

Public Input Meeting 3/10/2020
Goodman Maintenance Facility
Approximately 50 Members of the Public in Attendance

Summary of Major Takeaways:

- Many questions regarding accounting system, including PILOT, and why golf is expected to be self-sustaining while other services are not.
- Many objections to any sort of closure and expressed concern about accessibility and affordability.
- Many supported the City investing in the courses, but didn't agree with numbers presented.
- Suggestions to improve marketing and provide other opportunities for golfing and non-golfing purposes.
- Request for consideration of additional options, such as reducing Yahara by 18 holes and providing shorter courses (ie. 9-14 hole courses).
- Some support for exploring alternative uses of the land, including biking, disc golf, etc.

Public Comment:

All attendees were given an opportunity to submit a comment card, those that wished to speak were allowed to do so. Staff captured spoken comments, **individual written comments are provided in accompanying document.** All attendees were encouraged to email additional comments if they chose to do so.

- David Miller
 - Noticed in all readings MARGA has provided to him, all city talks about is closing courses. Doesn't talk about anything but closing. What happened to marketing? Great deal of competition in the area. Nothing has been said about how you are going to sell what you have right now. How to make it appropriate and bring the people in? There are many other facilities in area that you can choose from. No one has talked about how to sell what we have. Doesn't believe all options have been considered.
- Dan Dettmann
 - Monona and Glenway should be kept open. Both are playable for all golfers, each course drains well, no major capital needs to keep them operational. Time and cost are barriers to playing golf. Both courses are great for both of those barriers. If golf becomes part of Parks, finances look good. Not in favor of spending capital to address issues at Yahara for all 36 holes. Spend money to keep 18 holes. Consider something between 9 and 14 holes as well. Reduces playing time, maintenance costs, less irrigation needs, and maintenance issues.
- Mark Smith
 - Appreciates the amount of people that are showing up. Senses that there is too much golf in Madison. Senses lack of investment into the courses. Courses were not irrigated many years ago. Saw improvement in irrigation, play increased. Suffer from demographics, attention span, people want to play more 9 hole courses. Often plays Yahara. More holes have been built and there are fewer players. Likes to play quickly and enjoy the course. Maintenance/drainage issues at Yahara are due to landfill pushing water to Yahara. Water has been forced onto the property. Would like to see Parks take on the golf courses. There is cash flow. Golf is part of our City recreation. Should be opened up to other options,

disc golf, hiking, dog parks at Yahara hills or sell to private entity to run for City of Madison.

Tim Bates

- Experienced different courses when he moved here in 1992. A lot has changed since then. Access to area courses in the afternoons due to leagues don't allow people to get onto those courses. City courses are able to accommodate. Enjoys the flexibility with City of Madison courses, can get onto the courses regularly. Maximize that to the residents benefit. They do not need to travel to the other courses when they can stay and play with City courses.
- Ryan Penfield
 - Lives in Westmorland Neighborhood. Thinks about affordable/accessible courses and gets concerned about accessibility and affordability if courses are not brought into Parks. Rates at other courses at peak hours are going up. How do we have affordable options when other courses will raise their rates?

Questions:

- Why wasn't Milwaukee County reached out to? What is their operational model?
 - Staff made efforts to reach out to comparable municipal courses. Some courses did not offer information. We can still consider their model, but the goal was to study municipalities of similar size to Madison.
- What amount of golf course revenue is used to fund other city activities?
 - No funds to other entities over past two years. GEF has additional charges that no other parks service has. PILOT any business would pay property taxes, central service agency charges (mayor's office, IT, HR, etc.) various charges to golf as it is run as a business. Set up in the 1980's by city with an agreement with the golfing public that wanted their money kept in golf. Meant to be self-sustaining. No reinvestment was made. GEF averages \$400,000 paid back to the City per year over past 5 year average.
- How difficult would it be to move away from enterprise system?
 - The loss of the PILOT would leave a hole in the City's budget that would need to come from somewhere. Each year that we aren't able to make improvements, we continue to lose money due to impacts to services.
- Why do all scenarios have closings of courses?
 - Task force believes that affordable, accessible golf is important, the market is saturated and we need to right size. As a whole, we need to offer golf, but 72 holes may be too much to offer given the situation.
- Any other scenarios that you would consider beyond what is listed?
 - No decisions have been made yet, the scenarios are just information that has been asked by the Task Force. The final report is due to be presented by May 1st. We've looked at scenarios as if we were looking at each option as a Parks service and as an enterprise. Task Force is seeking community feedback to help in the decision-making process. Many people have said to keep 72 holes, which may not be the outcome, but that's not to say that these are the only options.
- If enterprise designation is removed and Yahara closes in total, will Yahara still have to pay central service fees?
 - The land would have to undergo a park master planning process. Would still have to pay for the parcel of land for stormwater/water, etc.
- Are other area public courses profitable? Why can't City courses be profitable?

- Don't know if other courses are profitable, public courses do not need to share their information. Our expenses are outpacing our revenues, with few solutions within the current model, which is why the Task Force was formed.
- Looked at a slide that had financial aspects of each individual course. Glenway Monona and Odana were all in black. Yahara only course in the red. Is that still the case?
 - Odana is generally in the black, Yahara is generally in the red. Glenway hovers around break even. Monona hovers around break even though is trending downward where expenses are beginning to overtake revenues. Everything is getting more expensive and it is hard to raise rates and not lose business.

Additional Comments:

- Greg Wisniewski
 - There is a competitive disadvantage due to not having a liquor license. Wouldn't eliminate debt entirely, but it would help. Tear down the existing Odana clubhouse and make it a community center to be able to host other events such as weddings, banquets and community meetings.
- Dan Dettmann
 - When talking about Glenway and Monona as break-even is it as an enterprise or Parks service.
 - Enterprise. See PowerPoint for anticipated gain/loss within various scenarios.
- Dan Dettmann
 - If all courses are closed, who pays the \$400,000. Won't there still be a hole in the City budget?
 - Many courses without improvements show bottomed out revenue and increasing expenses. Yes, there will be a hole if the courses go away. There is no easy solution.
- Tim Bates
 - Resident/non-resident fee structure. Has that been entertained?
 - Used to have this. It is likely that golf subcommittee changed this many years ago. With no general fund subsidy, there would be no discount to residents. Would continue with a single price point.
 - With regard to days of operation, how many days were lost for each course due to the weather? How many rounds from Yahara were played at other City courses? Where did players move to?
 - We have tracked Yahara closely April 1-Thanksgiving. Yahara operated at full capacity for 48% of the season. Not being able to have carts. Odana now struggling after the floods of 2018. Those impacts are increasing due to increased weather events. Monona and Glenway closed much less than that. Odana and Yahara aren't draining well, so do we make the investment or do we not? The revenue potential is high with reinvestment.
- Adam Chaffee
 - Plays over 100 rounds per year. Aside from global warming/climate change, drainage has changed significantly over last few years. Landfill is definitely contributing to the problems at Yahara. Clubhouse location is bad, should have been put up on high ground.

- Overall water table is way up. Not just Yahara that is having issues, though Yahara is the most susceptible to it. Yes, clubhouse should have been put somewhere else.
- Greg Wisniewski
 - Odana greatly affected. History of neglect on the courses. What do we do now? We feel like we are being abandoned as golfers in that we are not seeing reinvestment.
 - There is currently no money to reinvest. When there was money, it was not reinvested. That is why we are here to hopefully look to get improvements done. We are working diligently as staff to alleviate issues as they happen. Just a lot of water in the past couple of years. We are well aware of the issues and look to prioritize how we get to them and secure funding.
- Bill Batten
 - Yahara River is where all water goes throughout Madison. Talk of dredging Yahara River to move water faster. If that were done, it could improve drainage at Yahara. Odana is part of closed depression, only drainage is man-made sewer to Lake Wingra. Look at flooding issues in the greater Odana area. Explore how water moves through Odana area.
 - There are many studies on this issue. Recent flooding has ramped up those conversations in that area.
- Mark Smith
 - Summary of discussion: Global warming/heavy rain/raising water levels. All have fundamentally changed the landscape of our courses. Directly related but separate from golf course. Can't solve one without the other. If the courses properly drained we wouldn't have 48% down time. Would increase revenue and lower maintenance. Biggest fear is taking the easy way out by saying "Let's close golf holes because they lose money." The biggest mistake would be to close holes. We have to solve our drainage problem. How many golf holes do we really need? Keep open those that we really need.
 - Keep longer tees at Yahara for younger generation who wants to blast the ball a long way. Yahara allows for that.
- Bill Batten
 - Is liquor license totally off the table?
 - Under current operation, yes. Our mission is to provide recreational opportunities. Liquor sales would have to be provided by a 3rd party.