

TOWN OF SIMSBURY – CULTURE, PARKS, AND RECREATION COMMISSION

Subject to Vote of Approval – Regular Meeting Minutes – **Thursday, December 1, 2022** – 3 pages

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Dave Bush, Chairman at Simsbury Town Hall. Other commission members who were present included, Lori Coppinger, Kelly Kearney, Michelle Lipar, Christine Boswell, and Liz Keppel. The C. P. & R. Director, Tom Tyburski, Golf Professional, John Verrengia, Simsbury Farms Golf Course Superintendent, Brian Johnson and Board of Selectman Liaison, Chris Petersen, Hilltop Grille General Manager Marc Sparks and his Executive Assistant Regina Spafford were also in attendance.

Public Session:

No comments.

Culture, Parks and Recreation Commission Member Comments

No comments.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Mr. Bush declared the October 27, 2022 minutes approved and requested that they be put on record with the amendment to member comments that the word “not” be added in before “respected”.

New Business

2022 Golf Maintenance Season Report– Mr. Johnson stated that the 2022 year started out very cool and very dry which made it very difficult to grow grass in the spring. They also did have a little winter damage so they received some comments on bumpy greens earlier in the year. They are thinking that the end of the season will be end of next week. Earlier in the year, they had an outside company laser level some tees, they used a sod company to come in and sod those, and the same project in house would have taken all of the fall season. The old irrigation system has been performing fairly well. The irrigation system design consultant was out at the course the past two days as they have the approval for the irrigation system to be designed and installed in the future. They will hopefully get that out to bid late January or early February. Mr. Johnson stated that the Friends of Simsbury Farms donated money to purchase top soil to cover some tree roots. He also stated that pollinator pathway projects are progressing and that staff is coming up with a plan with them to plant wildflower seeds (funded by the Town). Another project is the dam on the irrigation bond at number 3, they are hoping to get DEEP approval soon. Friends of the Farms also donated money for signs at the Pro Shop at 1 and 10 and the men’s club donated money for cedar. The Golf Course once again received certification from the Audubon Society. He also stated that in the budget they received approval for a dump truck and pesticide sprayer, those items have been ordered. Their winter projects include replacing driving range nets, some tree work there, and to continue doing as much tree trimming as possible on the course. He stated that the No. 5 pond aerator stopped working so they need to check that out. They are also hoping to fill two part-time seasonal positions for next season.

Mr. Bush stated that the input on forward tee at No. 12 has been fabulous and asked if there is any plan to do a design change at No. 15 Tee. Mr. Johnson stated that with all those trees, you get minimal sun, it has been a challenge, it will never be a perfect tee.

2022 Golf Pro Shop Season Report – Mr. Verrengia stated that 2022 total revenue was up \$55k from last year. Cart fees were 194k in 2021 and in 2022 they were 216k. Green fees were up \$42,400, for a total of \$652k revenue, biggest booster of that was evening leagues. Last year they did \$56k in leagues, this year \$60k in

leagues. Outings last year were \$45k, this year they were \$56k. Some highlights shared include: 11 leagues total, total 275 players per week playing in the leagues, outings are strong as they had about 24 events bringing in about \$96k per year. They had 8 Friday night couple events, with 28-34 couples per event. They also had the 50th Anniversary fireworks there and he felt it was the best event they ever had up there and feels like they should push to have that event every year. He thanked his staff for all their hard work.

Mr. Tyburski shared a quick review of the year to date results compiled by Mr. Wetjen. The new bests include: 4 months set revenue records (April, July, August & October), Pro Shop revenue, season pass revenue, total revenue and highest revenue per round played.

Mr. Kearney stated that Mr. Verrengia and his staff are always very responsive and thanked him for his help in obtaining sponsors for the golf event. He asked him if money was no object what they would request at the Farms. Mr. Verrengia stated security cameras for the Pro Shop, golf parking area, and practice area

Ms. Boswell commented that she wished there was some consistency with scheduling tee times for leagues. For example, in the morning you have to schedule online but in the evening you can't. Mr. Verrengia stated that they present it to the leagues and they can choose to do it anyway they want, they can do it all online if they have everyone's email set up.

Mr. Peterson commented that considering the continued success of the golf course, when preparing budgets they need to consider that they have a premium product and premium staff and continue to charge for it.

2022 Golf Course Restaurant Report – Mr. Sparks shared that as they enter in year three it is a pivotal year and they only want to get better. They have identified three areas they need to key in on, speed, consistency and training. They have already identified some staff as potential leads and have started training them for next year, every shift has had a supervisor but they want to make it clear to anyone coming in. He also stated that they want to improve on quality food out quickly. They are really going to look at the property and create space for some faster grab and go items. They have also been working on navigating supply shortages as many vendors don't tell them they are out of items in advance. One idea they have is that during the next snow storm they want to be able to open the restaurant to people sledding on the hill for hot cocoa, light sandwiches, etc. They also want to engage with leagues and make sure they are meeting all their objectives and solicit feedback.

Mr. Bush stated that the Men's Club has shared pros and cons and some fences need to be mended in a big way. He stated he hopes that Mr. Sparks takes the initiative to engage with the golf league representatives. Mr. Sparks commented that he is committed to soliciting feedback and making the necessary corrections.

Ms. Boswell stated that with leagues if you can be ready when the leagues start play in the spring instead of doing a soft start that would be helpful. Mr. Sparks stated that the hardest part is the training and he is looking forward to starting this year with seasoned staff

Mr. Tyburski commented that the Farms is in their prime, our success should be your success. He stated whatever Mr. Sparks can do to commission the feedback, there is opportunity for the restaurant to be successful.

Mr. Kearney stated that all of the comments should just be taken as they are trying to help. He stated that they do respect Mr. Sparks' experience but they do have thoughts on how to improve. He stated he is most disappointed in the customer experience, his recommendation would be to have someone on the restaurant staff is truly going to take ownership for every open hour. He would also recommend a huddle with Mr. Tyburski, Mr. Verrengia and the Men's Club to solicit feedback for the first month or so.

Ms. Keppel stated that the community is really responsive if they have information. She suggested effective communication such as a sandwich board, temporary menu for that day, an accurate selection. She suggested a pre-season league breakfast or lunch to make that preseason connection.

Mr. Tyburski shared that there were two deaths in the Simsbury Farms family this past week. Former long time Golf Superintendent Hank Suchinski had recently passed away, the Commission expressed their condolences.

Old Business

2022 Simsbury Celebrates Wrap Up– Mr. Tyburski stated the event took place last Saturday, by 5:30pm there were more people than he had ever seen, around 20k. He stated it was a great night and the Simsbury Celebrates Planning Committee was awesome to work with.

Ms. Coppinger asked if fireworks every year like Mr. Verrengia suggested were feasible. Mr. Tyburski stated that he will put in a budget request for it, it costs roughly 17k.

Mr. Tyburski shared they will be starting the budget process earlier this year. He does see challenges with agricultural supplies. They are also going to try to get Ms. Huysman's position full-time due to the rise in enrollment in the programs.

Mr. Kearney gave a shout out to local businesses that assisted the Town this year including Mitchell Auto Group and UConn Health who sponsored various events in Town.

Adjourn

Ms. Lipar made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Keppel seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7: 23 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next Regular Meeting of the C. P. & R. Commission will be January 26, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor,
Commission Clerk