

COLUMBUS GOLF AUTHORITY MINUTES

August 18, 2026

In the absence of Chairman Alonzo Jones, member Gerald Miley called the meeting to order.

New Authority member Stephen Hyles was welcomed to the panel, having been appointed by Columbus Council.

The minutes of the July 21, 2026, Authority meeting were approved upon a motion by Stephanie Leohr, seconded by Jimmy Monfort. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Steve Brown reported that work crews have been trimming and cleaning up the par-3 Godwin Creek course, but the course continues to deteriorate with an inoperable irrigation system due to its sole water source being filled with silt and trash.

“We cannot irrigate. This (creek reservoir) has to be dug out and it’s beyond our ability to excavate,” Brown said.

Director of Golf Jim Arendt said he has discussed the problem with city officials and asked for city help by providing an excavator to resolve the problem, but with no success. He said he also has sought city help in removal of several trees.

“We need to know, is the city going to help us or not?” Gerald Miley asked.

Jim Houston said the city originally funded operations at the then-Bibb City Par-3 for decades, along with donations from philanthropic families and groups. Recently, however, the cost of operating the facility has been shifted to the Golf Authority through the city's failure to fund it, placing that burden upon Bull Creek Golf Course. That, however, is a direct contravention of the city's ordinance establishing the Authority and directing that all funds generated at Bull Creek Golf Course remain with the course and cannot be transferred to the city's general fund. Using Bull Creek revenues to replace funds formerly provided through the General Fund for operation of the Par-3 course violates the ordinance establishing the Authority, he said.

Brian Lunsford said the situation can be discussed repeatedly without solving the problem and something needs to be done about Godwin Creek other than "kicking the can down the road."

Houston made a motion, seconded by Stephanie Leohr, to use no revenues from Bull Creek Golf Course for operation of Godwin Creek Golf Course, recognizing that as an obligation for city funding. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Arendt noted that a plan for improvement and renovation of Godwin Creek already exists, but has no funding sources sufficient for the undertaking at this time.

Superintendent Brown also reported that the new chipping green at Oxbow Creek is open and greens recovery has been very good on the course. Application of fertilizers has improved the overall condition and weed control is an ongoing effort.

Bull Creek work has been adversely affected by 7 inches or rain over a 7-day period, putting maintenance work behind schedule. Problem areas have arisen on holes 2, 5 and 7 on the East Course and are being addressed. Aeration has been completed and weekly verticutting and sand topdressing is ongoing, with herbicides being applied for weed control on fairways, aprons and tees, he said.

Brown said inmate labor availability and skill levels continue to be a problem area, with inmates being trained then transferred or released, to be replaced by new inmates who also must be trained up. He already has had six or seven different fairway operators trained and then exiting this year. Some inmates also are shifted from the golf course project to other places and are no longer available, he said.

The superintendent said he is concerned that he is retiring at the end of August, when now-Assistant Superintendent Charles Lewis will take over his post, but there have been no responses to advertising for a new assistant to fill Lewis' post. "One person cannot do this job," he warned.

Brown said he will be working part-time to help out, but that will not be sufficient and he may have to try to work out a different fill-in plan until a new Assistant Superintendent post is filled. He cannot in good conscience walk away and leave Lewis and the golf courses in such a lurch, he said.

Arendt reported he has not yet received the financial reports from the city, but course point-of-sale figures show that Bull Creek generated \$262,755 in July, an increase over the same period a year

ago. That's partially due to a \$1 fee hike that went into effect July 1, and to increased numbers of rounds played.

Oxbow Creek point-of-sale figures show revenues totaled \$65,559 for July, he said.

The director said Brown, who is leaving for retirement after 44 years of service to golfers, will be honored by Columbus Council at its August 25 meeting, when a proclamation commending him will be adopted and presented. He encouraged Authority members to attend to show support for Brown.

Cash reserves for Bull Creek Golf Course on August 14 totaled \$524,934.80, with Oxbow Creek's reserves totaling \$33,539.66, he said. The director also noted that one reason for Oxbow's reserve totals is the continuing shortage of staff, with those funds that would have been used to pay for needed help going unspent. "Oxbow is not in a position to build that kind of cash," he said.

Arendt also played a video promoting Bull Creek, Oxbow Creek, Godwin Creek and projects such as PGA Hope that are important and available for all golfers. He also noted this was the first year Bull Creek Golf Course participated in the National Night Out promotion for public safety efforts in the community. Food and beverages were provided to guests who joined the caravan in the stopover at the golf course.

An inquiry following up on Carlos Coleman's suggestion from the July meeting resulted in the discovery that the golf course programs do qualify for possible Federal Crime Prevention Grant funds, Arendt said. Application for the grants will be made for 2027.

The director also provided members with an information sheet comparing the costs of golf at Bull Creek Golf Course to the costs at other area courses.

The city has agreed to turn over a surplus van at no cost within the next couple of weeks, helping resolve a continuing transportation problem, Arendt said.

The director also reported that a Land Water Conservation Fund Grant opportunity is possible. The application, recommended by the City Manager, could provide matching funds of up to \$750,000 for eligible projects and must be submitted by early October. Columbus Council must approve submission of the application.

Scores of logs from trees downed by last April's tornado continue to rest in piles between Bull Creek's parking areas and East Course #1 fairway, with as many now on site as had already been removed through city Public Works Department help, Arendt said. With at least that many more tree trunks yet to reach the pile, help is needed to remove them and the city had to stop in order to undertake other work.

The Forestry Department consulted about removal of such tree stock estimated it would cost \$10,000-\$12,000, Arendt said. The city will be asked if it can help further, but it may become necessary to find and pay a vendor to remove the debris, he said.

With the funding set to pay for clubhouse renovation and bridge at Oxbow Creek, as well as a new heavy-duty culvert at West Course Hole #5 at Bull Creek, it now appears about \$3.8-\$4 million of

the approved \$5 million in the city's most recent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax will be available for a new clubhouse at Bull Creek Golf Course, said Director Arendt.

That may not be enough to meet the costs for the new structure, plus parking and removal of existing structures, and other avenues of funding are being explored, he said. In the meantime, however, the City Manager and Mayor are being requested to participate in a groundbreaking for the new clubhouse. No date has been determined.

Columbus' Junior Golf Association, managed by Assistant Professionals Adam Cooper and Yohance Thompson, expect to field 100-125 players for its fall season. At least 30 parents attended the opening meeting and the expectation is that this will be the group's largest participation total by far.

Assistant Professional Yohance Thompson said he has been instructing 10-20 young beginners at Godwin Creek Golf Course on Saturdays and is happy to see youngsters anxious to learn the sport.

The irrigation controllers needed for Bull Creek Golf Course, already approved at a price of up to \$180,000, should be available for installation in October, Assistant Superintendent Lewis said.

Arendt said the irrigation system at Oxbow Creek also must be upgraded, which will cost up to \$150,000 for labor. He also said it is becoming more urgent to pursue the plan for upgrading Oxbow Creek to an 18-hole facility – a plan already including a general mapping that places the expansion atop the old city waste disposal site. Additional studies must be commissioned examining the site before plans can proceed, he said.

The Director also advised members that they are invited to participate in the Oct. 21 "City Manager's Day of Golf", an annual event in which city elected officials, Authority members, department heads and key workers enjoy a lunch and nine-hole golf outing to get to know one another and become acquainted with golf needs and directions.

A motion to adjourn, made by Stephanie Leohr and seconded by Jimmy Monfort, was passed unanimously.

Attending this meeting were Gerald Miley, Jimmy Monfort, Stephanie Leohr, Carlos Coleman, Brian Lunsford, Stephen Hyles and Secretary Jim Houston. Chairman Alonzo Jones and Richard Mahone were absent.