

**MEMORANDUM**

June 7, 2007

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

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SUBJECT: Montgomery County Revenue Authority Golf Master Plan

The lease between the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and the Revenue Authority that turned operation of the M-NCPPC golf courses over to the Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) required the MCRA to prepare and present to the Planning Board a draft capital investment plan (the "Golf Master Plan"). The Revenue Authority presented this plan to the Board in March 2007. At the PHED Committee meeting, the Revenue Authority will brief the Committee on progress toward integration of the four M-NCPPC golf courses into the Montgomery County system, the Master Plan and next steps. Attached to Councilmembers' memoranda is a bound report from MCRA.

**Summary of Integration Efforts**

A major requirement of the lease agreement was to have successful integration of the M-NCPPC golf courses and the Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) golf courses. The goal for the integration of the golf courses is to create a unified system of public golf, built on the Montgomery County Golf model and strive to have one of the best public golf systems in the nation. In order to be successful in this endeavor, MCRA began the integration process early by:

- Developing Project "Gemini"- a program that paired key personnel from an existing MCRA golf course with key personnel of a M-NCPPC golf course for the purpose of addressing issues as they arose early in the transition process.
- Moving M-NCPPC golf courses into a one point of sale system (accomplished in the first few months of operation).
- Moving to one loyalty program.
- Adding M-NCPPC golf courses to the MCRA website.

- Restructuring the MCRA organization by adding and redefining personnel roles to focus on key areas.

### **Participation Data**

Even during this transition year, there has been a significant increase in the number of rounds played. The total number of rounds played in calendar year 2005 was 352,779. In 2006 total number of rounds for both courses was 369,443, with 172,342 played on the M-NCPPC golf courses and 172,342 on MCRA golf courses. There was a 4.7% (16,664 rounds) increase in the total rounds played on both golf courses from 2005 to 2006 (a 1.1% increase for courses formerly operated by M-NCPPC and an 8.1% increase in MCRA courses).

The MCRA mission is to grow the game of golf by creating great golf experiences for golfers of all economic backgrounds. MCRA provides free clinics for new golfers, youth clinics and camps, and remains committed to the First Tee program. It had over 4000 junior golfers and 2,000 First Tee participants in 2006. During this same period, 29 public high schools played nearly 3,000 free rounds of golf. MCRA has developed flexible pricing plans by consistently reviewing rates by month of year, day of week, and time of day. It is also able to provide last minute savings to golfers through E-Club and believe this is partially responsible for the increased number of rounds played since implementation. MCRA has increased its community efforts as described in more detail on page 3 of their report.

### **Golf Course Master Plan**

According to the terms of the lease, the Revenue Authority must have an independent consultant prepare a draft Golf Course Master Plan by March 1, 2007. That would include short and long term plans of how the Revenue Authority will incorporate the golf courses into a unified system of public golf courses. The Master Plan was also supposed to include capital improvements proposed for the courses and a financial plan with proposed sources of funding. The lease emphasized the Master Plan as a non binding document and actions by the Revenue Authority are subject to Chapter 42 of the Montgomery County Code. The Montgomery County Revenue Authority presented the Plan to the Planning Board, on March 15, 2007. A summary of key points follow below.

### **Capital Improvement Plan- Phase 1**

The Revenue Authority hired consultants to study all the courses, the buildings (including heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems), irrigation systems, maintenance equipment, and market feasibility. They were able to identify major problems with each course that required immediate attention and develop a priority list of improvements that should be part of Phase One. Priority projects for each M-NCPPC golf course are described below.

#### *Little Bennett Golf Course*

The primary focus of this course is improving course conditions and MCRA does not plan on any major investments until course conditions and play levels improve. Once this happens, the focus will be on the clubhouse and irrigation system. The clubhouse columns are warped, cracked and molded. The Cupola is in need of repair and filled with moss and birds' nests. The irrigation system requires various upgrades and repairs.

#### *Northwest Golf Course Improvement Plan*

The focus of the Northwest course is on refurbishing all tee boxes on the championship course. In addition all greenside bunkers will be refurbished and the green grounds will be reshaped. Critical drainage issues will be addressed for holes 13 and 16.

### **Learning Centers**

#### *Needwood Golf Course Improvement Plan*

The focus of the Needwood golf course is to transform it into a quality learning center by lengthening the practice range to a full 300 yards and rerouting or renovating several problematic holes. Another focus for this course is to convert the primary practice green into a short game area. The Clubhouse will also be upgraded to address the rotting wood of the exterior of the building and tremendous heat loss through windows that have a reflective material coating to prevent glare

#### *Sligo Creek Learning Center*

Sligo Creek is the most significant part of the Capital Improvement Plan. The Revenue Authority has developed a concept plan that includes upgrades to the facility while making it a broad based learning center. The Revenue Authority recognizes this is just a concept and there needs to be more community involvement before a complete plan can be presented to the Planning Board or the County Council. Therefore, this concept plan is the focal point of discussion between the Revenue Authority, community groups, and area residents.

The concept presented to community groups and citizens is that Sligo Creek will be a world class practice facility that has a two-level, full length, lighted driving range with 60 to 70 stations. This will allow instruction to be given on the lower level and the general public can golf on the upper level. Although nine holes will remain, they will be rerouted in a manner that will allow golfers to play in three-hole, six-hole or nine-hole loops, providing a less time-intensive option for existing and new golfers.

In addition, there is potential to build either one or two miniature golf facilities which will allow Sligo Creek Learning Center to serve entire families. The clubhouse will be completely renovated with the intention that it becomes the home of First Tee Montgomery County. The clubhouse will have classroom and office space to teach participants of First Tee and where parties may be held.

The final improvements made to Sligo Creek are to the irrigation system. The system was constructed in 1950 and is outdated and useless to the current golf course. Issues that will have to be addressed are the water source, the piping network and the coverage issue. In addition to the above mentioned improvements, the Revenue Authority will continue to work with

M-NCPPC to resolve outstanding irrigation and stormwater management issues on all the golf courses.

At the Planning Board briefing, several nearby residents raised concerns about the proposed redevelopment of the golf course, while some strongly supported it. The Revenue authority plans further outreach and refinement of their plans before presenting a Capital Improvements Project to the Council.

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