

COLUMBUS GOLF AUTHORITY MINUTES

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

Chairman William Roundtree called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the Jan. 14, 2025, meeting were approved by unanimous vote upon a motion by Ken Crumpler, seconded by Tommy Nobles.

Superintendent Steve Brown reported his crews have been focusing on tree trimming and removal, clearing underbrush, grinding stumps and repairing cart paths.

Poa annua grass has been found in greens and has become tolerant to the herbicide previously used to prevent its presence. New herbicides are being introduced to find the product that best prevents its incursion, Brown said. Using the same herbicide repeatedly allows the grass strain to develop resistance, so continual efforts must be made to find the best preventive chemical.

Pre-emerge will be applied before mid-March to halt the germination of weeds, he said.

A new John Deere greens roller has arrived and is in use, but the existing roller is still out of service while a new engine coil is sought to repair its motor. The new aerial lift saw is also out of service due to failure of a part, but the part is under a two-year warranty guarantee that also covers labor, Brown said.

Director of Golf Jim Arendt reported that Oxbow Creek reported revenues of \$43,618 in December, and year-to-date revenues total \$287,133, or about half of the projected revenue budget for the year.

Bull Creek revenues for December totaled \$263,001, and for the year amounted to \$1.145 million, which is just over half of its projected annual revenue of \$2.2 million.

Point of sale figures for January show Bull Creek generated more than \$101,000, despite losing a week due to weather conditions, and Oxbow took in more than \$33,000.

Arendt said the inmate guard, Marquis Harris, at Oxbow has suffered a stroke and is in rehab. A temporary replacement will be hired. It is expected that Harris will have to requalify in order to return to the position.

Assistant Pro Jon Shuskey reported the Columbus Junior Golf Association met with the middle school league on Monday night. Eight schools participate in the program and a good turnout is expected for 2025. Turnout also has been good the first two weekends of junior instruction on Saturday morning. Word-of-mouth has been growing the program among juniors, he said.

Assistant Pro Adam Cooper said he has completed most of an updated report detailing equipment, which includes an eyes-on experience for each piece. The report will include its model, its expected life and photographs as well as anticipated replacement cost.

Director Arendt said Bull Creek's cash reserves to date total \$384,182.80, which is less than previous reports because some funds have been used to purchase equipment, and winter months are not the best for generating cash flow. Oxbow Creek's cash reserve is (-\$68,390.75).

A High School Golf-Junior Golf Initiative started in February, including the girls' teams of Northside High, Columbus High, Pacelli and Calvary Baptist.

More outings are projected for the golf season just beginning, with an increase expected over the busy outings periods experienced last year, Arendt said.

The alcohol license for Bull Creek is still in process, which will enable liquor and wine to be sold along with the beer already being sold at the course. The staff selling the beverages will receive ABC cards allowing them to handle the product, he said.

A web site to promote the golf courses, reserve golf times and record events and experiences is almost ready for activation. It will be a significant improvement over the current product, Arendt said.

A request has been made to have a meeting to discuss new bridges needed at Bull Creek and Oxbow Creek, which were a part of the improvements package approved in the most recent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST). The meeting with a golf course consultant and city officials is hoped to take place between Feb. 21-26, he said.

The director said the proposed budget for Bull Creek for Fiscal Year 2025-26 is expected to total \$2,644,500.

There is a need for a professional grill manager position. It is not only needed now to supervise staff, prepare schedules and purchases, but will be even more in demand when the projected new clubhouse – also part of the approved SPLOST items – is built and in service. A salary of up to \$55,000 is recommended, Arendt said.

Godwin Creek also needs greens and fairway mowers, and a new point-of-sale system – potentially to eventually replace those at Bull Creek and Oxbow Creek – is to be put into operation at the par-3 course in Bibb City, Arendt said.

The proposed budget also includes a \$2,500 item to allow attendance at the 2026 PGA show in Florida.

The budget is to be submitted by Feb. 14, with a review by the city manager and mayor between March 17-28, and submission to Columbus Council as part of the mayor's budget proposal on April 29. Council will hold budget review sessions on May 5, 13 and 20, with the final budget proposal presented for first reading and then approval in June.

Stephanie Leohr made a motion, seconded by Ken Davis, to approve the proposed budget for submission to the city. The motion passed unanimously.

Tommy Nobles reported meeting with the city officials and an architect to discuss clubhouse issues, but no significant progress was made over previous discussions.

Nobles also reported on the meeting he and Authority members Jim Houston, Ken Davis and Chairman William Roundtree had with Golf Director Arendt and Columbus Councilors Joanne Cogle and Glenn Davis. He said the councilors were generally supportive of possible expansion of Oxbow Creek to an 18-hole facility, using the former landfill area along South Lumpkin Road for the additional holes. However, the meeting resulted in a notation that a serious environmental study might have to be undertaken before any physical activity toward such construction could begin, or before serious planning or commitment to use of the property could be considered.

Jim Houston suggested that city officials be asked for copies of any environmental studies or reports that have already been performed on that property following its closure as a landfill.

Nobles also reported that a proposal to place a plaque honoring Richard Callahan at Godwin Creek is still being pursued by proponents. A motion was made by Richard Mahone, seconded by Jim Houston, to limit any such plaque to dimensions of 8x12 inches. The motion passed by a vote of seven members in favor and two members (Alonzo Jones and Stephanie Leohr) abstaining.

Nobles also made a motion, seconded by Jim Houston, to spend up to \$800 for a bronze plaque to be placed with an existing bust at Godwin Creek in honor of the facility's namesake, Bill Godwin. The motion passed unanimously.

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

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

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.