



**GOLF ADVISORY BOARD
SUMMARY
November 24, 2020**



- Pete Aspinwall *excused*
- Kelly Casey
- Jack Gregg
- Riley Kurtz

- Art Pembroke
- Judy Reddy
- Susan Skinner-Bannon
- Tessa Bailly

Ex-Officio Members

- Larry Kurokawa, Golf Course Superintendent
- Conlan Burk, Head Golf Pro
- Erik Sundquist, Food and Beverage Manager
- Kristi Ponzoso, Director, Parks and Recreation
- Jennifer Schade, Recorder

League Members

-

LOCATION: **Via Zoom**

Topic: **GOLF ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

Time: November 24, 2020 12:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97504433428?pwd=TFIrbVc3RXFadVdaZUxUa0FNdCtIZz09>

Meeting ID: 975 0443 3428

Passcode: 428688

One tap mobile

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Mission Statement: The Bill Roberts Golf Course is committed to providing a high quality, friendly, and affordable public golfing experience for all ages and abilities within the greater Helena community!

Visitors: None.

1. Call to Order/Establish Quorum/Review Agenda

- Conlan called the Golf Advisory Board to Order at 12:01 pm.
- A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Minutes:

- September 2020 Minutes
- Conlan mentioned there was one change to the minutes. The July rounds actually finished at 7,775.
- Jack moved to approve the September 2020 minutes as amended. Judy seconded. Motion carried.

3. New business

Discussion: Online Booking

- Online booking: Conlan stated he mentioned the potential of online booking for next year, and moving forward. Conlan has had continued conversations with representatives from Easy Suite and Golf Now. Golf Now is the “parent company” of our current point of sale provider, Easy Suite. At this time, we have several providers we use for our various forms of online communication/booking (example: our website is through one company, our email system is through another company, our “Tee Sheet” doesn’t communicate with the restaurant at this time).
- Conlan has received a proposal to consolidate the uses as well as take our “tee sheet” online. Conlan sees this as a trend nationwide. The down side to this is that this would be a “Golf Now” platform is that in using this platform, Conlan would have to give up trade times from BRGC’s tee sheet. The revenue booked would go to Golf Now. Conlan did state that they have placed price floors on all of these trade times.
- As it stands, with the current terms Conlan is negotiating with this company, the price floor would be capped at 25% for first 30 days. After 30 days, if no of the trade times booked, they would then have the option to bump that to 35%. If 90 days go by and no one has booked on Golf Now, they can drop down to 50%. Conlan stated he feels comfortable with that.
- In return, we are taking all of our tee sheets (whether the golf course, all three simulators, and everything online) and will be able to book everything online as opposed to doing business by phone. There are many safe guards built into this system so we are not being abused on the online booking. There are alerts that Conlan will receive if someone who is utilizing the booking system is misusing. It is integrated with what we see in real time.
- With this platform, we will obtain a new website. The tee sheets will be on our website as well. As a golfer at BRGC, you don’t need to go to Golf Now – you will now go directly to our website at [www. https://www.billrobertsgolf.com/](https://www.billrobertsgolf.com/).
- Conlan’s end goal is that hopefully by end of next week, we have the website live and the simulator online booking process functioning.

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- Art stated he is unsure how this process works for season pass holders. Is this built into the system or will the season pass holders have their own portal?
- Conlan stated the season pass holders will have their own portal with their own unique username, password, and profile. Season pass holders will also have fewer restrictions.
- Conlan reminded everyone that this is only for booking portion – all the transactions will occur at the golf course.
- Riley stated this program sounds great! It will simplify things for the golfer and alleviate some of the stress for the staff of having to manage this.
- Jack asked if the program allows for booking multiple tee times. Conlan stated that it does have some restrictions. As Administrator, Conlan can set this. Again, as a season pass holder, you will have fewer restrictions. Jack then asked if Conlan will keep booking capabilities out one week as it is now. Conlan is considering, that in an effort to incentivize season pass holder play, maybe extending that capability to 10 days. He will visit this option further down the road. You won't be able to book one month in advance.

Discussion: Fees Review

- As you are aware, we did experience a fee increase last year. People were not happy about that. We had this increase due to the fact that BRGC had not raised fees in previous years.
- Conlan stated that at this time, revenues are right where they should be. We experienced an increase from last year. This being said, Conlan believes there is not a lot of room for increasing our fees for the upcoming season. In his proposal last year, Conlan stated that our season pass holders continue to be our biggest user group. He would like to see small increases each year as opposed to large increases over several years. He believes a 1% – 2% increase each year is much more doable for the golfers.
- With this being said, there are five rates we will be changing this year. They include:
 - ✚ Adult Pass: increase from \$810 to \$820
 - ✚ Couple Pass: increase from \$1,240 to \$1,260
 - ✚ Senior Pass: increase from \$730 to \$740
 - ✚ Senior Couple Pass: increase from \$1,220 to \$1,240
 - ✚ Young Adult Pass: increase from \$415 to \$430
- Conlan stated that while these are nominal increases, he feels these small, palatable increases will be easier to handle in the end. This is what has been proposed to commission.
- The other change we have is the addition of the "Tower Club". This is our exclusive Resident Discount program.
 - ✚ You must be a City of Helena Resident
 - ✚ There is a \$50 entry fee
 - ✚ This will allow the holder discounted fees for the remainder of the year.
 - ✚ For 9 holes of golf, it will cost \$16 per round instead of \$22 (for our normal green fees)
 - ✚ For 18 holes of golf, it will cost \$32 per round instead of \$39 (for our normal green fees)
 - ✚ The more you use, the more you will gain from it. However, at the end of the day, our rate never is devalued to where we are losing money on this.
 - ✚ Tower Club members will also receive a 10% discount off soft goods.

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- Conlan stated that we also have added a ½ Season Pass. We have many golfers who have asked if they can set up a payment plan. This would be difficult to track with the amount of play we have at BRGC. However, this option could be beneficial for someone who could be gone for half of the season or for someone who has just moved to town during the second half of the season. We would have the capability of offering someone a pass for half of the season. This rate is more expensive than what our typical season pass holders pay. A half season pass will cost as follows:
 - + Adult Half Season Pass: \$500
 - + Senior Half Season Pass: \$450
- For our regular season pass holders, this will be \$130 more over the course of the year. This is a nice incentive for people who might not play at all if we didn't offer this.
- The final addition is our "Family Golf Pass"
 - + This pass will include unlimited use of the Last Chance Splash Waterpark and Pool.
 - + The family definition includes "all members of the same household; kids under 18"
 - + This pass will cost \$1,400
- Other than those listed above, our rates will remain the same. They are still below average and super competitive across the state. Conlan is very comfortable with all of these increases/additions.
- **Jennifer will email the rate comparison worksheet that Conlan shared with the board.**

Review on comparison reports

- Conlan asked for questions/concerns/comments on the financial comparisons.
- Jack stated that we look a whole lot better than we did a year ago!
 - + Personnel expenses have gone down quite a bit except for golf concessions which was expected. We have made big strides to make Muni's a profitable venture.
 - + Conlan – in light of COVID, we have had a very successful year.
- Conlan gave a shout out to both golf and Golf Maintenance! We have done an exceptional job with reduced crews. Hats off to seasonal employees and staff at BRGC!!
- Conlan then stated that we will be getting a check from Pepsi shortly. That check will be in the amount of \$22,000.00

4. Old Business

- None.

5. Reports

Parks and Recreation Director's Report

- Kristi stated she has nothing more to offer.
- We are still working on sanitizing and following the Lewis and Clark health guidelines in regards to COVID. We are still encouraging the wearing of facemasks and social distancing. At this time, Muni's is at 50% capacity. Kristi reminded everyone to stay vigilant.

Golf Superintendent Report

- Larry provided a report of the 2020 season.

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- We opened the greens on March 9. On March 28, we had a 10-day closure due to COVID. We reopened on April 7. We closed the greens on November 6. We had 233 open play days. This is similar to previous years.
- With round counts up, play seemed to be in more demand. People were anxious to get outside.
- Because of COVID, we were unable to have bunker rates, bottle washers, water jugs, etc., on the course, which in some ways saved us labor; however, we did need additional labor to pick up in the bunkers.
- effects – some things weren't out – had to pick up labor in bunkers
- Non-routine events included the Benton Avenue paved trail and fence and some irrigation replacements
- We did do some tree removal. There were seven diseased trees. We also had two memorial tree replacements – one for Harold Cox and the other for Van Jamison.
- The tree on the 11 green should have been removed last year. Larry thinks it needs to be replaced. We could remove it this winter. Everyone wants it gone. It will take a day to remove the tree and then Larry would like to move a replacement tree over a little to the west. Larry recommends something like a Honey Locust Tree.
- 1 day out move replace tree over
- Jack asked if there has been any thoughts of trail rerouting in that area. There has been discussion of routing the trail behind the green, but that will involve safety nets.
- Larry stated that doing something like this in-house with small staff makes it difficult. With nets involved, we will be looking at a few thousand dollars.
- Cart barn reroof is complete. The skylights were removed. The cost was \$23,400.
- The winds have been very hard on driving range nets. We had to replace one panel.
- This winter we will work on updating records and fleet maintenance.
- Kurtis had knee replacement surgery and will be out until January.
- Larry announced that he is retiring in March 2021. He is working with Kristi on a job description and advertising.
- Art gave kudos to the entire maintenance staff! The course was great this year! The new cart path and fence looks very nice – WELL DONE!

Golf Professional Report

- Conlan stated that rounds up 9% over the year. At the end of 2019, we ended at 32,283 rounds. As of today, rounds finished at 35,998. Some of this success can be attributed to the 9-minute intervals we switched to. This offered us a better pace of play.
- Winter simulator league is up and running. We have 56 teams. At this time, Conlan does not feel comfortable with large gatherings in light of the COVID pandemic. As of an hour ago, we have had one employee in the restaurant test positive for COVID and will have to close the restaurant for two weeks. Conlan will keep the simulators running; however, there will be no food or beverage offerings. There will be minimal contact with golfers and Conlan will spend the majority of his time sanitizing. This is not ideal, but we have already had eight cancellations due to COVID quarantine.

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- Conlan has split simulator league into 2 sessions. If one session is forced into a shutdown, we will hopefully be able to continue on. Conlan will keep everyone updated.

Men's League Report

- Jack stated that the board met two weeks ago. This is Jack's last term as President of the board. Erick Schweitzer will be the President. **Jack will send Jennifer Erick's contact information for notification of the Golf Advisory Board meetings.**
- Considering COVID and the late start, overall it was a great season!
- The board agreed that Men's League will begin play the first part of May next year instead of April.
- Jack will provide more information in January.

Ladies League Report

- Nothing to report from Tessa.

6. Public comment

- None.

7. Next meeting date – January 19, 2021

- At this time, the Golf Advisory Board will continue to meet bi-monthly.
- Jennifer will check on Pete's term date.

THANK YOU ALL AND HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

8. Adjournment

- With no further business, the Golf Advisory Board meeting adjourned at **12:44 pm**.

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