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To: SimsburyCT_ParkRecMin
Cc:

Culture, Parks, and Recreation Commission

Regular Meeting: Thursday, March 22, 2012 at 7:30 p.m.

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by commission member Mr. Kelly Kearney. Chairman, David Bush, could not attend. Present commission members included Frank Salls, Harry Ryan, Bill Mullen, Barbara Koff, and Gerry Wetjen. Others present included: Gerry Toner, C., P. & R. Director, and Douglas Beach, principal for Douglas Beach Golf Course Design, Inc.

II. Minutes

Mr. Mullen made a motion to approve the February 2012 C, P, & R Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wetjen, and was unanimously passed.

III. Correspondence

Mr. Toner presented copies of a letter sent to him from the Board of Directors of the Simsbury Farms Men's Club (SFMC). The letter was dated March 14, 2012, and clarified the intent of a March 9, 2012 letter from the SFMC in which they proposed giving a \$5,000 grant to the C. P. & R. Department to improve the playing conditions of the golf course. In this recent letter, they clarified the following points: 1. The funds are to be spent on the development of a long-term Master Plan for the golf course, 2. The SFMC will split the cost of the grant with the town, up to a maximum of \$5,000, and 3. The SFMC will in no way interfere with the planning and implementation of any work at the Simsbury Farms facility as a result of the donation.

Mr. Wetjen, a member of the SFMC, explained that the grant is an outright gift, that matching funds from the town will be budgeted from the Revenue Fund, and that a good master plan for the golf course will ultimately help it generate sustainable revenues.

Mr. Wetjen explained that the Master Plan for the Simsbury Farms Golf Course (SFGC) will be done in two phases over a time period of about 18 months. In PHASE 1, issues that impact play and revenue will be identified. Consultants, such as a golf course architect and an expert in the food and restaurant business, will be hired to analyze the strengths, weaknesses and future possibilities for the golf course, the restaurant and the Pro Shop. Reconstructing bunkers, designing better drainage systems and adding more cart paths are examples of how the course can be made more user-friendly. In PHASE II, a cost-benefit analysis will be applied to all the different recommendations listed in the Master Plan. This will help in the prioritization of projects and construction. Mr. Wetjen noted that consulting fees will make up the bulk of expenses. His rough estimation of the total cost is \$25,000, which breaks down into \$10,000 for Phase I to hire consultant(s) and have drawings made, plus about \$15,000 for Phase II to fulfill most of the objectives of the Master Plan. Mr. Wetjen advised the C. P. & R. Commission to get started as soon as possible because the process of getting town approvals and "requests for qualifications" will take a while. Mr. Beach offered that it might take 3 to 6 months to get the preliminary report for the Master Plan. Mr. Wetjen made a motion to forward the March 14, 2012 letter from SFMC to the Board of Selectmen so that the process of getting a golf course Master Plan made and funded could begin. The motion was seconded by Ms. Koff and was unanimously passed.

IV. Golf Course Improvements / Bunker Renovation

Mr. Toner presented copies of a 4-page report dated March 21, 2012, and titled, "2012 Renovation of Bunkers: Simsbury Farms Golf Course." The report details the sequence in which the bunkers will be rebuilt in the 2012 golfing season. The report was drafted by Gerard Toner, C. P. & R. Director; Douglas Beach, golf course designer; Mike Wallace, golf course superintendent, and John Verrengia, golf professional. Green-side bunker renovations will be the first priority.

Mr. Kearney praised Mr. Wallace for having the knowledge and skills to do all of the bunker work himself. Keeping the job in-house means substantial savings for the town. Mr. Beach noted that Mr. Wallace truly understands the drainage patterns at the course. Mr. Wetjen added that Mr. Wallace's

goal is to make the bunkers appeal to a broad spectrum of golfers. To accomplish this, he is making the bunkers as steep as is possible, sloping the grass down, so that the course can be maintained by the equipment the department already has.

Mr. Toner noted that around \$38,000 has already been spent on new irrigation heads, drainage materials, pipes, sod, sand and equipment leases or rentals. He expects that the funding already in place will cover all the expenses for repairing the green-side bunkers.

V. Golf Course Marketing Plan

Mr. Toner presented copies of a 3-page report. It included the 2012 Marketing Plan, the outline for a new point-based loyalty reward program, and a copy of the most recent press release. Of special note: The new web site should be live by Monday, March 26. In a recent review of local golf courses by the Hartford Advocate, SFGC was voted "The Top Public Course in the Greater Hartford Area." A "Savenowct.com" online 2-for-1 coupon offer—meant to fill empty tee times on weekdays and on weekends after 1 p.m.—has been a stunning success! By this afternoon, 471 coupons were sold, mostly to out-of-towners. This has boosted golf course revenues far ahead of last March's revenues. Mr. Toner noted, and the commission agreed, that even though this deal might attract one-time bargain hunters, it is a good way to showcase the Simsbury Farms Golf Course. It hopefully will result in return visits. "Simsbury Farms Day" will take place on June 2, 2012 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the complex. Demonstrations and tournaments are planned. Families are encouraged to participate.

VI. Status of the Simsbury Farms Main Building Project

Mr. Toner reported that his bi-weekly meetings with the contractor and architect have turned into weekly meetings. Crews are continuing to work on weekends. There have been few surprises. He expects that the project will stay on schedule and be completed by the end of May.

VII. New / Other Business.

- Pool season passes are for sale.
- The C. P. & R. summer programs have been released and registration has begun.
- The C. P. & R. Department has acquired a used wood chipper, funded in part by a contribution from the Simsbury Farms Men's Golf Club.
- Tree work and cleanup at Memorial Park is ongoing to ensure safety for all park users .

- The C. P. & R. Department has the responsibility of maintaining open space sites in town.

It periodically works with the Simsbury Land Trust. Currently, however, it has been busy taking care of dangerous trees affected by the October 2011 snow storm, especially in open spaces that abut homeowner properties.

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Mr. Wetjen made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Salls seconded the motion. All were in favor. The motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lorrie McElligott
Commission Clerk