

COLUMBUS GOLF AUTHORITY MINUTES

APRIL 22, 2025

Chairman William Roundtree called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the March 25, 2025, meeting were then approved by unanimous vote upon a motion by Richard Mahone, seconded by Tommy Nobles.

Superintendent Steve Brown reported that since the tornado hit Bull Creek Golf Course on April 6, his 3 inmate work crews have been cutting trees and hauling logs. The city also has authorized employment of Elite Tree Service to help clear the damage, and city work crews from the Public Works Department have also helped tremendously, he said.

Holes 4-12 on the West Course suffered tremendous damage and will take much longer and more effort to restore for play, he said. Georgia Power Co. brought its heavy equipment across the fairway fronting Hole 11 and their transit to the high transmission lines that had to be repaired caused damage to the cart path between Holes 11-12, but the power company already has repaired the cart path and is going to lay sod to repair the fairway damages.

"We have just been overwhelmed," Brown said, adding that other work, such as fertilizing fairways, has been placed on hold as a push is made to get at least 27 holes open for play.

Director of Golf Jim Arendt said the city's HR Department is working on an insurance claim for damage and use of equipment, and wear and tear that results.

Brown also noted that Oxbow Creek remains without an inmate guard for the crew that normally works that course. The guard employed by the Authority is on sick leave as he attempts to recover from illness.

Arendt reported that the guard's allotted recovery time, which holds his job open for his return, is rapidly diminishing and it is hoped that he will recover in time to resume his duties. However, despite much compassion for his situation, the work at Oxbow needs to resume and it may become necessary at some point to vacate that position and hire another inmate guard.

Arendt also reported that Bull Creek took in \$107,232 in revenue in March, and has generated more than \$1.52 million toward its budget of \$2.2 million for the fiscal year. Actual revenue generated for the month, according to the Point of Sales data, reflects Bull Creek's total was \$245,072.

Oxbow Creek's March revenues, posted on city reports, shows \$36,267 was generated, yielding a year-to-date total of \$388,541 of the course's \$554,000 budget for the year. Point-of-sale data recorded \$73,216 in revenue for March at Oxbow.

The golf director Also recounted the activities at Bull Creek at the time of the tornado and shortly thereafter, including how Darrell Grissom telephoned a warning of bad weather approaching and the employees and patrons gathered as advised in areas of the clubhouse not near windows. Afterward, a search of the parking lot showed that all patrons had departed – except for occupants of one vehicle.

A search of the course was launched and a crushed golf cart, hidden beneath fallen trees, was eventually spotted near the East Course Hole No. 1 tee box. Two male occupants, a father and son from Harris County, were found penned, but lifeless, beneath the fallen trees. The coroner, paramedics and the fire department were called and the two men were declared dead.

The golf director specifically cited Assistant Superintendent Charles Lewis, Assistant Professional Adam Cooper and part-time employee Jay Graham for their prompt response and work in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

Arendt noted that the inmate crews were working longer shifts and doing yeoman's work, for which he recommended increasing their daily compensation from \$3 per man to \$6 per man for the extended days. Tommy Nobles made a motion, seconded by Ken Crumpler, to authorize paying \$6 per inmate for the designated days of extra effort.

The golf director reported that the city offered the services of the Pastoral Institute for any employee who needed help in dealing with the deadly storm experience, with confidentiality assured for any who availed themselves of the offer.

He also noted that the City Manager and Mayor had been supportive of the work to recover from the storm's effects, and the Public Works Department assured that its workers would be available "until the work is done." Parks and Recreation also helped with equipment and services.

Arendt noted that one annual fee member had called the mayor questioning how to be compensated for inability to play the courses during the time they were closed. Arendt said he had never been confronted with such a complaint, but would try to find a way to deal with the member's concerns.

The Hughston Pavilion, sponsored by the Hughston Clinic, has agreed to sponsor the pavilion for five additional years at \$6,000 per year, an increase of \$1,000 per year over the current sponsorship agreement.

The storm resulted in some events being canceled and lost, with some resulting in postponement and rescheduling. The strategy, with the East Course now open for play, will be to add nine additional holes as soon as possible, and the final nine when that portion is deemed safe and playable. The operation of a 27-hole facility will not be a problem, said Arendt, who previously managed a north Georgia course with 27 holes.

A fire alarm recently touched off at 10 p.m. and it was discovered that kitchen towels previously washed and dried, had produced the smoke. The towels were gathered in a single container after being taken from the machine. No further explanation is available for the cause of the episode.

Arendt said there is an apparent agreement that a proposal to use a "sole source" provider clause to employ an experienced bridge-builder company for the replacement bridge at Oxbow Creek will be permitted. The estimated cost of \$136,000 for the structure and \$40,000 for its installation will save a considerable amount of money compared to an original estimate for the replacement bridge.

Chairman Roundtree concluded the meeting with an expression of thanks for the Bull Creek staff for "an outstanding job" in coping with the storm and the ensuing labors. He also noted that a "Go Fund Me" account some have proposed could be a benefit in helping make improvements at Bull Creek and Oxbow Creek.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ken Crumpler, seconded by Stephanie Leohr, to adjourn the meeting and was passed unanimously.

Attending were Chairman William Roundtree, Ken Crumpler, Tommy Nobles, Stephanie Leohr, Alonzo Jones, Ken Davis, Vice Chairman Richard Mahone, Gerald Miley and Secretary Jim Houston.