BLOOMFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
GOLF SUBCOMMITTEE

There was a special meeting of the above referenced subcommittee held on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Committee members present were:  Councilor Kevin Gough, Ciaran Carr, Kevin Laing, Rosemary Gunning, Jon Colman, Mark Mansur

Also present were:  Robert E. Smith, Town Manager, David Melesko, Director of Leisure Services and India Rodgers, Clerk of Council

Absent were:  Councilor Joseph Merritt, Deputy Mayor Rickford Kirton, Bradley Klein, Ryan Phelps, Rhoan Stewart, Byron Lester, Gregory C. Davis, Robert Morisse and Lynette Easmon

Guest:  Matt Fauerback, Argonomist for Billy Casper Golf

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Wintonbury Hills Golf Course – Monthly Activities and Financial Report

Mr. Ciara Carr, General Manager of Wintonbury Hills Golf Course presented an update of golf financials and course operations for July and August 2019.

The months of July and August were the best revenue generating months of the season for the golf course. There was an increase in public rounds of 1,408 for the year. The course is trending very well for the month of September thus far.

Total revenues year to date increased $225,555 over prior year. The Total Cash and Short Term Investments is $524,216. Some of the contributing factors in increases included revenues in the Golf Shop and Food/Beverage sales within outing fees. This increase was approximately $82,000 for 2019. Payroll continues to be under budget of $8,000 for 2019 to budget. The Net Ordinary Income was $70,000 over prior year for both July and August combined.

Councilor Gough noted that through the month of August, the EBITDA (Operating Income) was approximately $163,000. He also commented on the Public Links outing event held in August 2019. Councilor Gough inquired about publishing the overwhelming positive comments of the tournament for the community in the Bloomfield Messenger.

Mr. Mark Mansur, Course Superintendent gave a brief update on golf course conditions. Mr. Mansur stated that the course was very wet in the beginning of June. However, the month of July was the 2nd hottest on record for the course since its opening. There have been some turf challenges during this dry period, resulting in running irrigation at peak performance. Mr. Mansur and his team are currently performing regular maintenance on the course with cutting, leaf collection and the preparation to aerate greens soon.
July/August Snapshot

- Duane Haley Open - 2 Man Modified Event was cancelled due to the lack registered participants. Golf management has plans to host this event next year.

- CSGA - CT Public Links Championship held on August 6th and 7th was a very successful event. There were approximately 12,000 reviewed results, newspaper advertisement and coverage.

September Marketing

- Pass holder Drive has begun for FY 2020
- Toys for Tots - Sunday, October 27, 2019
- Black Friday Scramble - Friday, November 29, 2019

Discussion on Maintenance Replacement Reels Schedule and Final Cost

Mr. Mansur gave a brief status update on the request for maintenance of reels replacement for three fairway units. Currently, the course owns three fairway units that are approximately seven years old with about 1800 labor hours of wear and tear. He would like to replace and upgrade the cutting reels on each unit to prolong the purchase of new units. The cost estimate for this replacement upgrade is $50,000 and would guaranteed another five years of use.

Mr. David Melesko, Director of Leisure Services identified the three fairway unit replacements as well as the Top Dresser within the 5 year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the course. There was a brief discussion on the need to replace the Top Dresser prior to approval within the Capital Improvement Plan. It was noted that the cost estimate for the Top Dresser is approximately $12,000 - $13,000. It is a critical piece of equipment to offset ground maintenance concerns. Mr. Melesko will follow up with the Finance Director and inquire on how this expenditure could be financed.

Discussion regarding Range Machine Replacement and Capital Improvement FY 2020

Mr. Carr reviewed the cost estimates for the replacement of the Range Machine. The decision was made to purchase this unit from Range Servant. Although, the price is not the most economical, this machine would meet the needs of the course. It is twice in size, installation is included and it is the best machine on the market.

This replacement does not currently meet the threshold for the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Melesko will consult with the Finance Director on the best way to finance this replacement. He also recommended to go back out to bid to obtain more of a price comparison for submittal in the CIP for next year.

Mr. Carr also noted that this machine is compatible with the use credit cards or pin number with an internet bridge link to the clubhouse.
Presentation on Potential Rate Changes with Greg Sinder, Director of Marketing for Billy Casper Golf

Mr. Carr presented a review of potential rate changes for residents and non-residents. If the rates are reduced for residents, it would not make a difference with the bottom line. The subcommittee discussed a possible significant discount rate for residents to encourage use at the course. At the next subcommittee meeting, Mr. Greg Sinder, Director of Marketing for Billy Casper Golf will present data to support potential changes.

Mr. Melesko asked about if there is goal target number from the Town, to provide guidance for statistical data from Billy Casper Golf.

Mr. Jon Colman made a recommendation to reduce the rates in half for town residents. This option would make it more attractive for residents to play. He also briefly discussed the introduction of a “Super Senior” rate, individuals 90 years and older would qualify.

Councilor Gough noted that the subcommittee and golf management could potentially decrease or increase the rates, if it is not feasible for the course.

Public Comment

1. Bill Starkie, member of the Men’s Club commented on the amount of base play is from non-residents. He asked if the rates for non-residents be reviewed and considered for reduction as well. Mr. Starkie also asked how this rate change would affect the differential between residents and non-residents. There may be other issues with increased play, divot ball marks and rubbish on the grounds.

2. Don Tinker, President of the Men’s Club suggested to the subcommittee to be careful not to lower the rate too much, may have a major influx of golfers you can’t accommodate.

Discussion regarding Event Bookings

Mr. Carr noted the increase of event/outing booking for the 2019 season. These events have not impacted the regular course of play with pass holders and visiting golfers.

Discussion regarding the Resident Days

Mr. Carr commented on the suggestion to offer additional “Resident Days” to encourage Bloomfield residents to play at Wintonbury Hills Golf Course. The subcommittee discussed the idea offering additional days throughout the year. Mr. Carr stated that $10,000 has been set aside in the marketing budget. The initial Resident Day held in April allowed residents to play for only $5.00. He asked how many resident days is the town interested in and the possible budgetary impact that may occur.

Councilor Gough noted that if the subcommittee agrees to lower the rates for residents, then resident days could be offered in the beginning of the season in conjunction with rate offerings.
Mr. Melesko suggested a day or two to be offered later in the season in June or September. He also inquired about tracking who is coming and possibly offer a Player Appreciation Day or discount to frequent resident visitors.

**Discussion regarding Resident/Player Development Programs**

Mr. Carr noted that the course would like to offer the following programs to the community:
- SNAG Day
- Junior Golfers Program
- Continuation of the Middle School After School program with Leisure Services

He noted that is a struggle to attract new golfers from Bloomfield.

**Discussion on Signage/Player Education on Divot and Ball Mark Repair – Divot Mix on Par 3 Tees**

Mrs. Rosemary Gunning commented on increased play at the course and expressed concern of how many players don’t know how to take care of the course. She noted that more education and signage is needed with instruction for repairs. Mrs. Gunning would like golf management to focus on re-educating golf leagues. She made a suggestion to have repair mix on Par 3.

Mr. Mansur stated that initially divot mix was placed on Par 3, however golfers used containers inappropriately as a step stool, cigarette butt can, seats as well as when left in the elements, pre-germination occurred. He noted that repairing containers are supplied on weekly basis.

The Divot Mix Program is filled every day. Mr. Mansur has tried to do bottles on fairways with no seed. Individuals don’t read the signage when posted on how to repair divot and the overall care and conditions of the course.

**Old Business**

**Discussion regarding Wayfaring Signage and On-Course Portable Toilets**

The discussion regarding wayfaring signage was tabled until Bob Morisse is in attendance at the next meeting.

The subcommittee discussed the option of installing on course portable toilets near the 5th tee. There was discussion regarding a privacy fence with a normal unit, bio-degradable compost with fully operational facilities. However, access for maintenance and installation of these portable toilets is a concern relative to course conditions. The subcommittee also discussed concerns of exposure and potential vandalism. Mr. Melesko will solicit quotes for this type of unit. It is still need on course, however accessibility, long term maintenance and overall annual costs are being considered.

Mr. Colman suggested cutting a pathway to the existing facility near the 5th and 6th tees.
Mr. Melesko and golf management will come up with placement and pricing for additional on-course restrooms.

**Wintonbury Hills Golf Course/Billy Casper Golf Contract Update**

Mr. Melesko stated that the Purchasing Coordinator will submit the draft proposal for review by Town Attorney next week.

Councilor Gough commented on the Town purchasing the house adjacent east of the golf course. The cost to demolish this house is included in the Capital Improvement Plan. There have been some discussion to possibly extend parking for the golf course on this project that would have gravel pavement for overflow.

The subcommittee discussed hiring a firm to determine what our options are in order to generate additional revenue. The focus is on the idea of a “four season restaurant/banquet facility” that has been a topic of discussion for some time now. Also, there was discussion regarding a review other potential revenue possibilities for this property. There may be a request to be include funding in the FY 2020 CIP budget for this project.

**Public Comment**

1. **Don Tinker**, suggested to schedule a special meeting to discuss with the golf course the potential for a four season building expansion that would generate revenue as soon as possible. The CIP funding should provide resources to retain a consultant to review existing land area and highlight Wintonbury Hills as the destination course it is.

Councilor Gough noted that Bloomfield does not have any facilities to accommodate larger community events. However, the old Alexandria Manor facility is being considered for plans to restore as a boutique, hotel, banquet facilities and apartment living.

Mr. Tinker also thanked Mr. Carr and his staff for everything that has been done with the Men’s Club.

Mr. Colman gave kudos to the Men’s Club for their dedication and commitment to the game of golf by generating social events, attracting new membership and overall great promotion of Wintonbury Hills Golf Course to all.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There was no quorum to approve minutes from June 24, 2019.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.