

**CITY OF NORWALK
OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 22, 2023**

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

ATTENDANCE: Joseph Andrasko, Chair; Denise Brown, Richard Dellinger, Alan Dutton, Robert Stowers

ABSENT: Gary Leeds, Jennifer McAllister, Anthony Trimboli

STAFF: Paul Alexander, Golf Pro; Mark Gartner, Controller; Jim Hollyday, General Manager; Jim Schell, Superintendent

OTHERS: Lisa Bisson, Smoking Aces

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Andrasko called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He called the roll. A quorum was present.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• 7/20/2023 regular meeting

The following corrections were noted:

Page 1, under **ATTENDANCE**: please move “Mark Gartner” to Staff.

Page 1, and forward: under **STAFF**: please correct the spelling of “Holiday” to “Hollyday” and forward.

Page 1 and forward: please correct the spelling of “Dillinger” to “Dellinger”

Page 1, under **CALL TO ORDER**: paragraph 2, line 1: please change the following from:

Mr. Andrasko noted that Denise Brown, whose term has expired, is admitted into the meeting, and has not been officially reappointed, but will be.

To: “Mr. Andrasko noted that Denise Brown and Jennifer McAllister’s terms had expired, are admitted into the meeting, and have not been officially reappointed, but will be.

Page 2, under **OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS**: please change the following motion from:

**** MR. LEEDS MOVED THE FOLLOWING SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR THE AUTHORITY:**

**CHAIRMAN: JIM ANDRASKO;
VICE CHAIR: ALLAN DUTTON;
TREASURER: DENISE BROWN**

**** MR. DILLINGER SECONDED THE MOTION
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

To:

**** MR. LEEDS MOVED THE FOLLOWING SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR THE AUTHORITY:**

**CHAIRMAN: JOE ANDRASKO;
VICE CHAIR: ALAN DUTTON;
TREASURER: DENISE BROWN**

**** MR. DILLINGER SECONDED THE MOTION
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Page 2, under **MANAGEMENT REPORTS**, please change the following from:

Report of the General Manager: (filed on July 18)
To: Report of the General Manager: Jim Hollyday (filed on July 18)

Page 4, under **ITEM #5 MANAGEMENT REPORTS**: please change the following from:

Report of the Golf Professional (filed on July 18)
To: Report of the Golf Professional: Paul Alexander (filed on July 18)

Page 5, regarding **REPORT OF THE CONTROLLER**, please change the header from:

Report of the Controller (filed on July 18):
To: Report of the Controller: Mark Gartner (filed on July 18)

Page 6: under **COMMITTEE REPORTS**, please change the header from:

“TENNIS COMMITTEE”
To: “TENNIS COMMITTEE: Denise Brown”

Page 6, under **TENNIS COMMITTEE**, paragraph 1, line 1: please change the following from:

“Ms. Brown reported the grant from state USTA has been received”

To: "Ms. Brown reported the grant from Connecticut CT USA has not been received"

Page 6, under **TENNIS COMMITTEE**, paragraph 1, line 2: please change the following from:

"Mr. Falsey feels confident"

To: "Mr. Hulse feels confident"

Page 6, regarding **RESTAURANT COMMITTEE**, please change the header from:

"Restaurant Committee"

To: "Restaurant Committee: Alan Dutton"

**** MR. ANDRASKO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2023 MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

**** MR. DELLINGER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2023 MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Bisoan greeted the Board and said that she was the GM of Smoking Aces. She said that the staff was doing their best to keep the restaurant open to accommodate the golfers. They are currently short staffed in the kitchen. While they are often able to offer breakfast on Sundays, this past Sunday, they were not able to do so because the kitchen staff member was ill.

4. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Mr. Andrasko congratulated all the winners of the championships. The pictures were wonderful and everyone looked like they were having a great time.

5. MANAGEMENT REPORTS:

a. Report of the General Manager: Jim Hollyday

Mr. Hollyday said that he had been busy introducing himself to the staff and to others during the last month. He has been working on maintaining a high degree of visibility. He said there is never a dull moment with what appeared to be between 275 and 300 people on the course every day. The systems that are in place are working.

Mr. Hollyday said that they had released a survey with the help of staff. There were about 145 responses so far. With a mailing list of 4,852 names, it is difficult to know who the actual users of Oak Hills are. The deadline for the survey has been extending to September 1st.

He then updated the Board on the HVAC system. The RFP has been sent out to three additional vendors and Mr. Hollyday will be meeting with some of the vendors in the next few days. He hopes to have a recommendation for the Board in September.

Mr. Dutton asked if the scope of the project has been clarified. Mr. Hollyday said that it had been defined and noted that they had added some information recently.

Mr. Dellinger asked for some clarification in Mr. Hollyday's report. Mr. Hollyday said that he had previously removed the sentence in question and clarified the details for the Board.

Mr. Dellinger said he believed that the last day for the tennis was August 27th, not the 25th.

Mr. Andrasko said that he was willing to approve an increase for the Capital Expense budget because they had identified some other areas where there will be savings. A brief discussion followed.

b. Report of the Golf Professional: Paul Alexander

Mr. Alexander said that things were going really great. He said that he had been at the course for 12 years and had never seen it busier. Their reputation is out there and the golfers are coming to the course from all over.

The course is in great condition and the weather has been pretty good. There are many new faces coming through, including Junior golfers and young adults. Golf Now has brought a number of new golfers who keep coming back to the course. The reasonable rates and great course conditions have contributed to this. Utilization rates are up over 90% almost every day. They have brought in almost \$100,000 this year, which is a 5% increase, while other parts of the country have not done so well because of the rain.

Since January 1, 2021, the course has generated \$407,285 through Golf Now. He displayed a map showing where the golfers were coming from, including the West Coast, Westchester County, Rockland County, Suffolk County and other various locales.

Mr. Alexander then reviewed the hours of operation with the Board. The key sheet is open longer and people are teeing off at 6 knowing they will only be able to play for an hour and a half. Many of the new golfers only play six holes and then leave in their cars.

In the last month, there were two golf outings that went well. The 100 Club from Stamford held their first outing at the course and have already booked their next outing in 2024. O'Neill's Pub held their largest outing of the year with 140 golfers. Everyone has been impressed with the digital scoring offered by Golf Genius. Mr. Alexander thanked Steve Shepard for his assistance with this.

There were 13 total outings so far with 1353 golfers participating and there are six more outings scheduled. There is also the possibility of an additional outing after they aerate the course in October. There has also been an outing booked for August of 2024.

The Oak Hill Men's Golf Association and the Women's are in the 16th week of tournaments. Bobby Trimboli won the Men's Cup Championship for the fourth time in seven years. TJ Trimboli won the cup during the other three years.

Christoph Pappas won his first Senior Club Championship. There were 64 teams for this event. He listed the other winners for two other events and noted that the Junior Club Championship and the Women's Club Championship events will be held in September. The course will also be having their first Ryder Cup tournament.

The last Junior Summer Golf School is underway. There have been 27 of 43 scheduled golf clinics held. The new synthetic artificial turf tee has helped tremendously. There have been over 1250 memberships sold. The greens fees and cart revenue are over last year's totals.

Last July, the Board discounted the golf memberships by 30% late in the season. This worked out well.

The golf carts are now three years old and have been holding up well.

In terms of staffing, there are currently 8 inside employees; 20 on the outside staff. He reviewed the numbers of employees that were leaving, so the staff dropped from 38 to the current number of 28.

Ms. Brown asked if other local courses were having good years. Mr. Alexander said that the neighboring courses were also busy. COVID was good for golf. While the sale of clubs, shirts and other equipment had decreased, the number of rounds were increasing. There have been several improvements at the course, so things are good.

c. Report of the Superintendent: Jim Schell

Mr. Schell greeted the Board and said that the wet weather had hurt the course a little bit. In July there was over 6 inches of rain. The average amount for July is 4 inches. In August the current average is 4 ¼ inches while the average for the month is 3 ½ for the entire month. While the water bill will probably go down, Mr. Schell said that he may have to purchase some plant protection products.

The early morning heavy rainfall on the 18th did have an impact. While the course was open, Mr. Schell said that he saw a ball embed itself in one of the greens. Neighboring courses were closed and Mr. Schell said that if he saw similar conditions like the ones on the 19th, he would close the course or delay opening.

Mr. Schell then updated the Board on the condition of the bunkers and the current staffing levels. He reminded everyone that other courses have more competitive wages than Oak Hills.

Mr. Dellinger asked for an update on one of the project quotes. Mr. Schell said that they had received one quote.

Ms. Brown asked Mr. Schell to review the watering system with her. Discussion followed about the details of the low voltage wiring underneath the patio and the pros and cons of closing the course vs. delayed openings when there is excessive rainfall.

d. Report of the Controller: Mark Gartner

Mr. Gartner greeted the Board and said that the year-end closing went smoothly. The audit report is being assembled. There have been no inquiries from the upper management about the review process. He felt that the numbers that the Board had been given would be the final number, but cautioned them that there had been snags during the partner's review in the past few years. The report should arrive sometime in September and the Board will pay the 1% gross revenue fee to the City of Norwalk along with their normal, monthly payments.

Mr. Andrasko asked about the details of the review process, which Mr. Gartner outlined for him. He added that there would be an auditor's reports that will make some type of suggestion for improvement. Once the audit process is completed, he will send the report out to the Board.

The month of July is the first month of the new year. At this point, the revenues exceed last year's. The expenses have been on budget. The Oak Hills bank balance is very good in comparison to the past.

Mr. Dutton had some detailed questions about the sales analysis. He noted that they were behind by 27% in the Resident Senior Rounds category. There was also a 12% decrease in the amount that Golf Now participants pay for rounds.

Mr. Stowers asked who was performing the audit. Mr. Schell said that it was being done by PKF O'Connor Davies.

Mr. Stowers asked if there was a major increase in the fees. Mr. Schell said that the average revenue rounds was increased by a dollar and some other ones were increased by \$2.00 per category. There are also discounted ID cards. Discussion followed about the details.

Mr. Alexander pointed out that regarding the decrease in the Resident Senior rounds, if the seniors weren't playing, other golfers were filling that spot. He went on to explain that there was \$1.128 million in green fees this year verses and \$985,000 last year. The cart fees are up with \$348,000 this year compared to \$277,000 last year on a calendar basis.

Mr. Gartner said that they intended to continue with Capital Improvements to make the course even better.

Mr. Andrasko asked about the previous year's budget for Park Maintenance vs. Park Equipment. Mr. Gartner said that the budgets evened out as the year went on. He explained that when the equipment is ordered in October, the equipment often doesn't come in until the spring and the bill arrives in the summer.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

a. Tennis Committee: Denise Brown

Ms. Brown said that there was a meeting with Kings Highway that she was not part of. She spoke about the social events that were part of the lease, such as Friday Night Socials. The Board just completed three years' worth of the lease with Kings Highway and Item 2J in the lease has a request for yearly social events. To date, they have not offered any social events, which is not in compliance with the lease agreement. All of the social events at Oak Hills during the summer are sponsored by volunteers from the Friends of Tennis. The Friends have introduced the week-end drop in events, and organizing and hosting tournaments including the upcoming September Labor Day Tournament.

Ms. Brown said that there had been a request for a financial report, which was not provided. There was also no mention of the Ladies League. She estimated that Kings Highway probably brings in about \$60,000 to \$75,000 in revenue income from that league. Ms. Brown said that there were Ladies League team captains that were frustrated over the management of the teams. Discussion followed.

Ms. Brown announced that the Fall program for the Youth was being put together and would be advertised through the Norwalk Public School System and a marketing group. There have been about 20 registrations through NPS so far. The program will run afterschool on Monday through Thursday. There will also be some adult drop ins available before the Tennis Brands drop ins. Ms. Brown said that Chris Mayotte's been working very hard to have a USTA Youth Tournament on Saturday afternoon. There are two USTA representatives that are working with Ms. Brown on this.

Ms. Brown said she had been told the grant money had been received, but was not sure of the current status. There is a follow up report that has to be sent to the USTA with additional information. She asked Mr. Hollyday if he would be able to help her with this.

The discussion then moved to the pergola. Mr. Dellinger said that he had turned the project over to Mr. Hollyday for fund raising. Mr. Hollyday said that he had handed over the permit to the general contractor. They are waiting for the mason to provide estimates for installing the

footings. The contractor said that once the construction starts, it will only take a few weeks to complete. The materials for the project have been purchased.

Mr. Dellinger asked for the status on the USTA check and the status on the fence proposals. Mr. Hollyday said that he had sent out a revised RFP for the tennis project. He gave the details of the proposal for that project.

Ms. Brown asked Mr. Stowers about Recreations and Parks Youth Tennis program for the fall. Mr. Stowers said they had offered one in the summer. Mr. Dellinger asked who ran the Youth Program. Mr. Stowers said that his Recreation supervisor would have the name. He went on to speak about the recent pickleball courts that the City had created

b. Restaurant Committee: Alan Dutton

Mr. Dutton said that now that Mr. Hollyday was on the premise, he felt when there wasn't a need for a Restaurant Committee anymore. He explained that they could keep the Committee for oversight, but that Mr. Hollyday was doing the work. This will be discussed offline.

Ms. Bisoon said that the restaurant had been doing great and was extremely busy. She gave a brief overview of the sales revenue for the cart and the restaurant.

Discussion followed about having the beverage cart take a short detour to the tennis courts when there is a tournament underway. Ms. Bisoon said that she would be in touch with Ms. Brown about this.

Mr. Dellinger suggested that they needed to create an interest in having the tennis players to come to the restaurant and encouraged her to offer some 10% off coupons to tennis players.

c. Supporters of Oak Hills Park: Jerry Crowley

There was no report at this time.

d. Nature Advisory Committee: TBD

Mr. Gartner said that he had walked through the Nature Trail during the past few weeks and saw two coyotes, two deer, a baby box turtle and a frog that has now taken up residence at the fountain.

7. OLD BUSINESS / NEW BUSINESS:

a. Interest bearing account for cash balances

Ms. Brown said that she along with Mr. Gartner and Gary would be meeting about this issue. Mr. Gartner said The City Finance Department strongly discouraged anything that might be market based and encouraged keeping it in a bank account with FDIC insurance. There will be more information next month. A brief discussion followed about how much should be invested.

Ms. Brown said that she had spoken with the Assistant City Controller about some State of Connecticut investments.

b. Clubhouse HVAC system

Mr. Hollyday said that he would have more information for the Board at the September meeting.

Mr. Dutton welcomed Mr. Stowers and said that having Mr. Stowers on the Board will be a great asset. He added that there would be more cooperation between the City and the Board because Mr. Stowers has many great resources that the Board does not.

Mr. Stowers said that by working together they can do many things. He thanked the Board and said it was well run meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. DELLINGER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MS. BROWN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services