



Madison Parks Division

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Date: January 22, 2021

To: Golf Subcommittee

From: Eric Knepp, Parks Superintendent

CC: Mayor Rhodes-Conway; All Alders; Board of Park Commissioners

Re: Glenway Donor Funded Project and Alignment with Task Force Recommendations

The City of Madison Parks Division has an exciting opportunity, through the generous donation of an individual from the community to reimagine Municipal Golf so that it may flourish for generations to come. Madison Parks and the Madison Parks Foundation were approached by Michael Keiser, who draws his eco-centric inspiration from renowned naturalists as well as age-old public courses in Scotland and Ireland, to redesign and reconstruct the 9-hole Glenway Golf Course. Michael has a deep understanding of golf course architecture and the ability to ensure high-level professional work on such a project.

Michael has offered to donate both his knowledge and expertise in providing a professional redesign for the course and to provide the construction services required to build it in an expedited timeframe. This is certainly a unique opportunity where the donor has the demonstrated track record to allow for consideration of this unique approach and staff is confident it can be a success.

The focus of the project will be on ecological restoration and multi-purpose benefits of golf courses, which will at the same time enhance the golfing experience, for players of all skill levels. The work will highlight the natural beauty of the course by opening up key vistas across the course, in which native prairies and woodland edges with high value oaks will be highlighted. This project would not include the Glenway Woods next to the Golf Course, but seek to highlight this area and work to promote improved access. A community-focus will connect more members of the community with the courses through alternative recreational activities, which will boost the community's intrinsic value of the courses and possibly introduce new players to the game.

The Task Force on Municipal Golf in Madison Parks did not provide a detailed roadmap to move the Golf Program forward, but it did provide a future vision that this collaborative project has the potential to assist with. This donor funded project will strive to directly address at least half of the 10 recommendations set forth by the Task Force. It also has the potential to serve as a prototype for future improvements of other City of Madison courses.

- The City should provide Municipal Golf in Madison Parks.
 - This project would improve the 9 hole Glenway Course so that it will be available for generations to come with limited City investment required.
- The City should update the mission of the golf program.
 - The work will be based on deepening the vision of the Task Force, shaping the mission to allow golf to be community-focused, ecologically-focused and overall reimaged.
- The City should work to promote positive ecological outcomes at the golf courses through reducing reliance on limited natural resources and providing ecological assets.

- Through the inspiration of conservationists, the proposed design will focus on sound active ecological restoration strategies and techniques that will position the course for long-term sustainability by restoring native habitat.
- The design will maximize ecological value of the landscape to areas that are no longer manicured turf, increasing biodiversity of flora and fauna, including pollinators. The design would also promote the long-term health of the landscape through removal and pruning of select trees, replanting of appropriate tree species, restoration of native understory/savannah plantings, and establishment of native prairie areas.
- The City should work with stakeholders and staff to develop a specific action plan to promote equity and inclusion at all courses.
 - Michael has extensive knowledge in golf course designs and recognizing that many of today's courses are geared towards advanced male players. Michael's design will seek to remove gender biases, making the course more enjoyable for all ages, genders and abilities.
- The City should work with residents, stakeholders, and partners to promote wider utilization by the community of the golf courses to better integrate the courses into the wider park system for uses other than golf.
 - Inspired by the Scottish principles of municipal golf, where walking and biking coexist alongside of the golf game, the design will seek to connect a variety of members of the public with the natural beauty of the course for purposes other than golf.
- The City should ensure that if City resources are used to invest in capital projects at golf courses it is done in an equitable and fiscally responsible manner to reduce negative impact on park services across the system.
 - Aside from staff involvement in the project, the project will be fully-funded through the generous donation of Michael's.
 - This work will positively influence other areas of the park system by promoting diversity of uses and connections, including to the Glenway Woods.
- The City should not sell park land to fund capital improvements of the golf courses.
 - No City land will be sold, rather, this capital improvement will be funded completely with private resources and would enhance access to additional park land.

Michael is interested in completing this work in 2021. A donation of this magnitude requires a thoughtful consideration of a legal agreement. Should the project move forward, staff will continue to work with the Madison Parks Foundation as well as Michael to ensure this is completed in a timely manner. The Golf Subcommittee is the first step in considering this potential project, and staff are working diligently to develop a schedule that could achieve a 2021 construction project. This would include review and approval of an updated plan for Glenway by the BPC, as well as consideration by the City Council and other committees related to any necessary agreements to allow the project to occur. Closure of Glenway for one season is not a desire, but necessary, to reinvest. Staff thinks that doing so in a year when all other holes are able to be operated is worth working towards a 2021 project at Glenway.