



GOLF ADVISORY BOARD SUMMARY January 19, 2021



- Pete Aspinwall
- 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

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LOCATION: Via Zoom

Topic: **GOLF ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

Time: Jan 19, 2021 12:00 PM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

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Meeting ID: 913 9116 8646

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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

Chairman Pete Aspinwall called the Bill Roberts Golf Course Advisory Board Meeting to order at 12:00 noon. A quorum was established.

2. Approval of Minutes:

November 2020 Minutes

- With no noted corrections to the November minutes, Jack moved to approve as presented. Riley seconded. Motion carried.

3. New business

Update: Golf Superintendent Position – Kristi

- Kristi state that Larry will be retiring in mid-March 2021.
- We began the recruitment process in December. We received 16 applications. Larry, Kristi and the HR company that has been working with the city are going through all the applications and have narrowed the pool down to a smaller group that we will be telephone screening tomorrow. From that screening, we will select the top 3 – 5 candidates to bring in for a formal interview process.
- Kristi has asked Pete for a recommendation for a member from the Golf Advisory Board to serve on the interview panel. Sue Bannon’s name was mentioned. However, if Sue is unavailable to serve in that capacity, Kristi would like to look at someone else.
- The formal interviews will be scheduled for next week.
- It is our goal to have this position filled by the end of February in an effort to have someone start at the beginning of March. We would like to have the new hire train with Larry for a little time before his departure.
- Pete asked if there was anyone local that we are considering. Kristi stated that information is confidential; however she can state that the applicants are from all over.

4. Old Business

None.

5. Reports

Parks and Recreation Director’s Report

- Kristi stated she does not have a lot of updates for parks and recreation. We are continuing to modify our operations due to the COVID pandemic. We have taken extra precautions at the golf course such as reduced capacity at the restaurant, mandatory mask wearing, etc.
- There have been some changes at the state level; however, at this point the county has not made any significant changes to their health orders.
- One new requirement for city employees is a self-health check before going into the office. We go online and complete a “City of Helena Employee Daily Health Screening Form”. It is a short survey that reviews COVID symptoms and gives employees the opportunity to ensure they don’t have any of the symptoms listed before going to work.

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- Our department has been very successful with all of our efforts to avoid COVID breakouts. We have only had one confirmed case in our department. The precautions we are taking have been very successful. We will continue these efforts until vaccines have been administered and we are in a different place. We will most likely see these precautions into the spring and possibly the summer.

Golf Financial Report(s)

- Eric won't be available for today's meeting.

Attachment A: October – Period 4

Attachment B: November – Period 5

- October Financials
 - ✚ The October financial report looks really good. The weather was perfect.
 - ✚ Revenues are up and our expenses are down somewhat.
 - ✚ We did finally receive the check for the golf beverage cart which was \$22,000. That check was received in late December.
 - ✚ \$23,000 for the roof is an additional expense that we didn't have last year.
 - ✚ With all that being said, we are about \$98,000 in the hole.
 - ✚ Conlan believes that with the beautiful weather, we should be able to open early this spring. It is beautiful outside and we have a lot of people looking for outdoor activity.
 - ✚ Travis and Conlan have been creating some programs for new golfers as well as evaluating potential groups that may have disposable income. They are working very hard to bring in new customers this year. Conlan believes that BRGC will have a very strong spring.
- Pete stated he recently read an article in a golf magazine that talked about the financial health of private courses vs public courses. The article stated that golf is seeing a resurgence. Rounds are up approximately 20% nationwide and Pete believes that is because people are identifying golf as safe activity for everyone. In light of COVID, golf is an outdoor activity where folks can spread out over the course. Golf has been identified as a great activity for people. We are seeing a lot of youth getting into golf as they are unable to participate in team sports. Pete recommended we might want to focus on reaching out to the community about what a great activity golf is. It is growing nationwide and kids who have made the move to golf are actually staying with it. We need to really reach out to community.
- Conlan stated he does have some ideas on how to create some fun, new ways to take the course to the people. He is researching the possibility of going to and being a part of events such as Farmers Market, Alive at Five, and Carroll College events.
- Pete stated the reports look good. It is good to see that rounds up. The restaurant seems to be holding its own.
- He has heard comments from folks in the simulator league. Are we having issues with the simulators? Pete has heard negative comments regarding the reliability of the simulators. Does the city have a maintenance or service agreement on those?
- Conlan stated that we are having issues with the simulators. Conlan has spoken to representatives from Full Swing regarding the big simulator. We had to completely replace the computer unit on the big simulator. It was out of warranty so that was an additional expense that we had not planned for. When they went through everything and installed the programs,

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(and in conversation with the representative Conlan spoke with), the serviceman did not fully update all the components. They went in and finished all the updates. Conlan tested it this morning and it is working much better.

- All 3 systems have been upgraded and current. Per Conlan, the old simulator is on a different platform. The repairman from Full Swing said that one is as up to date as it can be.
- The potential cost to update the third one would be approximately \$6,000. We would need to purchase a new unit. The lasers that go around the censors – these boards are completely different than the two boards are different than the two newer ones out in the restaurant. Conlan added that the good news about that one is it has been our most reliable one this year.
- Pete asked if this will stay that way for the next few years. Conlan stated it is running well right now. If this is something that needs replaced, we are looking at \$7,000.00 - \$10,000.00 potentially every 10 years. If we are looking to replace these every 10 years, Conlan may start to explore some other options. Track Man is the best on the market. It is a multipurpose, indoor, outdoor simulator. We can still use the box and components that we currently have. You would be essentially running the Track Man software on what we already have set up. A representative has visited Bill Roberts Golf Course twice this past year. They have begun preliminary discussions.
- Pete recommended we begin to look at what the costs of this program would be and begin saving money so we can make this move in a couple of years.
- Per Conlan – we need to start setting aside some capital. The lifespan of the simulators isn't great. If we were to go with Track Man, the initial cost is fairly large up front. However, this program can use in all 3 simulator stalls. This is definitely something we should consider.
- Track man can be used outside as well. Track Man gives us 48 data points compared to Full Swing which is 12. Track Man also has video capabilities.
- Per Pete – it seems like Track Man is a program that could increase lesson revenue and teaching opportunities. Conlan stated Track Man is more versatile.

Questions / Comments

- Kelly – is switching the two nines still the plan. If so, what are we doing about signage.
- Conlan said we are switching the two nines. Signs have been ordered and should be here by end of the month. We updated the graphics on the new signs. Conlan will be meeting with a Regional Representative from Pepsi who has expressed interest in sponsoring all of the new signage.
- Score cards have been updated to reflect that change and have also been re-rated.
- Conlan has created a new handicap committee. We will be meeting soon. We have added a combo tee box and the course has been re-rated. Stroke allocations have been changed.
- Art – thanks for email response on his question regarding clubhouse credits and whether or not they will carry forward from year to year. He has had many ask how that information got out to the golfers.
- Conlan stated that he is currently working on a new marketing plan which will include a new website e-blasts, Facebook, and Instagram announcements.
- For the next three months, we will get the word out that this is the case. It has been three years since we have expired credits and that is just too long. Moving forward, Conlan hopes to go on a biannual credit process.
- Arts biggest concern is making certain we get that communication out to everyone.

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Golf Superintendent Report

- Larry – course has been open and we have seen quite a bit of play. There has been a lot of activity on the course. The turf is holding up well.
- We sustained damage from the recent wind storm. New shingles placed on the cart barn were ripped off. As the work was still under warranty, it has already been repaired. The wind knocked down five trees – two of the large spruce. The pine tree on 5 fairway bunker was pulled out of the ground. The maintenance crew is in the process of doing clean up. Some trees will need to be removed in spring. There were also two range nets that were torn.
- The old clubhouse demolition is in process.
- Personnel requests have been submitted. Larry put in for an increase in pay for seasonal staff. We are also submitting capital budgets. Larry believes those requests will be somewhat status quo.
- Carts will be evaluated for replacement next year. Larry has been in conversation with Mike. He will discuss this in the capital budget meeting with Kristi and the finance department.
- Pete asked about the status of the removal of the tree on 11. This tree is gone and the Men's League has offered to replace it next spring. Larry is recommending the new tree be planted within a few feet to the west.

Golf Professional Report

- The website we are working on with Online Booking is taking longer than expected. When building four tee sheets – one for the course and one for each simulator, it takes a bit of time. Conlan is working with Golf Now EZ-Links to finalize the formatting. This is exciting as users will be go out to billrobertsgolfcourse.com and book a tee time. This will be a great selling point for youth play and younger crowd. This will also give us the opportunity to offer some discounted rates and promotional items during slower times.
- We will be staying with 9-minute intervals through 2021. It worked out well. We didn't have issues with back up on the yield and Conlan believes it helped with pace.
- Ryan asked if Bill Roberts offers a twilight rate. Conlan – it's a floating twilight. Early in the season we start at 6:00 pm and during our peak period, it starts at 7:00 pm. It is a \$15 nine-hole rate. We do so well with the twilight rate that there are times where we have to turn people away. This would be online, bookable rate as well.
- Travis and Conlan are in the process of completing their certification. This will be a 10-wk course, one hour of instruction per age group with 8 testing days.
- Conlan – we have done junior league, but it is not structured as well as this program.
- Conlan is hoping to do some different, additional tournaments this year targeting newer golfers and higher handicap golfers.
- Conlan stated we are switching from Golf Net and moving to GHIN (Golf Handicap and Information Network). One of the many benefits of this move is that BRGC will be on the golf genius system. This will also give us a potential opening for live, scored events.
- Lastly, Conlan is asking for assistance from the Golf Board, Men's League and Women's League to host a junior golf day at BRGC. His thought is to shut down the course for 6 hours. This would be a free event to the community. The idea is to have stations (booths) at various locations that would teach etiquette, rules, basic training of golf play.

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- Conlan has already reached out MSGA, the Senior Association, the high school teams, and Carroll College and they are all excited about the event. Conlan would like to get this on the books for mid-June. Pete and Riley both agreed this is an excellent opportunity for the community.

Men's League Report

- Jack said Men's League now has a new president, Erik Schweitzer. They will be meeting soon to set dates for the 2021 season. As soon as those dates are set, Jack and/or Erik will share that information with the board.
- They are looking at the possibility of a shorter season (starting in May, not April). That schedule seems to be more player friendly.

Ladies League Report

- Conlan meets with Ladies League Board at the end of this month to formalize their calendar. They are expecting another big year.

6. Public comment

None.

7. Next meeting date – March 16, 2021

8. Future agenda items

9. Adjournment

With no further business, the Bill Roberts Golf Course Advisory Board Meeting adjourned at 12:55 pm.

10.

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