

A meeting of the Council of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on October 25, 2007. Mayor Robert J. Buckman, Jr. called the meeting to order in Council Chambers at 7:00 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, Deputy Clerk of Council Sue Bennett, Treasurer/Administrative Services Director James Pfeffer, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk, Service Director Dennis Albrinck, Golf Pro Bill Mayer, Golf Maintenance Superintendent Dan Walter, Assistant to the City Manager Kelly Osler, member of the press, and interested citizens

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Bryan moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of October 11, 2007. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

WORK SESSION – Topic: Golf Course Improvements Update

City Manager David Waltz explained that the purpose of tonight's work session is to give Council members an update as to where the team is in regards to the future improvements planned for the golf course. Tonight a global picture of various options will be discussed. The goal is to hone in on what is desired over the next several months. Though the team may be close to finalizing the programmatic elements of the clubhouse, the City is not close to finalizing the final overall golf course design.

John Gothard and Blake Sandler from Steed Hammond Paul, and Clete Benken from Kinzelman Kline Gossman were present to give Council a brief presentation of the various options for golf course improvements. Improvements relate to a multi-purpose clubhouse (including banquet facilities), as well as course improvements. The following offers a summary of the presentation led by Mr. Gothard:

Overall development goals:

- To establish a quality multi-purpose facility including banquet functions in addition to maintaining clubhouse functions.
- To create a banquet facility that will be a benchmark facility along the I-71 corridor.
- To create a visual impression and statement from Cooper and Plainfield Roads.
- To continue the exceptional golf experience and provide the opportunity to increase overall golfing amenities.

Features of the floor plan for the clubhouse's **main level**:

- Main level to be accessible through a main entrance in the front.
- Total seating capacity of about 300 inside plus about 150 outside.
- An interior circulation area including a main lobby and access to the various seating areas, which can be partitioned off for smaller function use.

- Men's and women's restroom facilities.
- Office and storage space.
- A bar area accessible from a central dining area.
- An outdoor deck or veranda capable of seating about 150. The deck runs along the entire back of the clubhouse, providing a wonderful view of the course.

Features of the floor plan for the clubhouse's lower level:

- A Pro Shop along the northeast corner.
- Men's and women's locker room facilities.
- Golf cart storage.
- Dining areas with seating capacity of about 80 inside and 40 outside.
- The lower level will have direct outside access in the rear (north) due to the sloping landscape.

Proposed front and rear building renderings were shown. Mr. Gothard explained the desire is to create a "country estate" appearance.

Three site plan options were reviewed by Mr. Gothard, including advantages and disadvantages of each. Those options are summarized below:

Option #1:

Shows construction of a new clubhouse very close to the location of the existing clubhouse, with main access from Cooper Road. A practice hole is shown to the east (towards Plainfield Road). No significant changes to the golf course layout itself would be required, other than suggested improvements to selected bunkers, ponds, etc.

Advantages of Option #1 include:

- A new clubhouse to include banquet facilities.
- Since no significant changes to the course would be required for construction of the clubhouse, course improvements could be accomplished on a flexible, or as-needed, basis.
- The existing parking area is maintained (though expansion would be required).
- Provides good (close) relationship with the #1 tee and #18 green, which would be convenient for golfers.
- Allows the existing amenities at Cooper and Plainfield (including the golf shelter and restrooms) to remain in place.
- This is the least expensive option.

Disadvantages of Option #1 include:

- May need to operate out of a trailer during clubhouse construction, depending on final clubhouse location.
- No signature golf holes would be gained on the airport property.
- No driving range facility is provided.

- No connection to the airport park.
- This is the least dramatic option discussed.

Option #2:

Shows construction of a new clubhouse closer to Plainfield Road, near the current #9 green, with main access from Plainfield Road. Access could be lined up directly across from the current Timbers Drive on the east side of Plainfield. A driving range is shown along Cooper Road towards the northwest. In this option, changes to four holes would be necessary (#1, #9, #10, and #18), and two new holes would be created on the airport park property.

Advantages of Option #2:

- The new clubhouse and banquet facility could have the greatest potential impact and identity from Cooper and Plainfield.
- The existing clubhouse could remain open during construction.
- The addition of a driving range would create an additional revenue source, an opportunity to introduce more adult and junior players to the game, would increase food and beverage revenue, and allows the course to host local, regional, and perhaps national tournaments.
- The driving range is in a "safer" location as compared to Option #3, and would not likely require protective netting.
- Two signature golf holes could be created on the airport park property.

Disadvantages of Option #2:

- Given the involvement of airport park property, timing of this option is somewhat uncertain. Construction phasing and coordination of improvements could be complex.
- It is likely that golfers would be playing some temporary holes for a period of time (perhaps 1-5 years) during construction. This may result in fewer rounds and loss of revenue. Strong marketing blitz would be required to regain customers.
- The course is highly rated, and redesign will affect six holes.
- Traffic on Plainfield may have to be disrupted during the period the tunnel is being constructed.
- The existing amenities at Plainfield/Cooper (shelter and restrooms) would have to be eliminated.
- This is the most expensive option.

Option #3:

Shows construction of a new clubhouse very close to the location of the existing clubhouse, with main access from Cooper Road (similar to Option #1). A practice hole is shown to the east (towards Plainfield Road). A driving range is shown along Plainfield Road. Since the driving range would affect holes #1 and #9, two new holes would be created on the airport park property.

Advantages of Option #3:

- A new clubhouse to include banquet facilities.

- The addition of a driving range would create an additional revenue source, an opportunity to introduce more adult and junior players to the game, would increase food and beverage revenue, and allows the course to host local, regional, and perhaps national tournaments.
- The creation of two signature holes on the airport park property.
- Since the City could control when the driving range would be constructed (the factor of this option affecting the two holes to be relocated to the airport park property), this option gives more flexibility as to overall timing and lessens uncertainty of the timing related to airport park uncertainties.
- Depending on final location, existing clubhouse could remain open during construction.
- Allows the existing amenities at Cooper and Plainfield (including the golf shelter and restrooms) to remain in place.

Disadvantages of Option #3:

- There is potential possibility of golf balls striking cars or pedestrians along Plainfield Road. About 90% of golfers slice (or hit balls that veer to the right). Protective netting along Plainfield Road would likely be required.
- There is no ideal way to locate the hole #1 tee or the final hole (#18) green near the clubhouse. This is an inconvenience to golfers.
- Traffic on Plainfield may have to be disrupted during the period the tunnel is being constructed.
- The course is highly rated, and redesign will affect four holes as well as the practice putting green.
- May need to operate out of a trailer during clubhouse construction, depending on final clubhouse location.

Highlights of Council questions and staff discussion follow:

- With Option #2, Mr. Funk commented that the construction of the driving range along Cooper Road would not encroach in the nature area currently in place (between the Course property and Carpenter's Run Drive).
- Regarding overall design/appearance of the clubhouse, Councilman Sumner encouraged that consideration be giving to making a more dramatic architectural statement. He commented that the overall interior layout looks good. Councilman Sumner commented that he would lean towards site layout Option #2.
- Mr. Funk commented that the clubhouse footprint has not changed significantly from what was presented to Council previously. Overall scale is very similar.
- Regarding seating, it was clarified that the upper outside veranda area can seat about 150, and the lower outside area can seat about 40. Inside seating on the main level includes about 300 plus 30 to 40 available in a breakout area.
- Councilwoman Stoller complimented the outside design of the clubhouse. The concern of having the driving range along Plainfield Road was explained in that 90% of golfers tend to hit balls that veer to the right. Placement of the driving range in this manner would likely require tall protective netting along Plainfield Road given that tendency of golf play.

- In response to a question from Councilman Weber, the outdoor seating areas would be open to the public as long as there is not an event booked. Even with an event, there would be outside seating available for golfers on the lower level. Because of the course slope, even the lower level seating area will have an attractive view. Mr. Funk commented that the lower level eating area would likely have more restaurant service than is provided by the current Sandtrap Sandwich Shop operation.
- In response to a question from Councilman Sumner, the planning team is working towards LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification

Mr. Waltz encouraged Council to not eliminate options based solely on timing issues. He also offered the following summary of the three options:

- Option #1 provides the construction of a new clubhouse in about the same location as the current clubhouse. Not many changes to the course except minor changes to bunkers, etc. – changes normally expected to a golf course over the years. This option would cost about \$6 to \$7 million for the building, plus about \$1 to \$2 million for landscaping, hole improvements, etc. Overall, Option #1 is the least expensive option.
- Option #2 offers the most dramatic impact and affects six golf holes. This option is somewhat dependent upon the airport park property. This is the most expensive option, and he estimates it would cost about \$5 to \$6 million more than Option #1. This option also has the potential to take the most time given the uncertainty of the airport.
- Option #3 shows construction of the clubhouse in about the same location as the current clubhouse (similar to Option #1); however, includes a driving range along Plainfield Road. If Council would decide to pursue Option #1, Option #3 is still a possibility – overall, Option #3 provides more flexibility. Option #3 does result in a golfing disadvantage as both holes #9 and #10 are far away from the clubhouse (representing an inconvenience to golfers). He estimates the cost for Option #3 to fall somewhere between the costs for #1 and #2.

Miscellaneous Discussion

Mr. Waltz commented that the Administration has been looking into the possibility of railroad crossing improvements in the Hazelwood neighborhood and has found that such improvements would likely cost between \$600,000 and \$700,000. Given the relatively small number of residents such an improvement would affect, such an expense is probably not recommended. Treasurer/Administrative Services Director Jim Pfeffer added that this area is also in the FEMA flood zone “A” and any changes to it require federal involvement. It appeared the consensus of Council that this level of expense is not justified.

Mr. Waltz commented that the planning team is in the process of finalizing the Recreation center design. It appears that unanticipated, and unavoidable, expenses will likely be required due to Code changes, fire proofing requirements, HVAC requirements, etc. It is likely that each of these factors will increase project cost between \$300,000 and \$500,000. Council will be kept apprised of these cost estimates and alternatives for cuts.

Mr. Waltz distributed a draft Downtown Streetscaping Plan for consideration at a future Council meeting. In addressing a question from Councilman Sumner, Mr. Waltz commented that this should be considered a planning document.

Also distributed at this meeting was a report regarding recommendations related to Plainfield Road.

Motion to approve and accept the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law regarding the appeal of a Board of Zoning Appeals decision relating to a variance granted in lot width for the construction of a home at 5200 Donjoy Drive

Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to approve and accept the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law regarding the appeal of a Board of Zoning Appeals decision relating to a variance granted in lot width for the construction of a home at 5200 Donjoy Drive. A voice vote was taken. Mayor Buckman abstained (since he was absent from the October 11th meeting at which time this hearing was held). All other members present voted yes. Six yeses. One abstention. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

After all items on the agenda were acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to convene an Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to property acquisition. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Stoller, Sumner, Weber, Stacey, Czerwonka, Bryan, and Mayor Buckman voted yes. Seven yeses. Motion carried.

After matters pertaining to property acquisition were discussed, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Bryan seconded to convene to the regular meeting. A voice vote was taken. All Council members voted yes. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Bryan seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:07 PM.

Robert J. Buckman, Jr., Mayor

MINUTES WRITTEN BY:

Susan K. Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Council