but as a golf, tennis and a nature learning center which will be planned adjacent to the nature trails. The OHPA discussed taking public comment on a draft of the master plan in a workshop format in March.

PRO'S REPORT

Mr. Ruiz noted that he continues to be perplexed by the difficulty in driving users to "like" the OH Facebook page. He reported on changes at the pro shop: new carpet, locating the pro shop office in the old store room with windows; reusing the store room to set up equipment to analyze the golfer swing; increase in special orders from golfers due to his competitive prices. Mr. Ruiz reported that about 27 tournaments have been booked and the various events, clinics and camps he has scheduled for the season which he will begin to take registrations for on April 1, 2014.

SUPERINTENDANT'S REPORT

Mr. Schell reported that there has been over 2 feet of snow in February and the snow plow has broken down several times. He advised the Authority that the plow will need to be replaced sometime this year. Mr. Hollar advised Mr. Schell to contact him regarding assistance snowplowing at the Park.

Mr. Schell advised the OHPA that in December an electrical surge occurred which traveled to the shop and fried the irrigation computer and based unit in the field which communicates with the 17 satellites on the course. He has re-set up the office system to try to communicate with the satellites but was only able to communicate with three. He knows that there will be some expense involved to repair the system but until he can get into each satellite he will not know the extent of the total damage. Mr. Schell advised the OHPA that he received an estimate of \$5,800 to install a wireless system from a central location outside of the office, and approximately \$1,900 for each additional site.

Mr. Schell reported that the Assistant Superintendent resigned and he has interviewed four candidates for the position, one of which he plans to offer the position.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. Guyer reported that he has created a senior non-resident golf I.D. card and will begin to track both the senior non-resident ID and green fees separately as requested by Mr. DesRochers.

He distributed the January sales were better than last year due to the sale of I.D. cards and deposits for 2014 golf outings. The OHPA discussed the sales report and differences between February 2014 to 2013.

Mr. DesRochers advised that OHPA that he would like to measure the cost of OHPA golf operations against similar golf courses nationally using the metrics in the reports from the National Golf Foundation. Mr. Guyer stated that OHP is a member but the book may cost money to use or access. Mr. Ruiz noted that he would check if the PGA has similar information.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

Tennis / Restaurant Liaison Committee

Mr. Cifatte advised the OHPA that the tennis facility is not open yet. He noted he is scheduling a meeting with Mr. Gocke and his staff. Mrs. Work noted that her understanding is that Mr. Gocke has not assigned a pro for the new season. She stated that the pros have told her that they are reluctant to work for Kings Highway at OH because the pro's feel that Kings Highway is not committed to paying them to run additional events or to selling merchandise in the shop at the Oak Hills facility.

The OHPA discussed Kings Highway's management of the tennis facility, the tennis revenue stemming from ID card and tennis passes, court availability outside of scheduled lesson's and tournaments. The OHPA agreed that it is important to improve the tennis experience at OH and determined that both the tennis and the restaurant lessee will be asked to regularly attend the monthly OH meeting.

Mr. Guyer stated that he can provide some financial information on the tennis revenue. Mr. Mount asked that the Committee meet with Kings Highway to discuss the concerns that Mrs. Works has stated were brought to her attention by the tennis pros and the woman tennis players at OH.

The OHPA, Mr. Engler and Mr. Guyer discussed the restaurant lease and the agreement to defer rent and consider late payment charges. Mr. Englert suggested Mr. Guyer send a certified letter to the restaurateurs advising them that they are in breach of the lease. Mr. Guyer agreed and noted that he would consult with Attorney Avery. Mr. Mount suggested that he and Mr. Cifatte report the problem to the lease holder, Gino, the owner of Quattro Pazzi.

Operations Ad Hoc Committee

Mr. Guyer and Mr. Ruiz discussed with the OHPA the idea to restructure employment of the OH starter positions to create a full-time (or 2 part-time) seasonal starter/outside operational supervisor. Mr. Ruiz stated that the person interested in this position would be preparing for employment as a club caddy master. Mr. Ruiz stated that they would present a proposal next month. Mrs. Obuchowski inquired whether a position would be advertised or if there is a mandate to publically notice job openings. Mr. Ruiz replied that it would be filled from within or advertised in the PGA journal. Mr. Mount replied that OH is not mandated to publically advertise job positions.

Mr. Mount asked that the staff look at the employee structure and try to consolidate the total hours into fewer employees as well as review the employee handbook.

Mr. Guyer stated that the official opening day would be April 5, 2014. Mr. Mount reported that WEBE 108 has donated hot dogs and he would like to make it an event. He asked that the Authority Members be on sight to welcome golfers and to celebrate the 45th anniversary.

Mr. Mount, Mr. DesRochers and Mr. Hollar agreed to be on the Operations Ad Hoc Committee.

Finance Committee

Mr. Guyer distributed and reviewed the January balance sheet and P & L sheet. Mr. Guyer reported \$6,250 in cash at the end of January which is not a lot but believes with February revenue he should be able to pay expenses. Mr. Guyer reported that the Rents Receivable line is negative -\$1,911 due to deferred rent, plus the -\$9,000 that the restaurateur has not paid since the end of January.

Mr. Englert expressed concern that there was not enough cash to cover February expenses. Mr. Mount noted that Mr. McKenna is an accountant and asked if he'd be willing to chair the finance committee. Mr. Guyer noted that by default Mr. McKenna would be the acting Treasurer until a vote.

Mr. Guyer, Mr. McKenna and Mr. Englert agreed to review the finances. The OPHA, Mr. Englert and Mr. Guyer further discussed the financials and how to increase the February revenue.

Legal Committee

Mr. Guyer reported that he, Mr. Schell and Attorney Avery attended a mediation held by the CT Office of Human Resource to discuss complaints of discrimination by two former employees. He advised the OPHA that no discrimination took place but that a small settlement was offered which the two complainants declined. He stated that Attorney Avery believes it's highly unlikely that the two complainants would hire a lawyer and take the matter to court.

Marketing Committee

Mr. Waters reported that the newsletter has been reviewed and edited by himself and Mr. Guyer and he is planning to email blast it out the first week in March.

Mr. Mount noted that the WEBE 108 radio spots were a great success last year, 96 certificates were bought from WEBE and 96 were redeemed at OH. He reported that he has signed OH up for three spots this year. He noted that the radio spots will be in March, April and May, the first spot is called "Celebrate the Green", March 17-March 21 for which the buyer will get a round of golf free with purchase of a cart. He noted that approximately 500,000 people a week will hear the spots.

Mr. Mount reported that he and Mr. Waters met with the Norwalk Hour to discuss a 2014 advertising campaign. He noted that the Hour has a circulation of about 28,000 people in Northern Stamford, Wilton, and Norwalk. For \$10,000 and 13 weeks, the ad campaign would include three types of advertising. He explained that there's a digital piece that identifies viewers on the Hour who have recently viewed an golf site via the internet and iPhone and sends them ads about Oak Hills; a newspaper OH peel off coupon sticker once a month; a bottom banner in the sports section in the Friday newspapers; and teaser 2x3 ad on maybe Tuesday and Thursday for free. Mr. Mount reported that the ads will run from March 15-June 15 in the Norwalk Hour and OH can pay on monthly for the campaign. The OPHA discussed the marketing plan.

****MR. DESROCHERS MADE A MOTION TO PURCHASE A 13 WEEK ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN WITH THE NORWALK HOUR NEWSPAPER AND ITS AFFILIATES.**

****MR. WATERS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Mount suggested that OPHA try a direct mailing to target the golfers in Fairfield County and has a contact who would share a contact list. He noted that OH can try to increase the social media by mentioning it in all advertising campaigns and the newsletter. Mr. Ruiz noted he would like OPHA to print more flyers for golfers and to distribute to the local hotels and businesses. Mr. Mount suggested participating in local fund raisers in towns that don't have golf courses.

Mr. Waters noted that he read Mrs. Obuchowski critique of the website and noted that the current system isn't sophisticated enough to integrate all the suggestions. The OPHA discussed the website and the information most necessary to display at this time.

Human Resource & Policy Committee

Mr. Mount advised the OPHA that the Committee needs to update the handbook. Mr. Mount asked Mrs. Obuchowski to chair the committee.

Master Plan Committee

Mr. DesRochers stated that discussion of the master plan was given under Diving Range committee.

OLD BUSINESS

Oil Tank Update

Mr. Mount report that Mr. Barron has not responded to the inquiry about removing the oil tank so he will follow up on the issue this week. Mr. Guyer noted that they can't remove the tank once the season begins.

Mayor's Trophy Tournament

Mr. Mount did not have any new information to report. Mr. Guyer stated that he would create a tournament registration form for June 26, 2014. Mr. DesRochers, Mr. Waters and Mr. Hollar with Mr. Ruiz help agreed to form a committee to organize the tournament. Mr. Mount asked noted that it will take a concerted effort by all the Authority Members to make it a big success. The OHPA reviewed the types of tournament sponsorship, what companies' participated last year and use of the City vendor list to solicit sponsorships. He asked that the 2013 plaque be engraved.

Committee Structure and Assignments

Mr. Mount noted that the members were assigned to various committees through the night.

DRAFT 2014 Committees

Human Resources: Mrs. Obuchowski, and ?

Tennis/Restaurant: Mr. Cifatte, Mrs. Waters, Mrs. Obuchowski

Master Plan: Mr. DesRochers, and ?

Driving Range: Mr. DesRochers, and ?

Operations and ad hoc: Mr. DesRochers, Mr. Mount, Mr. Hollar

Marketing: Mr. Water, Mr. Mount

Finance: Mr. McKenna, and ?

Mayors Trophy: Mr. DesRochers, Mr. Waters, Mr. Hollar, with the help of Mr. Ruiz

Legal: none

BOY SCOUT PROJECT UPDATE

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Assignment of Committees

Mr. Guyer advised Mr. Mount that the OH by-laws "matters of procedure" refer to Roberts Rules to determine how to nominate officers. Mr. Ciffatte asked that an updated list of the Authority Members be distributed.

Agenda Changes

Mr. Mount asked Mr. Guyer to place "Chairman's Report" on the agenda after the public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

****MR. CIFATTE MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

****MR. DESROCHERS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Dravis