

**LAKE BLUFF PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES OF SPECIAL BOARD MEETING
MARCH 5, 2018**

The Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Lake Bluff Park District, Lake County, Illinois, was held at the Lake Bluff Park District Recreation Center, 355 W. Washington Avenue, Lake Bluff, Illinois.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by President Douglass.

The following Commissioners were present when the roll was called: S. Ehrhard, B. Gordon, K. McKendry, C. Mosbarger, F. Pitera, B. Wallace and R. Douglass.

Staff members present were Ron Salski, Executive Director; Jim Lakeman, Superintendent of Recreation, Safety and Outreach Services; Ed Heiser, Superintendent of Facility Services; Rob Foster, Superintendent of Golf, Park and Facility Maintenance; Dana Hansen, Preschool and Early Childhood Director; Cheryl Mosqueda, Superintendent of Finance and Human Resources; Dawn Dahl, Administrative Assistant; and Marcia Jendreas, Recording Secretary.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner McKendry moved, seconded by Commissioner Gordon, to approve the March 5, 2018 Agenda as submitted.

On the roll call, the vote was as follows:

AYE: S. Ehrhard, B. Gordon, K. McKendry, C. Mosbarger, F. Pitera, B. Wallace, R. Douglass

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Facts About the Lake Bluff Golf Club and Its Future – Presentation

President Douglass welcomed everyone in the audience and said the Board was present tonight to hear thoughts and comments about whether the Lake Bluff Park District should continue to operate the Golf Club. The Park Board has worked hard to always be financially responsible with our tax dollars. Through the Comprehensive Plan, the Board has established long term financial sustainability. Tonight, the Park District staff will share the financial data and details about the Golf Club operation, including assessment reports from experts. You will see the Club's financial impact on the Park District's overall budget.

President Douglass explained the meeting format. He said that if a decision is made to close the Golf Club, it will still remain open through the end of the 2018 golf season. Any discussion of future uses of the property will not occur until after the 2018 season.

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Executive Director Salski explained that he will show a presentation that contains facts and history about the Lake Bluff Golf Club. This presentation will be available for viewing on the Park District website. He said that the Board and staff want community input into the final decision. He noted that the Billy Casper Golf contract is ending at the end of the 2018 season, and the Clubhouse needs to be shut down in January 2019, for significant repairs, including some which need to meet the needs of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Total cost for these repairs is \$600,000 to \$700,000.

Executive Director Salski outlined the timeline of events regarding the Golf Club since 2001, and he reviewed the revenue situation after Billy Casper Golf was hired. He noted that there is a decline in golf participation and there is a saturated market. 80% of the golf rounds are played by non-residents. The cost-recovery shortfall to goal is \$384,000. The financial loss of the Golf Club for the past 12 years has been \$3 million and projected loss is \$5.4 million from 2018 to 2029. The Golf Club requires the highest tax subsidy of any of the Park District programs and facilities.

Executive Director Salski explained various scenarios/options that were explored by Sikich LLP and staff, such as an 18 hole golf club with no building, 18 hole golf club with a modular facility, 9 hole club with and without building and no golf club. Billy Casper Golf has recommended against the nine-hole course because even though maintenance would be reduced slightly, revenue would drop significantly. He said without the golf club, staff would just mow the area and create paths and there would be a slight positive operational cash flow.

Executive Director Salski stated that the Park Board of Commissioners need to make an important decision regarding the golf club and they want input from the citizens. He opened the meeting for public comments.

Statement of Visitors/Public Input

Tom Grant, Lake Bluff, commented that the golf club fees are too high and not enough has been done to promote the course. He suggested working with the Lake County Forest Preserve to run the course.

Edward Bogle, Lake Bluff, said part of the reason he moved here six months ago was because of the golf club. He urged the Board to try everything to keep it open.

James Arnold, Lake Bluff, stated that it is absurd to keep the golf club open because of the loss of revenue. He said it should have been closed ten years ago.

Scott Griffith, Lake Bluff, felt that this was a great opportunity for the Park District to do something different and make some changes. He suggested using a modular club house.

Mike Coleman, Lake Bluff, felt the numbers provided were not accurate and the facts were objective. He asked the Park District to come up with alternatives that could be presented to the residents. He commented that the threat of townhouses is real. He said people will pledge donations and mobilize, but they need time to make it work.

Jenny Coleman, Lake Bluff, commented that people don't spend a lot of time at a golf club building and all Park District debt will not go away just by closing the golf course. She said you have to play with the numbers and maybe charge \$49 per round.

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Janice Schnobrich, Lake Bluff, thanked the Board Members for serving and said Mr. Salski was the best thing to ever happen to this District. She commented that the golf course has to close.

Bob Taubenheim, Lake Bluff, commented that the Park District should think like an accountant and renegotiate debt and he said he was skeptical of expenses related to the clubhouse.

Stewart Shepherd, Lake Bluff, stated that the golf course is part of the community and if it's closed, it is gone forever. He noted that people don't come to hang out at a clubhouse.

Dave Partington, Lake Bluff, said that he has not received any emails regarding the golf course and there has been no social media news.

Larry McCotter, Lake Bluff, said he works with Lake Bluff Open Lands Association (LBOLA) and he would like to see a nine hole option with the remainder of the land being kept as open space. He noted that LBOLA would be happy to help with the restoration of the open space.

Adam Smith, Lake Bluff, commented that the golf course needs to remain open and an abandoned golf course is a black mark on the community. He said facts are subject to interpretation and are skewed. He suggested school camp offerings and giving the residents a chance to offer their support.

Scott Ellis, Lake Bluff, stated that continuing with the golf course is irresponsible with the loss of money occurring and open space has other uses besides golf, which produces a soup of pesticides and chemicals. He felt that tax money should serve the community at large and not just 8% of the residents.

Glenn Mordini, Lake Bluff, noted that the Park District is not in the business of making a profit and is here to provide services to the community. He felt the Park District should hire a different consultant or have a referendum to determine what the people want.

Sam Beckman, Lake Bluff, suggested fixing the flooding and doing something to make the golf course more viable. He noted the financials look awful.

Barbara Andersen, Lake Forest, said to give the community a chance to rally for the cause. She noted that she never received an email about the golf course closing and she is a golfer in Lake Bluff. She stated that her club of ladies only need a clean bathroom and a place to get a sandwich and she suggested raising the rates.

Kate Manfred, Lake Bluff, advised that the website is not user friendly and memberships cannot be purchased on line. She suggested looking at the positives and noted that her kids learned to play golf on the Lake Bluff course.

Jim Murray, Lake Bluff, suggested that the Park District form a special committee of residents to oversee this problem and determine what the bare minimum is that the Park District needs.

Mickey Collins, Lake Bluff, stated that the golf course is a great asset to the community and maybe the sport of golf should be doing more to pull people in, like offering programs in schools or fundraisers.

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Andy Johnson, Lake Bluff, said that Lake Bluff is not a golf course that should be closed. He felt it should be reinvented with an innovative course and become the hub of the community. He presented the Board with some plans he drew.

Kate Briand, Lake Bluff, stated that the Community Wide Survey indicated that no one wants taxes raised and keeping the golf course open is taking away money from the beach. She said it is not a wise choice, the golf course is not sustainable, and it is hemorrhaging tax dollars.

Peter McGuire, Lake Bluff, said he financed four golf courses and the financial gap is there. He noted that foundational membership is needed. He suggested rallying the young people, who want to save the golf course and then there will be a partnership. Get a monetary commitment from users, residents and non-residents and put more effort into promoting the website and membership.

Christine Greenfield, Lake Bluff, asked what the other close-by golf courses are doing that Lake Bluff is not. She commented that the Board has not done enough research and people present at the meeting want to help, participate and bring new life to the course.

Dick Driver, Lake Bluff, said he is also representing Dan Williams, the Athletic Director for the Lake Bluff Middle School, who was not able to attend due to the weather. He said they have a golf team and so does the high school, as well as Lake Forest College. As Dick Driver, he said no one is talking about closing the Fitness Center and felt that usage percentage is not a valid criteria; the real criteria is cost. He said people will still be paying taxes even if the golf course closes and noted that all the park district programs do not break even.

Tom Fox, Lake Bluff, said Billy Casper did not do a very good job and he never received any emails about the golf course. He implored the Board to hold off on a decision and said he and others will make an effort to play more and bring in their friends.

Doug Damrow, Lake Bluff, said he started out at the golf course as a caddie and he felt more people would use the course if the speed of play was increased. He said marketing needs to be improved and so does increased outreach to schools.

Nathan Pavlik, Lake Bluff, stated there is a question about financials and he needs more detail. He felt this is a great opportunity for community support.

Kate Jackson, Lake Bluff, said all of the North Shore neighbors have golf courses and the course is Lake Bluff's brand. She said residents don't want amenities taken away and the clubhouse could become a community gathering space.

Dick Marek, Lake Bluff, stated that this is a complex project and there are many options that are viable and they all need to be studied.

Matt Valente, Lake Bluff, said the Park District is a complete package and he wants opportunities for his children. He felt the Park District should be committed to their facilities and there should be a definitive plan of what will happen to the land if the golf course closes.

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Paul Greenfield, Lake Bluff, commented that the golf course is in very good condition and the Park District should ask the people in the community to get together and come up with different ideas to keep the course open.

Colette Asmussen, Lake Bluff, stated that the Board got a proposal for free tonight, because the community has come together. She said there is a lot of expertise here and the Board needs to tell the residents what is needed in order to buy some time to come up with a plan to keep the course open.

Roger Hecker, Lake Bluff, commented that no one has heard about these problems until recently. He felt the Park District should educate the public and if the golf course needs to be saved, then money should be raised.

President Douglass thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and said that the Board is still actively collecting information. He reminded everyone that they can view information presented tonight on the Lake Bluff Park District's website. He also said that if anyone has further questions, they can jot them down on one of the notecards available in the back of the room and give them to staff. An answer to the question will be returned via email.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, motion was made by Commissioner Gordon, seconded by Commissioner Mosbarger, to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Approved this 19th day of March 2018
Board of Commissioners
Lake Bluff Park District