

RECREATION & PARK GOLF ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Discussion Item

DATE: November 20, 2017
ITEM: New Business

SUBJECT: Report of Group Play Policy Subcommittee

Submitted by: _____
Craig Kessler, Chair

The Subcommittee has met twice since the Golf Advisory Committee's last meeting on September 18 – October 11 and November 2.

Members present at the October 11 meeting were Craig Kessler (Chair), Larry Cloud, Bruce Fortune, Gene Vano and Steven Yablok; member Richard Agay was absent. All members were present at the November 2 meeting. Golf Manager Laura Bauernfeind and Senior Operations Staff were at the October 11 meeting, which took place at Golf Division Headquarters in CSY. Subsequent to the October 11 meeting and in response to a direct Subcommittee request, Golf Manager Laura Bauernfeind appointed Branden Augustus, Uriel Matus, and Chuck Ruiz to work with the Subcommittee to develop the group/tournament play policy document envisaged by this ad hoc exercise. Augustus, Matus and Ruiz staffed the November 2 meeting and were joined by Sepulveda Course Manager Lance Taminaha at whose facility the November 2 meeting took place.

At the October 11 meeting the members considered two (2) written documents: 1) A version of the existing Tournament Policy document marked up by staff to reflect recommended changes/edits; and 2) a memo from the Subcommittee Chair the dispositive part of which reads as follows:

The existing policy document is written in the language of bureaucratic command and control precisely because much of it represented an effort to liberalize group/tournament play in an environment characterized by excess demand, lengthy waiting lists, and severely limited tournament access.

That "language" just isn't appropriate for today's environment, one in which even at venerable Rancho Golf Course the call list is a thing of the past, the tee sits empty much of the day, and tournaments are no longer a regular part of doing business. Today's policy language needs to create to the greatest extent possible an environment that brings back some of those things, so that the system can generate the rounds and revenue required to finance the capital projects that are central to long-term success. A rewrite from an opposite perspective is in order.

The consensus of members and Staff was that a "rewrite from an opposite perspective" represented the best course, and that is what the Subcommittee resolved to do.

The Subcommittee met with its Operations Staff partners on November 2. Much was discussed. The following points were resolved:

- To rename whatever final policy document emerges from this process as a set of "Event Management Guidelines" to reflect the fact that formal tournaments, particularly large ones, are less in demand than they used to be while small groups, leagues, outings, and social events are more in demand;

- To take advantage of the nimbleness and flexibility afforded by the new Internet reservation system to allow for more of the management of group play to occur as a collaboration between individual course managers and the reservation office – a two-way street to promote the creation and sustenance of the small groups that are displacing traditional tournaments as drivers of rounds, revenues, and particularly ancillary revenues, as well as attract the tournaments that might otherwise be lost to a competing municipal system or daily fee course;
- To promote the creation of group play units in addition to the traditional clubs (men, women, senior and co-ed) as a way of developing core customers and filling tee sheets;
- To allow the “traditional” clubs more group block access than current policy allows but allow it ONLY for formats that are amenable to a pace of play that is at minimum equal to that of general public play – formats other than Individual Stroke Play such as Stableford, Shamble, 2 balls of 4, alternate shot, etc.;
- To get completely away from one-size-fits-all thinking in terms of what is permitted and allowed for general or non-traditional group/tournament play AND traditional club play on the theory that what Woodley Lakes or Hansen Dam require in order to fill tee sheets and promote traditional (“recognized” clubs), non-traditional (small groupings) and tournament play is a level of flexibility, accommodation and promotion considerably greater than Rancho or Wilson, both of which need to keep tee sheets more available for general reservation and walk-up play;
- To create a preference for erring on the side of innovation, experimentation, and risk taking in order to begin collecting the information necessary to figure out what really works in terms of increased play and revenue and what doesn’t work;
- To employ the new Reservation System to capture and then analyze the data collected from all of this innovation, experimentation and risk taking for the purpose of continual review and adjustment;
- To employ the new Reservation System to create and then accommodate affinity groups to complement extant traditional clubs/groups while avoiding competition between and among them; and
- To establish the Golf Advisory Committee as a backstop in support of a creative risk taking sure to incur complaints from some quarters.

Before the Subcommittee begins to work with Operations Staff to put meat on the bones of these general principles, the members would appreciate feedback and direction from the full Advisory Committee regarding the wisdom or ill wisdom contained in them. We look forward to a robust and challenging discussion.