

COLUMBUS GOLF AUTHORITY MINUTES

JULY 21, 2026

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

Miley welcomed to the meeting newly installed members Brian Lunsford, Jimmy Monfort and Carlos Coleman, who began their terms July 1, having been appointed by Columbus Council.

The minutes of the June 16, 2026, Authority meeting were approved upon a motion by Jimmy Monfort, seconded by Richard Mahone. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Steve Brown reported that Oxbow Creek's grasses have "come a long way" from previous problems and new grass for the practice and putting greens, previously approved by the Authority, is expected to be on hand by Aug. 1.

Applicants for a position as a licensed sprayer at Oxbow Creek have been received and are pending approval, he said, but the course still needs to fill a superintendent post. One new employee at the course is already on hand and doing good work, he said.

Brown noted that the "in-and-out" irrigation heads that were originally planned for Oxbow Creek in 1998 "never happened" due to budget limitations at the time of the course's construction. The irrigation system needs attention and updating, he said.

A new front-end loader also is needed at Oxbow Creek to replace the current machine that was already a used item in 1998, Brown said.

Bull Creek's greens have continued to be aerified monthly using the small tines machine, eliminating the need for large-hole aerification that usually occurred in June and July on the two 18-hole courses, he said.

There remains a need for two vans for inmate transportation, Brown said, noting that the city has used vans that would be appropriate for that purpose and are not now being used. If they could be made available for golf course use or purchase, that problem would be solved, he said.

The superintendent said the greens at Bull Creek are aged and are becoming more difficult to manage each year, with the East Course greens more problematic than the West Course, but both are in need of attention. Next year, they will need deep penetration aerifying at the least. Mutations have begun to become noticeable on some of the Tift Eagle greens, he said.

Brown warned that equipment lease prices will become "sticker shock" problems as machinery leases expire beginning in November. The longer lease agreements take for approval, the more it will cost, he said, noting that the legal department's lengthy review of the leases four years ago saw prices increase more than \$5,000 on some units.

Off-lease greens mowers that were \$12,000-\$15,000 when purchases were last made are now costing \$30,000-\$35,000 each, Brown said. "We need to have a timely review (of agreements)" he said.

In addition, labor continues to be a need, with more skilled labor especially needed, Brown said. The Authority has previously requested planning that would create a hybrid labor force, with more full-time workers in addition to the inmate labor pool.

The superintendent also passed around photos of the creek at Godwin Creek Golf Course, which provides the water used to irrigate the 9-hole par-3 facility since the city stopped use of city water supplies. The photos show a creek with very little pooled water and debris and litter scattered throughout. Stormwater washing onto the creek along with the debris is proving inadequate and there is now no irrigation plan to attack the problem, he said.

Brown said the city has previously stated it would dig out the creek, but “that never happened,” and the long excavators the city has that could be used to create the water pool needed have never been approved for Godwin Creek’s use.

Golf Director Jim Arendt said he has an appointment to meet with the new City Manager and will brief him on Godwin Creek along with other items.

Arendt noted that Godwin Creek has limited financial resources and that his request to the city for designation of the course as an enterprise fund for budgeting and funding has been rejected. The funding has been left to taking money from Bull Creek operations to pay for Godwin Creek’s needs, he said.

Jim Houston noted that the city ordinance creating the Bull Creek Golf Authority and the requirements of Bull Creek’s designation as an enterprise fund dictate that the revenues produced

at Bull Creek are not to become part of the city's General Fund, and must remain at Bull Creek to support its operations. Since Godwin Creek was previously supported from the city's General Fund, plus charities, and the city is no longer providing those funds but requiring Bull Creek to use its revenues there, that would appear -- in appearance, if not legally -- to violate the city ordinance and the enterprise fund requirements.

Golf Director Arendt reported that Bull Creek's cash reserves on July 17 totaled \$527,773, and cash reserves at Oxbow Creek were \$48,104. That may seem to be great news, which it is, but there are tremendous infrastructure needs and expenses looming, he warned.

Bull Creek has received 154 new Yamaha golf carts and they have already been put to use with good customer response, he noted. Seven new E Z Go/Cushman electric maintenance vehicles also have been received and are in use.

Filling staffing conditions continues to be a problem, with Oxbow Creek waiting more than two months for approval of a person selected for a position.

Advertising is under way for the position of Bull Creek Assistant Superintendent, which will become vacant when current Assistant Superintendent Charles Lewis moves up to the Superintendent post being vacated at the end of August by Steve Brown. The position pays \$55,000 a year.

Brown noted that the city's Human Resources Department has been "a nightmare to work with," and that it is urgent that a new assistant be hired soon, hopefully before he retires so a smooth transition can take place.

Arendt said the \$1 fee increase at Bull Creek that went into effect on July 1 has been well received by customers, as has the return to regular fees at Oxbow Creek, where rates had been lowered during the period when grass conditions were so poor.

The golf director also presented charts showing the number of rounds played at Bull Creek and Oxbow Creek from FY2023-FY2026. More than 67,172 rounds were played at Bull Creek in FY26, compared to 59,336 in 2023. More than 24,456 rounds were recorded at Oxbow Creek in FY26 – despite poor green conditions – compared to 18,575 in FY23.

PGA Hope Night with the Clingstones, the Atlanta Braves' AA team in Columbus, was very well attended, he said. More than 130 veterans and their guests were on hand and the audience viewed a video of how PGA Hope is helping the veterans' community.

Arendt said each Authority member has now received through the internet copies of his 1-, 3- and 5-year plan for public golf in Columbus. The plans, he noted, include proposals for \$1 increases in fees on July 1 and January 1 for the next 5 years to help provide needed revenues for maintenance and operations.

The golf director reported that the recent audit of golf operations was concluded and presented to Columbus Council on July 14. It largely supported stated goals previously aired by the Authority and found no serious deficiencies, he said.

Arendt said he is developing an evolving plan for advertising of public golf in Columbus, including promotion of the charitable outings and more networking.

The latest projections on the current Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, which includes \$5 million for clubhouse and bridge projects at Oxbow Creek and Bull Creek, show proceeds are running ahead of projections, Arendt said. In fact, the full SPLOST budget may be achieved before the end-date set by law. With the clubhouse renovation and bridge replacement projects fully funded at Oxbow Creek, and the bridge work under way at Bull Creek's West Course Hole 5, it appears about \$4 million in SPLOST funds will be available for a new Bull Creek Clubhouse. It also may be possible that other funds, such as interest from SPLOST accounts or funds not used elsewhere, could become available to help build the structure, he said.

A motion to adjourn, made by Richard Mahone and seconded by Brian Lunsford, was passed unanimously.

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