

BLUE ASH CITY COUNCIL

October 13, 2008 – Work Session

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A Work Session of the Council of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on Monday, October 13, 2008. Mayor Robert J. Buckman, Jr. called the meeting to order in the Blue Ash Conference Room at approximately 6:00 PM.

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Buckman led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilman Rick Bryan, Mayor Robert Buckman, Councilman Lee Czerwonka, Councilman Henry Stacey, Councilwoman Stephanie Stoller, Councilman James Sumner, and Vice Mayor Mark Weber

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager David Waltz, Treasurer/Administrative Services Director James Pfeffer, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk, Public Works Director Mike Duncan, Golf Pro Bill Mayer, Golf Superintendent Dan Walter, Clete Benken of KKG Studios, and Dick Thomas of Steed Hammond Paul

WORK SESSION: Topic: Future Golf Course Improvements

Mr. Waltz remarked that there are three goals desired for tonight's work session:

- To discuss the external design of the future golf clubhouse (with further concepts to be presented later in this meeting).
- To discuss the future golf clubhouse location.
- To discuss the future airport park in general, especially as it relates to golf operation components

Dick Thomas of Steed Hammond & Paul explained that additional Clubhouse designs have been developed after conversations with Mr. Funk and Mr. Waltz, and Council feedback is being requested tonight. Highlights of Mr. Thomas's PowerPoint presentation are summarized below:

Goals of the development include:

- Establish a sustainable banquet facility on the golf grounds while maintaining the clubhouse golf offerings.
- Create a banquet facility that will be a benchmark facility along the I-71 corridor.
- Create a visual impression and statement from Cooper & Plainfield Roads.
- Continue the quality golf experience & increase overall golfing amenities.
- A site plan shows a new clubhouse in the approximate location of the current clubhouse. A drop-off area is shown in front.
- Main floor outdoor seating area shows 152 and main level indoor seating shows 304 – for a total of about 450 on the main level. The “main” level is actually ground level from the Cooper Road side, but one level up from the northern elevation due to the site's topography.
- Total lower level outdoor seating shows 36 and lower level indoor seating shows 82, for a total lower level seating capacity of 118.
- The most recent design concept was shown – showing a traditional architectural style clubhouse design.
- Other recently completed, soon-to-be completed, and conceptual future City of Blue Ash public facilities were also shown, including the recent north fire station completed in 2003, Recreation Center project currently under construction, and the planned Performing Arts & Conference Center.

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- The desire with the proposed design for a new Clubhouse is to continue (or “connect”) the “language” of these public facilities. They have consistent design elements that can be built upon.
- The firehouse has “landmark” design elements, including strong vertical forms & beacon quality. The Recreation Center shows strong, bold roof forms, combined with landmark design elements, with an emphasis on strong horizontal with unique vertical counterpoints. The PACC shows strong “celebratory” elements such as transparency and major horizontal emphasis with unique entry expression.
- In the context of those three facilities, additional design concepts for a Golf Clubhouse were created in sketch form. Four concepts were shown (labeled “Nicklaus Scheme,” “Hogan Scheme,” “Trevino Scheme,” and “Palmer Scheme”). Sketches of the entry view, the view from Hole 18, and an aerial view were shown for each Scheme.
- Proposed project timing included an image development phase from October 2008 to February 2009, Project design/development from February 2009 to September 2009, project bidding from August 2009 to October 2009, an approximate 12 month construction period from fall 2008 to completion in August 2010 to October 2010.
- Regarding projected costs, overall changes/increases in construction costs are occurring in the economy. This type of project in 2006/2007 would be an estimated \$5.5 to \$6 million; in 2007/2008, an estimated \$6 to \$6.5 million; and in 2008/2009 \$6.5 to \$7 million.

Mr. Waltz clarified that the layout/footprint displayed for inside the facility is the same as has been proposed previously to Council. The change in what is shown is reflected only within the outside façade design, higher ceilings, etc. He explained that the intent was to create something unique for Blue Ash -- something that works well with the landscape and will not become dated.

In addressing a question from Mayor Buckman, Mr. Thomas commented that the tower at the entry is approximately 25 feet tall and would have enough height to be dramatic upon entry. Mr. Waltz commented that it is approximately five to seven feet taller than the height of the previous design’s entry.

Vice Mayor Weber commented that in his opinion, none of the designs presented reflect a facility that resembles a golf facility. In his opinion, since golf is the predominant use, it should look like a golf facility.

In addressing a question from Councilman Sumner, Mr. Thomas explained access to the golf part of the facility. Councilman Sumner commented that he finds the new outside designs attractive, however, has concerns that golfer access is not convenient enough.

Councilman Sumner commented that he believes the original design looks like a funeral home. He expressed concern with having the golf facilities all on the lower level, and nothing on the first level that would be used by the golfer. Of the four new designs, he prefers the “Nicklaus” design.

Councilman Stacey commented that he prefers the softer edges shown on some of the new designs, and the overall vertical effects on all four new designs. He also preferred the stone and wood components on #3 and #4, vs. the traditional brick. He added that he is not particularly fond of the original clubhouse design.

Councilman Czerwonka commented that he favored the fourth design. He agrees with Councilman Stacey that more stone and wood would be preferred.

Vice Mayor Weber commented that he likes the overall interior layout. However, he does not prefer any of the exterior designs that have been shown tonight. However, he does like stone and asked if there’s a possibility of getting a mixture of traditional and contemporary in the overall Clubhouse design.

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Councilman Bryan commented that he also likes the interior layout and that the idea of keeping the golf facilities separate from the banquet facilities does not trouble him since this facility will be more than just a golf facility. He does not particularly like any of the four new designs presented tonight.

Councilwoman Stoller commented that she prefers design #4 because it is different.

Mayor Buckman commented that he prefers the original design over the four new designs presented this evening. He commented favorably on the Yankee Trace clubhouse personally visited a year or so ago.

In addressing a question from Councilman Czerwonka, Mr. Thomas summarized that the proposed new designs would be more efficient to operate and less costly to build as compared to the original design.

Mr. Waltz commented that the feedback received tonight would be reviewed amongst the team members and additional design concepts would be presented for Council's consideration at a future meeting and/or work session.

Golf Course Improvements Within the Future 130 Acre Park

Mr. Waltz reminded Council of the most recent discussion regarding golf improvements as it related to the future 130 acre park near the airport. Past concepts have included:

- The addition of a driving range along with enhanced golf holes on the new park property adjacent to the airport. This concept would have resulted in no or minimal changes to the existing course hole layout.
- Addition of a driving range along Cooper Road on the existing course side (west) of Plainfield and constructing a new clubhouse closer to Plainfield Road. This concept would have resulted in the need to alter approximately five existing golf holes.
- Addition of a driving range along Plainfield Road (on the existing course, west, side), resulting in fewer changes to the existing hole layout. However, an issue with this concept was timing since any new signature holes to be constructed on the new park property would have resulted in a multi-stage construction approach.

Mr. Waltz commented that the Administration is comfortable at this time in recommending that a new clubhouse be constructed in the approximate location of the existing clubhouse. This would preclude a driving range from being located on the west (course) side of Plainfield. If a driving range would be included in the overall improvements, it is recommended that it be included on the airport side, along with a shorter, family-style golf course featuring shorter holes. This concept would also involve no changes to the existing course and would keep the airport park golf component separate – with further details to be decided in the future.

Mr. Benken commented that the future park property fronts about six-tenths of a mile of Plainfield Road and about three-fourths of a mile along Glendale-Milford. An updated and more refined conceptual plan for the overall airport park shows three precincts within the triangle-shaped 130 acres of future park property: a "Civic" precinct along the far eastern portion of the property (including a future performing arts & conference center [PACC] and supporting retail); a "passive recreation" precinct centered towards the Plainfield/Glendale-Milford intersection; and an "active recreation" precinct along the western/Plainfield portion of the property (including the short family-style golf course and driving range discussed above).

The plan tries to preserve existing landscaping amenities of the property. To provide additional scale information, Mr. Benken overlaid the city's current 37-acre Sports Center property upon the future airport park property, and indicated that within each of the precinct areas shown, the future park property has enough acreage to hold perhaps two sports center sized properties. He displayed something similar in showing that the Cincinnati "Banks" project could fit on the airport park, as well as a good portion of downtown Blue Ash, simply to help conceptualize the size of the future park.

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In addressing a question from Councilman Sumner, Mr. Waltz commented that though such details are not finalized, an outdoor stage could be included within the “mall” area, behind the PACC. There is also a “placeholder” shown on the plan for potential placement of a “My Gal Sal” museum.

The desire for the civic precinct is to provide adequate space for a variety of civic and cultural events, a low maintenance “mostly green” area, to be anchored by a PACC.

The passive recreation precinct shows mostly green spaces along with lots of walking trails. Additional features also include preservation of existing woodlands, supporting accessory buildings (restrooms, small parking area, etc.), and a gateway entrance at the Plainfield/Glendale-Milford intersection.

The active recreation area could offer year-round recreational opportunities, including sledding hills, ice skating and paddling activities upon the water features, cross country ski course, etc., in addition to the short, family-style golf course and driving range already discussed. The short golf course would be constructed in such a way to coexist with the existing natural features of the property and would be more environmentally friendly, including use of more natural “meadow grass,” vs. the highly-manicured and treated areas that exist on the current course. Limited maintenance facilities (storage, restrooms, etc.) would likely also be included upon the golf course side of the property. Parking is spread around the site and it is not concentrated on any one portion.

Mr. Waltz commented that the timing of each portion of the project cannot yet be predicted nor finalized – he commented that the City is probably still probably a couple of years away from making those decisions.

In addressing a question from Mayor Buckman, Mr. Waltz explained that the shorter course would likely include six shorter holes and could be appealing to those who may not have the time to complete a nine-hole course, or played by those on a lunch-time break, and would also be appealing to beginning golfers and families. This course concept could bring in a new variety of customers that can enhance the revenue stream for the City’s overall golf operations.

Some discussion was had regarding public information efforts regarding the concepts proposed. It was agreed that the need exists to clarify that development of any aspect of the future 130-acre park is years away and at this point is conceptual only. The timing of the future airport configuration is also still not known, making timing of the future 130-acre park also unknown at this point.

Some discussion was had regarding an upcoming walk-through of the future park property. Saturday, November 1st, is the proposed day, pending cooperative weather conditions. A reminder to Council regarding this will be sent closer to the date. (Deputy Solicitor Pacheco commented in a previous meeting that such a gathering would be considered as “information gathering” only and would not require public notification/advertisement.)

ADJOURNMENT

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Czerwonka seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:15 PM.

Robert J. Buckman, Jr., Mayor

MINUTES WRITTEN BY:

Susan K. Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Council
(not in attendance at the meeting)