

TO: Parks & Recreation Committee
FROM: David Chanski, City Administrator/Clerk
RE: Alternative Uses for Disc Golf Course Property
DATE: May 6, 2023



Background

On April 3, the City Council moved to “Send the issue of the disc golf course expansion back to Parks & Recreation in May to review alternative uses of the property and if a disc golf course is still the best use of the land. And have staff simultaneously work with adjacent property owners on possible solutions to be presented to the City Council in June pending a recommendation from Parks & Recreation.”

Therefore, the purpose of this agenda item is to do just that. The Committee is tasked with considering if there are any uses that, if the property could only have one use, would supersede the disc golf course.

Staff has been actively promoting the May 11 Parks & Recreation meeting, specifically that the Committee is seeking comment on possible alternative uses of the land. Such promotion has included directing members of the public to the April 3, 2023 City Council meeting packet, where a significant amount of information regarding the disc golf course was provided, as well as the video recording of that meeting on the City’s YouTube page. Additionally, members of the public were encouraged to reach out to staff (contact information was provided) with any comments or questions. All communication that has been received by staff has been forwarded directly to the Parks & Recreation Committee as it has been received.

The Committee’s task is not to consider the merits of the disc golf course, the process by which it was developed, or if the expansion should be completed. As clarified with the City Council, the Council is seeking a recommendation from the Parks & Recreation Committee as to whether there is an alternative use of the land the should supersede that of the disc golf course.

The remainder of this memo provides a brief the history of the disc golf course, estimated costs to maintain the course, and a cost estimate to remove the expansion to help the Committee determine if what a higher and better use of the land may be. In addition to the cost to remove the disc golf course, the installation of a new use also will have a cost. However, staff cannot estimate such a cost until a higher and better use has been identified.

History of the Property

The disc golf course property was dedicated to the City in 1982 as part of the Whitebirch 16 plat. The land is platted as Outlot A, and the plat states, "That Whitebirch, Inc...does hereby donate and dedicate to the public for public use forever the drives, trails, place, pass, roads, lakes, circle and County State Aid Highway Number 11, and Outlots A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, & R as shown on the plat." As the land was donated and dedicated to the City for public use, the public cannot be denied access to the land.

Original Course

The original 18-hole disc golf course was constructed in 2015 upon the recommendation of the Parks & Recreation Committee. The course was constructed for roughly \$33,600. This cost does not include labor as the work was done by the Public Works crew, and their wages are not assigned to any specific project or task. Below is the total cost breakdown for the original course.

Original 18-hole Disc Golf Course	Approximate Costs
18 Baskets	\$5,000
2 Tax Forfeit Lots	\$18,200
Rubber mats and tee boxes	\$3,400
Course Design	\$3,000
Seed, Straw, Fertilizer	\$1,800
Signs	\$500
Benches	\$1,700
Total	\$33,600

Expansion Course

The 18-hole expansion of the disc golf course was a project in the 2022 budget and was recommended by the Parks & Recreation Committee in response to the success they experienced with the original 18-hole course. The budget for this expansion was just under \$85,000. 95% of the expansion's construction was completed in 2022 and was done by the Public Works crew. Just as with the original course, labor was not included in the budget. With just a final grade of the new parking lot needing to be conducted and new hole number signs installed, \$49,755.57 has been spent on the expansion, and the aforementioned items are estimated to cost a total of \$6,000. This would bring the final estimated cost of the project to \$55,755.57, which is almost \$29,000 under budget. A map of the 18-hole expansion is attached to this memo. Below is the full cost breakdown for the expansion course.

Disc Golf Expansion Budget	Estimated	Actual	Remaining Expenses	Estimated Total Cost
3 Tax forfeit lots	\$45,000	\$13,465.57		\$13,465.57
18 Baskets	\$8,000	\$5,940		\$5,940

Concrete for 36 Tee Pads and skid steer attachment rental	\$4,000	\$4,100		\$4,100
Gravel for 1 acre of parking	\$5,000		\$5,000	\$5,000
Surveying	\$2,000	\$1,850		\$1,850
Seed, Straw, Fertilizer	\$3,500	\$3,000		\$3,000
Tree Removal/Clearing	\$8,000	\$17,000		\$17,000
Contingency	\$5,175	\$4,200		\$4,200
New hole number signs	\$1,000		\$1,000	\$1,000
Timbers for tee boxes	\$3,000	\$200		\$200
Totals	\$84,675	\$49,755.57	\$6,000	\$55,755.57

Ongoing Maintenance

The Public Works crew currently averages 180 man-hours of work on the original 18-hole course per year. Approximately 120 of those hours are spent mowing, approximately, and approximately 50 hours are spent collecting trash and conducting miscellaneous repairs and upkeep. Finally, roughly 10 hours is spent plowing the existing parking lot. The course is mowed using the City’s John Deere lawn tractor, which is also used to mow various other City-owned properties, and the City spends around \$1,200 per year for fertilizer and a temporary bathroom. Time spent mowing and snow plowing do fluctuate each year based on precipitation. A lot of mowing was conducted in 2022 as it was a very wet year, but very little mowing was conducted in 2021 as we experienced a rather significant drought.

Once the expansion 18-hole course goes into operation, staff expects mowing time to increase to 240 hours, and trash collection and upkeep to increase to between 75 and 80 hours. With the new, larger parking lot, snow plowing is expected to increase to roughly 25 hours. The cost for a temporary bathroom will stay the same but more fertilizer will be required, which will bring the total for these two items to around \$1,500 per year. A full breakdown of current versus anticipated future costs is below.

	Original Course (18 holes)	Original + Expansion (36 Holes)
Mowing	120 hours	240 hours
Fertilizer	20 Bags (\$360)	40 Bags (\$720)
Trash Collection	25 hours	37.5 hours
Misc. Upkeep/Repairs	25 hours	40 hours
Snow Plowing	10 hours	25 hours
Temporary Bathroom	\$750	\$750

Remediation Costs

The City Council requested that staff research the cost to return the expansion 18-hole course to its “natural state.” Staff estimates that this could be done for approximately \$3,664, excluding labor, which would be done by the Public Works crew. 4,400 seedlings (made up equally of pine seedlings and oak seedlings) can be purchased

from the DNR for less than \$3,500, and staff estimates it would take between 120-200 man-hours to plant the seedlings.

However, in conversation with a DNR forester, the DNR shared that the City should first roundup all the grass that has been planted as it will compete with the seedlings for water and nutrients. Additionally, best case scenario is that 50% of all seedlings survive, and there is a good chance that no seedlings will survive if conditions are not just right (especially as there is no water source located on the property). If planting seedlings fails (in part or entirely), the potential exists for raspberry and hazelnut thickets to develop and persist for several years without significant intervention. Additionally, since the soils in Breezy Point are primarily sand, there are significant washout concerns on many of these steep inclines if the grass is killed and the seedlings to not survive.

Finally, according to the DNR forester, a realistic timeframe for forest regeneration is 50-75 years.

2200 Pine Seedlings	\$1,188
2200 Oak Seedling	\$2,156
10 gallons roundup	\$320
120-200 hours labor	
Total Cost	\$3,664