

**OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
MEETING MINUTES
October 16, 2012**

PRESENT: Bob Virgulak, Chairman; Mike Corsello, Vice Chairman; Pat Williams; Bill Kementzides; Paul Cifatte; Stephanie McLaughlin; Shannon Giandurco and Clyde Mount.

STAFF: Shelly Guyer, Executive Director; Tom Vorio, Superintendent and Ed Ruiz, Golf Pro.

ABSENT: None.

INTERESTED PARTIES: Randall Avery, Attorney.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Virgulak called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Virgulak asked the Authority Members to review the minutes from the September 20, 2012 meeting.

****MR. CORSELLO MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2012 MEETING.**

****MR. CIFATTE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED. MRS. GIANDURCO ABSTAINED.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Paul Cantor stated that he resides on Fallow Street and cited his recent letter to the Norwalk Hour that expressed his opposition to a driving range being discussed at Oak Hills Park. He stated that he is appalled that the Oak Hills Park Authority would again consider building a driving range and feels it shows contempt for the neighbor's objections and he vowed to fight the proposal should the Authority begin the process to receive the City's approval to construct it. He stated that he objects to the traffic, noise, environmental damage and instead would like greater access to the Park for those who do not play golf.

Diane Lauricella stated that she understands that to have a top notch golf course revenue is necessary to improve the course. She stated that she is an environmental consultant and was pleased to hear of the improvements at Oak Hills particularly that Oak Hills has handled the water issues that have occurred over the years. She noted that she was part of the City wide effort year's back that opposed the driving range in favor of the preservation of open space and remain open to the public for recreation and walking trails. She asked to see and suggested that the public have access to the driving range plan. She noted that a statistical analysis was prepared by Tony Grant to determine the number of driving range "rounds" needed in order for the project to be profitable enough to support course improvements and he found that the range would have to be open at night for it to make the profit necessary which this type of range would harm the neighborhood and park. She stated that she thought there must be a number of other ways to generate revenue and ask that the Authority try a different approach.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Virgulak stated that presenter of the NEON Work program could not give the presentation due to

illness and asked that the presentation be rescheduled to the November meeting.

PRO'S REPORT

Mr. Ruiz stated that he did not have any new information to report this month.

SUPERINTENDANT'S REPORT

Mr. Vorio provided a course maintenance update (full report attached) regarding the arrival of the new turf equipment, the success of the fall greens aerification, the dry summer and early frost had prompted an early leaf pick up. He stated that due to saturation of the fairways he plans to skip the fall aeration and instead he will spike and seed the thin areas with stronger, draught tolerant grass seed. He stated that he plans to prepare the greens for winter with a deep hole aerification the first week in November which allows the snow melt to drain properly which prevents ice damage to the greens.

He noted that he has been working with Mr. Perez to redesign the turnaround on the 18th hole to incorporate a memorial garden to honor our fallen soldiers in conjunction with the benches he has dedicated in the memory of his sons.

Mr. Vorio reviewed the project to extend the drainage from the 8th hole across the 9th hole to the rough on the 10th hole, the construction of a detention basin on the 18th hole and 7th tee, two additional concrete support piers for support are needed for the outdoor cold storage building as well as a concrete pad adjacent the pro shop to place the above ground oil tank which is scheduled to be installed in the spring, and the irrigation lines for sewer excavation have been marked and digging is scheduled for the end of October. He reported that the contractor has delayed the start of the sewer project until October 30, 2012. He, Mr. Guyer and Mrs. Williams decided to put a hold on the entire project schedule to ensure that there are additional funds available should the contractor have to remove more ledge than expected.

Mr. Vorio reported that he attached a copy of the article he wrote about Oak Hills Park and course maintenance to the Norwalk Hour for the Authority Members to read. Mr. Virgulak noted that it was a good letter.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. Guyer advised the Authority that the Mayor Trophy golf tournament netted \$5,100 and it would be used to make improvements to the golf course. He noted that the last tournament of the year attracted 92 golfers. Mr. Guyer stated that in order to get more golfers on the course he has been trying several different golf specials in October.

Mr. Guyer stated that an additional 350 emails were added to the system. He stated that One to One Marketing, the company that hosts the website offers free programs, a survey, a mobile phone app, and will update the website for free in January. He noted that he has asked them to confirm what programs are free and if they offer the same services as Constant Contact he will cancel Constant Contact and save up to \$600 a year.

Mr. Guyer reported that he attended a healthcare reform seminar to access information on how the new law would affect them and determined that Oak Hills qualifies as a small business.

Mr. Guyer advised the Authority that sales during the month of September stated that revenue and rounds are up slightly up which has closed the gap created in July. He reported that the year to date revenue is up 1%. He noted that GolfNow.com has generated over \$8,400 in revenue this year. The Authority Members, Mr. Guyer and Mr. Ruiz discussed the consistently low number of junior golf

rounds this year and how to improve it next year.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND DISCUSSION

Tennis / Restaurant Liaison Committee

Mr. Cifatte reported that the Oak Hills 2013-2015 tennis lease has been vetted by Mr. Foley, Attorney Avery, and was agreed to by Mr. Gocke and is now ready for Mr. Virgulak to sign.

****MR. CIFATTE MADE A MOTION TO AUTHORIZED MR. VIRGULAK TO EXECUTE THE 2013-2017 TENNIS LEASE WITH JEFF GOCKE OF KINGS HIGHWAY TENNIS.**

****MRS. WILLIAMS SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Virgulak signed the tennis lease.

Mr. Cifatte stated that restaurant is trying but the overall reaction to the Terrace Grill is that the food and menu is decent but could be better. He believes that the restaurateur has been cooperative and noted that they have been serving breakfast out of the shack.

Greens, Facilities & Water Use Committee

Mr. Kementzides questioned whether winter aeration in the first week of November would negatively affect the number of winter golf rounds. Mr. Vorio stated that he would not delay the aeration any longer than the second week in November but recommended that it be done in the first week of November as planned. The Authority discussed the matter further and agreed that Mr. Vorio has made an educated decision and deferred to his experience.

Mr. Kementzides requested that Mr. Guyer ask the school golf coaches to organize some junior golf volunteers to fill divots next year in return for free golf times.

Finance Committee

Mrs. Williams stated that she and the staff have been trying to catch up on the financial reporting. She reported that the July, August and September financials were now completed, the 2011-12 year has been closed, the yearly audit is being prepared and she is working to complete the budget and the five year plan. She noted that once the latter is done she would release the July, August and September financials to the Authority to review in November but noted that she doesn't expect the cash flow over the winter to be good so she continues to look at how to reduce the budget.

Legal Committee

Mr. Corsello stated that the Authority will discuss the new restaurant lease with Attorney Avery in executive session.

Marketing Committee

Mrs. Giandurco thanked everyone who played a part in making the Mayor's Trophy Tournament a success. She stated that she is meeting with Golf Now to discuss free additional marketing tools.

Mrs. Giandurco noted that she is developing a 2013 marketing plan with a monthly itemized structure. She noted that last year she was not able to market the course effectively because the fees were not decided until March or April 2012 and asked that fee's be discussed and determined preferably by January so that she can begin marketing prior to the start of the season.

The Authority discussed fee's and determined that they need to discuss fee's in November so that they can hold a public hearing in January if necessary. Mr. Ruiz advised the Authority they should consider and review the time structure as well as the rates. He, Mr. Guyer and the Authority briefly discussed how to address the time structure.

Mr. Mount noted that the Marketing Committee cannot market without money. He suggested that the Authority discusses ways to raise revenue such as getting tee and green sponsors. The Authority and Mr. Vorio discussed carts signs, marker signs and the Members approaching potential sponsors with a tee sign mock up. Mr. Guyer noted that he would probably have a proposal from a marketer on cart signs in November.

Human Resource & Policy Committee

Mr. Mount reported that he has a personnel issue to discuss in executive session. He noted that due to the recent employee issue he has decided to write policy to address what system of warnings the Authority would take before terminating an employee.

Master Plan Committee

Mr. Mount stated that the new committee consists of Mr. Guyer, himself and Mr. Ruiz. He noted that the committee will meet to brainstorm to produce a road map and eventually prepare a 5 year plan. The Authority Members discussed how to proceed in developing a master plan.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Corsello stated that the Authority will discuss in executive session whether they will authorize the Chairman to execute a new restaurant lease with RM staffing.

Mr. Virgulak commented that the Authority has only just begun to investigate construction of a driving range so as of yet has not discussed the driving range in any length but will make a concerted effort to create a plan that won't be intrusive to the neighborhood i.e. the range will not be lit and traffic will not be an issue. He stated that the Authority has exhausted all other revenue ideas and has cut the budget to bare bones so in order that the Park survives the Authority has to have another revenue source.

Mr. Corsello stated that the Authority has had a constant problem coming up with adequate revenue to meet their enormous loan obligations to the City and so have already reviewed the concept of miniature golf and a skating rink. He noted that right now the only source of revenue is golf course fees and they are not enough to meet financial obligations, maintain the course and the stay competitive with area golf courses. He noted that the Authority believes that a driving range is the only way to create additional revenue to accomplish these things. Mr. Corsello stated that he read Mr. Cantor's letter in the Norwalk Hour and was disappointed with the comments he made tonight because he seems very close minded about the issue. He stated that he's sure he speaks for the Authority when he says that the Authority intends to accommodate the neighbors to the greatest extent possible and will clarify the misconceptions made by Mr. Cantor about the plan.

Mr. Virgulak noted that the misconceptions are based on a plan presented 11 years ago for a driving range in a different location. He stated that he thinks the neighborhood has changed sufficiently and believes it will give the Authority the opportunity to prove that the new location of the range will not be disruptive.

The Authority discussed how to proceed with obtaining a plan. Mr. Mount suggested that they first putt out a RFQ then an RFP as the Mayor suggested when he spoke to him last week. The Authority discussed the recommendation, having Mr. Foley the City Purchasing Agent prepare the RFQ to help ensure that it makes financial sense and the driving range financial pro-forma prepared by Mr. Englert.

Mr. Vorio reported that he received an email from Mr. Anthony Corano of the West Norwalk Association regarding the driving range. Mrs. Williams asked that he forward it to the Authority

Members and Mr. Guyer. Mr. Virgulak asked Mr. Guyer reply to Mr. Corano and offer to give a tour of the new location of the driving range.

Mr. Vorio reported that the Conservation Officer Alexis Cherichetti is pulling the records on the conservation trails at the back of the proposed site of the driving range to determine the history of when and why the trails were established. The Authority discussed the trails.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Vorio stated that he and Mrs. William were discussing winter snow removal and how to manage the work without an assistant and asked the Authority Members how much of the property (golf and restaurant parking lot & road) was the Authority required to plow and what approach the Authority wants to take toward sledding on the golf course. The Authority Member, Mr. Vorio, Mr. Guyer and Attorney Avery discussed the issues and Attorney Avery advised the Authority how to proceed.

Mr. Vorio reported that on occasion 1-2 groups of golfers loiter in the parking lot after playing golf and he wanted the Authority to know that property damage has occurred as a result. The Authority discussed the issue and agreed that Mr. Guyer and Mr. Ruiz would approach the group to address the Authorities concern.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

****MR. CORSELLO MADE A MOTION TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

****MR. CIFATTE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Authority went into executive session to discuss an employee request at 9:04 p.m. and returned to the regular meeting at 10:31p.m.from executive session.

Mr. Corsello stated that after discussing the terms and the security in the proposed lease with the restaurateur RM Staffing the Authority Members determined that the terms negotiated by Attorney Avery are prudent but the Authority decided it is not ready to vote to execute the lease at this time. He stated that some new information has come to the attention of the Oak Hills Park Authority Members and they plan to review the information prior to taking action on the new lease.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:33 p.m.

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

****MR. CORSELLO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,
Sheila Dravis