

COLUMBUS GOLF AUTHORITY

MINUTES

June 23, 2020 Meeting

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Gerald Miley called the meeting to order.

MINUTES: The minutes of the May 27 CGA meeting were approved by unanimous vote of those present.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: Steve Brown reported that Bull Creek's East Course was aerated June 1-2, but cool nights inhibited root growth until recent warm nights prevailed. He dusted again today and expects growth to fill in much better in coming days. Spraying for goose grass has been accomplished and the aeration of the West Course will begin after the July 4 holiday weekend. The course also will be verticut again next week.

Labor in recent days has concentrated on normal green-cutting, plus weed-eating in problem areas.

Asked about the electric water-cooling stations vacant throughout both courses, he said there is a wiring problem. The original wiring does not function and does not meet modern standards, and it will cost several thousand dollars to acquire and install the wiring sufficient to make the coolers operable. The problem might be manageable much sooner if the city could provide help, he said.

Brown noted that the city sent a worker to Bull Creek to repair a flooring problem in the women's rest room and more than three months have passed with no one coming out to finish the job.

"I was also promised my office would be finished in January," Director of Golf Jim Arendt said. "I assumed it would be January of this year." The office remains unfinished.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Jim Arendt said during the hot summer days, course ambassadors will be touring and offering bottled water to golfers at \$1 per

bottle, and the two concession carts operating on the courses will have water and refreshments available to alleviate potential hydration risks.

The financial report for Oxbow Creek in May reported revenues of \$25,637, according to city records, but the course actually generated \$39,044 during the period, Arendt said. The difference is due to the city figures not including the last bank deposit, which was recorded in June and therefore not included as part of May's revenue, although that was when it was generated. The year-to-date report also reveals \$48,594 earmarked for wages in the operations budget during the fiscal year has not been spent, but maintenance spent \$20,514 more than its budgeted amount for wages during the fiscal year. On the whole, the budget shows a result that is "about average" on salaries, but more help is needed and the budget does support filling the gaps being experienced.

Bull Creek also reported the city recorded \$114, 576 in revenue in May, but actual receipts show \$174,708 was generated. The difference, again, was in the last deposit for May receipts not being reflected due to the date of the deposit not being acknowledged in the city's report of May revenue. Arendt said he and the finance department will be attempting to reconcile those reporting differences.

Arendt said the courses' revenue for the fiscal year is amazing, considering it was totally shut down for 45 days due to the pandemic, and has reopened while limiting golfers to one-person-per-cart, generating half the revenue each cart would normally produce in a given round. Only during the last week have golfers been given the option of riding two-to-a-cart, with the recommendation that those selecting that option wear face masks to combat potential virus contact.

Arendt said if the course generates \$200,000 in revenue during June – a figure that is within reach – the fiscal year budget is capable of being met.

Ken Davis noted that Oxbow Creek has a shortage of ambassadors on the course, which some see as a matter of neglect. Arendt agreed that the lack of ambassador presence to help marshal the course is a problem, which is magnified because of cart shortages at the course, with the available carts being prioritized for customers. He said it is a problem for which he will seek a solution.

Arendt also displayed a possible new logo specifically for Oxbow Creek, continuing a branding/signage change already in evidence with a new logo and signage adopted and in place at Bull Creek.

A new Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program also has been initiated, monitored by Ambassador Wayne Ayers, with 5 young people (17-18 years old) spending four hours daily performing on-course chores, such as sanding divots that went unrepaired during the pandemic, when sand bottles were removed from golf carts to avoid potential contact that could spread contamination.

Arendt said he made a presentation to Columbus Council on June 17, which included a brief report on course operations and the poor state of equipment at the courses. "They now have a vision of what we're dealing with," he said. Councilor Glenn Davis said he would like to see the city develop a realistic plan for replacing outdated equipment. Miley said that next year, Arendt should include in his report and budget request the actual hours of equipment life for machinery upon which the courses rely daily.

Arendt said he concluded his remarks to council by stating it was the goal of the golf courses to give all citizens an opportunity to see what a first-class facility they have. "We want to do amazing," he said. Ken Davis suggested city councilors be invited to take a tour of the golf courses.

Columbus Council this morning approved the requested \$125,000 in revenue for Bull Creek from the city's enterprise fund, he said, which includes \$36,000 for a sprayer to replace the one that was destroyed by fire while operating at Oxbow recently.

Arendt said he consulted the city about the number of handicapped parking spaces Bull Creek is required to provide to meet standards. He said nine spaces were striped last fall, but six spaces (one of which must be van-accessible) are required. With parking at a premium, Ricky Wright made a motion, seconded by Richard Mahone, that three spaces be retrieved and remarked for availability to all. The motion passed unanimously.

The director also reported that he has discussed with the city engineering department having a look taken at ways Bull Creek, Oxbow Creek and Godwin Creek deal with hydrological problems and flooding. He said he was told Bull

Creek was built on a flood plain as part of a watershed -- of which he was aware -- but he was suggesting a look at ways the course could release water in advance of conditions predicted to produce flood problems for the course, which also causes problems for other creek-adjacent properties, such as Pratt & Whitney.

Arendt said he was told the watershed project was federally funded and the flood gates are not supposed to be manipulated. He said the city does need to better maintain the watershed lakes, which has in the past resulted in occasional dredging or removal of built-up sand and silt in the channels and lakes, which is now prevalent. Miley suggested the city's chief engineer have someone come out and examine Bull Creek's watershed, and Arendt said Donna Newman agreed to come out and take a look. "I think something can be done to help us," the director said.

Arendt reported the budget contains enough funds to support the 2 percent pay increase the Authority approved in May for golf course employees, covering the period beginning in January 2020 through June 30. The projected cost is \$5,851 at Bull Creek and \$1,992 for Oxbow Creek. It would come from projected unused wage funds that total \$85,486.

The director reported that a monthly membership payment plan proposed earlier this year by Ricky Wright has been approved by the city's legal department and is ready to be implemented and monitored for occasional improvement as needed. It would include a down payment on an annual fee program, assessing a 10 percent cost and allowing the balance to be charged to a credit card with payments spread over a 12-month period. The availability of this option should mean increased revenues for the course. "It's approved and ready to go soon," Arendt said.

A decision needs to be made concerning exempt and non-exempt positions as part of golf course operations. Exempt employees would be salaried and not eligible for overtime pay, with salaries of at least \$35,000. An assistant pro/manager would need to be such an exempt position, Arendt said. He also reported he is working on job descriptions for each employee and a review process for annual evaluations. It's a new process not previously exercised at the courses.

Arendt also said he needs an additional employee authorized for Bull Creek Golf Course in order to free him to spend more time at Oxbow or Godwin Creek. He said he has not been able to have the impact he would like to have at the other courses due to the need for him to be at Bull Creek.

Ricky Wright made a motion, seconded by Ken Davis, to table the consideration of exempt and non-exempt employees until the next meeting. The motion was passed unanimously.

Arendt said William Roundtree has suggested a severe weather warning system be looked into for the golf courses, as well as a way to provide access to drinking water for distressed golfers. The drinking water problem is being addressed and the weather warning system will be looked into, he said.

Roundtree also has suggested all the course buildings be repainted, as have the clubhouse and Hughston Pavilion. Arendt and Brown reported the painting of all buildings is planned, but the funds for paint are not presently available in this fiscal budget.

Arendt announced that the First Baptist Church's altruistic donation of \$500 for fertilizer for Bull Creek was due to one golfer's recognition of the efforts to improve the course and its environs during the last year and to show the appreciation people have for the efforts. Ken Crumpler said such compliments are much appreciated by all involved in the process.

Under New Business, Miley suggested it is past time for the loyal employees of the golf courses to be recognized for their work. Some way to recognize them and to show how much they are appreciated is needed. Arendt said the city has a procedure that annually recognizes its employees and shows its appreciation, but the golf course workers – not city employees – have never been included.

Richard Mahone made a motion, seconded by Ken Davis, to establish an appreciation benefit for golf course employees. The motion passed unanimously.

Ricky Wright's motion to adjourn, seconded by Ken Crumpler, also passed unanimously.

Authority members present for the meeting were Gerald Miley, Ken Davis, Ricky Wright, Richard Mahone, Ken Crumpler and Jim Houston. Absent were Mario Davis, William Roundtree and Stephanie Callahan.

Photos presented during meeting



Oxbow Creek's sprayer on fire



36 Year Old
Tractor



22 year old
sprayer



36 Year Old Tractors



**29 year old truck
22 year old Jeeps**