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## **DRAFT MINUTES**

### **GOLF COMMISSION**

**Monday, August 9, 2021**

**7:00pm**

**Fairfield Parks & Recreation Conference Room**

**75 Mill Plain Road, Fairfield, CT 06824**

Members Present: Keith Varian – Chair, Peter Secrist – Vice Chair, Michael Feinstein, Mike Herrington, Liam Herron, Christine Hogan, Priscilla Schulz

Others Present: Parks & Recreation Director Anthony Calabrese, Golf Pro Bob Bigonette, members of the public

1. Call to order – Chairman Keith Varian called the meeting to order 7:00pm.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – K. Varian led the Pledge of Allegiance
3. Act on Minutes: 6/14/21

M. Herrington noted that on Item VI of the 6/14/21 minutes, the amount of money approved for the ten-year plan was \$100K each year for 10 years.

M. Feinstein made a motion to approve the minutes of 6.14.21 as amended. M. Herrington seconded the motion.

The motion carried 5-0-1 (L. Herron abstained)

#### 4. Staff Reports

##### a. Pro Manager Report

B. Bigonette said everything is going well. The July rounds were down based on weather as it was rainy, hot and humid. The starter shack is in and functional. There are 20 new carts and golfers seem to greatly appreciate the added carts. Dennis Walters will give a motivational speech at the HSR golf course at 4:00pm on 8/24/21. There will also be a movie about him showing at the Community Theater at 7:00pm the same day. It will be advertised by Fairfield Parks & Recreation and it's also on Mr. Walter's website: denniswalters.com.

Peter Secrist said he was at the range, there were new balls, and the machine was working very well. B. Bigonette said they are working on getting an automated machine so they wouldn't have to staff the shed on site. There are ARPA funds for \$260K allotted for the golf course, but it could be cut. If it goes through, that would be part of it. They also want to run fiber optic cable. The machine would be \$10K and would allow more access to the range.

b. Administration Report

A. Calabrese said the Golf Report was higher than in past years. It wasn't higher than 2020 because people are back at work after the Covid shutdown. Overall, it was a good month. The additional patio furniture has been ordered and is two weeks out. They will have two picnic tables with umbrellas. The Tucker Garden looks great and they will be adding plants. The Butterfly Garden is beautiful.

c. Superintendent Report

P. Grace was not on the call.

5. Greens Committee Report

M. Herrington said the course looks terrific. There are some bare spots on the fairways, but the course is playing well and in great shape. He said he is filling divots and holes along the course, but it is normal for this time of year.

6. Par 3 Committee Report

L. Herron said he hasn't played the Par 3, but his kids have, and they told him it is in great shape. M. Feinstein stopped by the course to speak with Ben and said everything looks smooth. B. Bigonette said they increased the rangers there now to five shifts per week. The range is being used for clinics and before games. They have new balls there too.

7. To hear and or act upon old business:

a. Starter Shed/Fire pit

The starter shed is there and functional. It has a temporary AC unit, but they've ordered a vented unit. The blinds for the window are in as well. The fire pit will be completed this week with the help of DPW.

8. To hear and or act upon new business:

a. ForeUp update

They have been going back and forth with ForeUp because they cannot implement it with Munis. There is no other municipality they work with that uses Munis. Staff would have to manually enter data daily. That is not something that will be done. They have asked for tech support from the company. M. Feinstein would like the commission to think about a Plan B, so there is a system in place by next March. They will need to solicit a new

program by October. K. Varian would like new bids instead of a “plan b”.

b. Ten Year Plan

K. Varian would like to create a waterfall and give it to A. Calabrese to prioritize projects. M. Herrington put together a spreadsheet comparing 2020-2021. K. Varian, M. Herrington and A. Calabrese will meet to put together cost and revenue projections.

c. Outing sizes

B. Bigonette has had a request for a chunk of tee times on a weekend at the same time. The current policy is outings are on Monday only, shotgun format depending on amount of people, with a golf-only cost of \$76 per person. If there is something outside of that it will have to be presented to the commission for approval. The policy is on the website and the Golf Commission has the flexibility for approval. Commission did not want to deviate from the outings policy for small outings. B. Bigonette reported that outings are scheduled for all Mondays after Labor Day. There are 10 outings. He'd like to use some of the money make to advertise outings for next year. He will speak with Yanni at Boca.

d. Fling Golf

Alyssa Israel gave a presentation on Fling Golf. She saw it on Shark Tank and she passed around the stick used to play. Ms. Israel thinks it will attract additional golfers to the course and would create more revenue. The game is 25% faster than regular golf. Some flingers can fling the ball 100 yards. After some discussion, K. Varian said the commission is not interested in having Fling Golf at the course right now because traditional golfers are not able to get tee times so it would not be appropriate at this point to expand to non-traditional golf course uses. If rounds decrease over time then future golf commissions could readdress the request. No action was taken.

9. Communications

a. Memorial Bench for Kevin Kuczo

Jim Kuczo is Kevin Kuczo's father. He requested a memorial bench for his son at the 7<sup>th</sup> tee box. K. Varian told the commission he was supportive of that location and the bench dedication.

P. Schulz made a motion to approve the request to place a memorial bench for Kevin Kuczo at the 7<sup>th</sup> tee. P. Secrist seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

b. Joe Carpenter's email

Wed, Aug 4,  
6:53 AM

*Hello Commission -*

*I play most Wednesdays with the Fairfield Senior Golf Association. We all appreciate the availability of tee times on Wednesday mornings.*

*Kudos to the maintenance crew! Course looks great.*

*Everyone who uses the practice range appreciates the newly paved entrance/parking.*

*With maximum utilization of the practice range - income must be way up. Please consider NEW GOLF MATS! There is NO nap on the mats. Many are torn. Risk of injury to joints goes up with HARD mats.*

*Thank you for considering this matter.*

*Joe*

*Joseph Carpenter  
6 Hunting Ln  
Westport, CT 06880*

B. Bigonette agreed that new mats are needed. He will upgrade them.

#### 10. Public Comment

Bob Gorman, 225 Sturges Road, Fairfield

Mr. Gorman wanted to say that although he did not agree with the way the Golf Pro selection was handled, he said B. Bigonette has done a phenomenal job and it was a great decision. He was concerned on the appointments of the Golf Commission and thought it was political. He said they should consider giving someone from the Men's/Women's club a chance to serve. He also said Boca is a great restaurant but is concerned that the \$7.2M building for the town has become a facility for Gianni.

K. Varian commented on the Golf Commission members and told Mr. Gorman that if the golfers would like to change how the commission is appointed, they would need to bring it before the BOS and request a change to the town charter. Golf commissioners are not involved in the process or selection of new golf commissioners as that is controlled by the Town Charter and BOS.

Eileen Wenzel, Flintlock Road, Southport

Ms. Wenzel wanted to say that the Golf Commission had a member from the Women's club for years.

Joe Wright, 115 Smedley Road, Fairfield

Mr. Wright said he researched the policy and procedures for the restaurant. In Sec 5/Sec E, it states the restaurant should open one hour prior to tee time. He said the restaurant, or the window is not open at that time. He feels it needs to be addressed. Mr. Wright also commented that there is not a place to eat breakfast because there is a sign saying the restaurant is for diners only. He and other golfers need a place to eat and sit down from the heat and humidity or other types of inclement weather.

K. Varian told Mr. Wright that there hasn't been enough interest in breakfast since the course opened and it costs Yanni more money to staff someone at the snack bar than the money coming in from the breakfast orders. Boca is losing money on breakfast opening 30 minutes before the first tee time and K. Varian is concerned that opening the snack bar a full hour prior to the first tee time will cause Boca to lose additional money. Since very few golfers are ordering breakfast that early, opening even earlier doesn't seem to be a major issue. K. Varian and A. Calabrese agreed to talk to Yanni at Boca to confirm outside seating is available to golfers prior to the restaurant opening. K. Varian also will discuss with Yanni about opening the restaurant earlier than 11:30 and opening the snack bar a full 1 hour prior to the first tee time. K. Varian reiterated that he would only support these requests if they made business sense. K. Varian also agreed to discuss with Yanni if it would be feasible to open the restaurant for seating during weather delays to allow golfers a place to wait inside in addition to the pro shop and locker rooms.

Brian Daly, 195 Hurd Street, Fairfield

Mr. Daly acknowledged B. Bigonette for getting ForeUp and how quickly the decision was made. He asked if there was something that the town had decided recently that would not allow the golf course to use this program. He is very frustrated and felt he has no voice in the town. He asked what the public can do to get this program going. He said again that it seems like someone doesn't want to use it. He responded to the comment made by B. Bigonette earlier, that the staff would have to enter the data daily, by suggesting using sources out of the country for data entry.

## 11. Adjourn

M. Herrington made a motion to adjourn. M. Feinstein seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pru O'Brien  
Recording Secretary