

## MINUTES

### GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

City Hall Commission Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER: 9:00 AM
2. ROLL CALL: Member John Pelican called the roll: Present: Member John Pelican; Member and FBMGA Representative Lee Murray; FBWGA Representative, Sue Simpson; Member Jayne Paige; Member Jim Rauschenberger; FBGC General Manager, Mike Cooney; FBGC Superintendent, Blaine Ellerbe; FB City Manager, Dale Martin; FB Information Technology Manager, Mary Hamburg; FB Commissioner Chip Ross and FB City Resident, John Spatola.
3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Member John Pelican led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.
4. ORGANIZATION; ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Lee Murray volunteered to be chairperson. After discussion Lee was unanimously elected as chairperson. John Pelican volunteered to be vice-chairperson and after discussion was unanimously elected as vice-chairperson. Jim Rauschenberger volunteered to be secretary and after discussion was unanimously elected as secretary.
5. PUBLIC COMMENT: Lee Murray asked if there were any public comments and recognized John Spatola, a city resident. Mr. Spatola referenced recent membership cost increases at Amelia River Golf Club that presented an opportunity for FBGC to attract more working class members/players priced out of membership at Amelia River. He noted that the owners of Amelia River had invested a lot of money in that course and that it was in pristine condition. While FBGC had hot deals of \$26 today on Golfnow, Mr. Spatola noted that even those could not be sold. Mr. Spatola suggested that the regular price at FBGC of \$60 per round was too high to attract many golfers given the current state of the course and the inability to sell out the discounted hot deals. Mike Cooney discussed his strategies as to pricing for Golfnow discount prices and said he would follow-up on having more discounted tee times available for on Golfnow. Member

Rauschenberger noted that Golfnow had many discounted prices for Amelia River that were less than the FBGC standard rate of \$60, making FBGC even less attractive. In closing Mr. Spatola referenced the FBGC having been in great condition ten years ago and having good bones but had deteriorated under the prior management company and needed to be improved.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Member Simpson made a motion to approve the prior GCAB minutes and was seconded by Member Pelican. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. OLD BUSINESS. Member Pelican asked Mike Cooney about the status of the contract for the new golf carts. Mike indicated that the RFP would go out in the next 2 weeks and that replacement carts would arrive in Oct-Dec, 2022. He said he was leaning against having GPS carts due to the increased cost and had not made a decision as to whether to purchase electric or gas carts.

#### 8. NEW BUSINESS.

8.1 NonAgenda New Business. Member Murray asked City Manager Dale Martin about FBGC status as an Enterprise Fund. Mr. Martin explained that an Enterprise Fund had to be supported from its revenues. If the FBGC were to made part of the Parks and Recreation Department or some other line item in the City Budget, city resolutions require that a 25% operating reserve be established for the golf course budget. Such funds would have to be set aside and used only for a contingency reserve. The FBGC had previously received an annual operating subsidy from the city to cover shortfalls in revenue from golf operations of approximately \$220,000. For the current fiscal year that subsidy was reduced to \$100,000. Mr. Martin recognized the dilemma raised by the need for the FBGC to raise more revenue while the course required more money to improve the course conditions and make it more attractive to golfers. Mr. Martin noted that the council had to date not had interest in raising taxes to fund more operations. He suggested that advocates for increased spending on the FBGC attend City Council meetings when the budget process begins in March, 2022.

Member Murray also inquired about the feasibility of establishing an endowment to which individuals could make contributions to be used for the FBGC. Mr. Martin referenced that tax-deductible contributions can be made to the City and earmarked for specific purposes, with the funds set aside by the City

to be used only for the specified purposes. As for a separate endowment fund he suggested that a parallel already exists for the Police Foundation and suggested Harry Kegler, also a former GCAB Member, as a possible resource.

8.2 Financials. Mike Conney provided an overview of the financial reports distributed. Total annual rounds were in the range of 39,000-40,000 rounds for 2016-2019, but had dropped to 34,552 in 2019-2020 and 36,473 for 2020-2021. For the first quarter ended December 31, 2021 rounds totaled 9,322 - about 37,000 annualized. Mike noted that revenue per round is important, with more revenue per round generating more revenue with less wear and tear on the golf course. He indicated that would pursue more pricing strategies with Golfnow to increase play during down times - typically Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sunday mornings. First quarter operations (ending December 31, 2021) showed golf operations yielding a net profit of \$127,454; Toptracer losing \$9,200; golf shop losing \$8,985 and Food and Beverage making a net profit of \$11,611, yielding a new overall profit of \$120,880.26. Mike highlighted that the profit from golf operations was attributable to the sale of annual memberships in the first quarter, which would not be repeated throughout later quarters. Mike summarized that progress was being made in improving course conditions and more could be done, if more funds were available. Mr. Martin referenced prior budget processes when Billy Casper Golf was involved reflecting BCG dictating to the onsite manager funding needs as opposed to the onsite manager making requests. Mr. Martin suggested that a recommendation to the City by the GCAB as to whether to retain a third party management company or to continue with city management would be appreciated.

8.3 Food and Beverage Request for Proposal. Dale Martin addressed the Board on the proposed Request for Proposal (RFP) for leasing the golf course/Toptracer food and beverage operations. He described it as an attempt to see if the the operations can be run differently and generate more net revenue for the golf operations. He solicited comments from the Board and indicated that the RFP could be published next Friday. Dale Martin indicated that if a new vendor were selected one could be in place by May. In response to a question from Member Simpson, Mr. Martin confirmed that a new vendor could assume the work on the existing Bonhams/Concourse contract, though not in time for March 2022.

9. FBMGA UPDATE. Lee Murray reported that the FBMGA would be holding a quarterly meeting later in the day and that the first tournament of 2022 would take place on January 29.

10. FBWGA UPDATE. Sue Simpson reported that FBWGA members noted the improved course conditions and that members were generally happier with course conditions than 6 months ago. While the greens in particular had improved, her members think that the tee boxes need work. Sue also reported that a new drop zone had been added to 7 South. She suggested to Mike Cooney that carts include a notice of the new drop zone.

11. MARKETING UPDATE. Mike Cooney reported on marketing activities including commercials running at the Ritz Carlton. Mike reported that Toptracer runs competitions for individuals at all facilities to play a specified simulated course, with the low round at each location receiving a prize. Such competitions had been promoted on social media. Member Murray suggested FBMGA interest in such competitions given its members general interest in competitions. Mike noted that it was good to see the Toptracer facility getting extensive use during New Year's weekend.

12. AGRONOMY UPDATE. Golf Course Superintendent Blaine Ellerbe reported that the greens were in good shape and getting better. He noted that the tees and fairways needed work. As an example of issues associated with the tee boxes he distributed a series of pictures of the tee boxes associated with 1 South and discussed with the Board. Issues include the expanding tree canopy providing excessive shade and tree roots encroaching into the teeing areas after 30+ years of tree growth. Part of a fix could be cutting limbs and removing some trees. Completely renovating problematic tee areas and using varieties of grass other than Bermuda could also address the issues but required time and more money. He indicated that he was evaluating a procedure less intrusive than complete renovations using planer mowing to renovate certain tee areas and would get a quote for the cost of the project. Blaine noted that he had to look 3-5 years out for projects and renovations, notwithstanding that the budgeting process was a year to year matter.

13. ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made seconded and approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:10am.

Submitted by Jim Rauschenberger, GCAB Secretary

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Lee Murray, Chairperson

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Jim Rauschenberger, Secretary