



Mr. Parish said this concludes the items on the Golf Course Advisory Board Agenda.

Mayor Flagg thanked the Advisory Board and expressed his gratitude to the members for all they do to help the golf course move forward. He welcomed the golfers and their families, saying they had made this course a success through the years. They are all here tonight to talk about issues related to the golf course. This meeting is not designed to allow people to make personal attacks on individuals, whether they are staff, volunteers or advisory people. They are here on a fact-finding mission. He did not come today to learn how to play golf, but is here to find out the root cause of the problems that seem to plague the course and have adversely affected membership. The Advisory Board's input is important; if someone on the Board feels like their input is being ignored, they want to know about that. The Board was not created to micromanage the Golf Course; they are a liaison to the Commission to keep them in the loop. The staff reports directly to their supervisor, the Golf Pro, who reports to the City Manager, who reports to the Commission. He is not interested in groups or factions; all they are interested in is operating this facility as a sound business. People who use this facility need to be able to come here to relieve their stress, and not have to deal with stressful issues. He asked those who wish to speak to give their name to the Clerk. They will be called individually. Those wishing to speak will be given 3 minutes to do so.

Harry Brown, 5391 Atlantic Vw, St. Augustine, said for the last several years they've been hearing that the course will ready to play in 3 months, 8 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 weeks. He has been to the Board and Pro about this. He spoke with the City Manager about the problems, who told him he was not aware of any problems. This means no one has told him about the problems, and he is the one who should be made aware of the problems. He asked the City Manager to meet with his large group of players any Wednesday at 11:00 so they could show him the course and speak to him about their concerns. It is a shame to let the course go downhill. It is one of the oldest around. He has heard rumors that the course is going to be sold or leased out. The City supports all kinds of other recreational programs; this golf course has an excellent kid's program and many of the area's high school students have gone on to get college golf scholarships. These kids will be playing on this course as adults. The Commission needs to get involved and make sure the Advisory Board is just that, and the City Manager accepts the golf course as part of his responsibility.

Allen Bush, City Manager, said Mr. Brown did come to him when the temporary greens were set up, and was talking about problems with the play. He is very interested in the golf course, and after listening to the complaints he went to the Commission and proposed they float at bond to replace the greens, which they felt was the answer to increased play. The new greens were installed. Subsequent to that is when the major problems developed, and those are the issues they are here to talk about. The new greens are taking hold, and what he would like to know from this group is, when they do come in, how that will affect the amount of play. The whole idea of replacing the greens was to pump more revenue into the program, as the golf course was falling deeper and deeper into the hole each year.

Jerry Durchholz, 10405 Baylor Avenue, Flagler Estates, a member of the PMGA, said they are very proud of their junior tournament, and many kids get college scholarships from here. He has had experience with two difference country clubs in Cincinnati OH where he was on the greens committee, and he feels that the budget restraints don't allow this club to function as well as other golf courses. He would like a steering committee to look at what other area courses spend on their maintenance. It is his opinion that they spent money on the greens, but they need to increase the irrigation capability. They can only block so many holes to water.

Richard Morris, 320 Fern Street, San Mateo, said his concern is with protection of city property and ways to deter the repeated vandalism at the course. Vandals drive onto the course and spin 'doughnuts', tearing up the course and greens. They need to look into the cost of the construction of an 'acceptable' fence, both to the City and surrounding residences, to deter the vandals. All these repairs cost a lot of money. He agrees that a constructive meeting will accomplish more than personal attacks.

John Mathe, audience, said 14 years ago they had to line up to play golf. They had many teams that competed against one another, and he would like to see that again. Unity is strength; they all own this golf course. They should all pull together to help. They can all say or do something positive and help the Board to do their job. The staff is working to get something growing. The lack of rain is a big factor; this is happening throughout the entire state. They should all pray and ask God to provide rain.

Mayor Flagg said they can talk all night about symptoms, but they need to discuss the root causes of the problems. They all have ideas on how things can be fixed. He asked for input from the audience on why play is off, why revenue is down, what the solution is and how to affect that solution. The Advisory Board's mission, simply stated, is to 'provide advice to the Pro, Superintendent, City Manager and the Commission.' The Commission can get a report from a meeting, but he expects someone to come before them and tell them both the good and bad things that are happening at the Course. This is their opportunity to express themselves.

Scott Scapaletti, audience, said he has been playing this course since he was seven. Five years ago staff cuts were made, and the course has gone downhill ever since. They can't do anything about the rain. The maintenance crew does not have enough help. If Mr. Robertson had more help, that would be the quickest remedy.

Keith Stein, audience, said he has been playing for many years, and this is the worse he has ever seen the course. The fairways are cut too short. When you scalp the fairways the grass won't grow. All the other courses around this area have taller grass. He is 82 years old, and objects to all the par 3 holes being roped off so he cannot drive his golf cart on them. This is not necessary.

Jim Roach, Board member, said they made the decision to rope off the areas in question because of the serious deterioration of the greens. They roped them off and installed walking areas every 4 – 5 feet so you could stop and walk across. He and Mr. Bacon have discussed splitting the #14 Fairway and going down both sides to make it easier. It is a long walk across that Fairway. If anyone looks at the par 3 holes, there is more grass around the greens, in between the greens and t-boxes and in the fairways than he has seen in the 16 years he has been here. At the time they were doing what they believed was best for the course. They are looking at ways to make the walk easier.

Charlie Baird, audience, said he has been playing on this course since 1936. He was the Pro here for several years in the 1950's. He does not know anything about greens, but does hear a lot of excuses as to why the greens are so bad. Excuses are fine, but are not the answer. They used to have greens back when they only had sprinklers hooked up to faucets to watering. They don't have greens now. They have lost a large amount of players and it will be hard to get them back. It will be up to the City to come up with some money, and they need to approach the County about contributing, as it provides recreation to many county residents and is an asset to the County. Many counties build golf courses just to attract people.

Toni Scroggins, Board member, said the Board has been talking about trying to get some help from the County Commission. They have contacted Commissioner Linda Meyers about getting some County support.

Greg Jungenburg, audience, said everyone can see there is no grass on the greens, and he is not sure who has the answer. The Board has consulted several experts on this as far back as November of last year, and there are still no greens. They need to bring in someone else to consult. He offered the name of Frank Savarro, who can grow grass better than anyone.

Perry Parish, Board Chairman, said David Barnes, who grows grass for Greg Norman, has set a plan in place for the Course, which they have been following. They have also consulted with Dwight Kummer, a former superintendent, and Mr. Blankenship, who works for Mr. Kummer. Mr. Bacon has also consulted with the University of Florida. They are leaving no stone unturned. People come to Palatka for the greens and the

people. When the greens come back, the people will come back. There is daily improvement on the greens; it is a slow process and has taken some time.

Earl Alvers, audience, said the irrigation system is antiquated and obsolete. It needs to be rebuilt. They should look into a reclaimed water system coming off the WWTP.

Billy Gray, audience, said he was a former superintendent here. He played high school golf and members of the Hall of Fame here helped him get his college scholarship. He hired Mr. Robertson, the current superintendent. They came here 7 years ago with IGM, the former greens maintenance contractor. At that time, they were on a set budget and buying their supplies wholesale. The Golf Course still has the same amount budgeted for greens maintenance. Everything is more expensive now and Jeff doesn't have the staff or equipment he had at that time. The sprinkler system is outdated and needs to be replaced. They need to spend money to make money. When IGM left, the course went downhill.

Mr. Bush asked Mr. Bacon for a breakdown of how the \$500,000 in bond money was spent. Mr. Bacon said the Advisory Board prioritized how the money would be spent. \$119,000 went to the greens replacement. \$14,860 was spent on the cart barn roof, \$12,200 for recarpeting the clubhouse, \$50,000 to repair damaged wood and repainted the clubhouse, and \$76,000 to pay off the existing clubhouse loan. They also paid a debt to the City of \$89,500 and a debt to IGM of \$78,900. It cost \$2,900 to process the loan. Those were the items the Board felt needed to be paid. Irrigation was not on the priority list. They ended up having to redo the 15<sup>th</sup> hole after they lost it. Mr. Bush explained that the Golf Course is an Enterprise Fund and in theory is not subsidized by the General Fund. They try to go out for these bond issues when they are in a position to. The revenues have been slow and have not met the expenditures. The only way they can make major improvements is via a bond issue.

Eloise Glisson, audience, asked what happened to the air conditioning. Mr. Bacon said one unit is broken and there is a leak in another unit. It is being repaired. Mrs. Glisson said she and her husband have been coming here since 1964. They used to lease the snack bar, and tried to have social events with good food. She loves this golf course; her husband went to another course, but she stayed here. She would love to see it improve. She would like to see more social activities. She also does not believe the clubhouse has ever been professionally cleaned. She would like to see the County do what they can.

Doris Dunning, audience, said she has been playing here since the 1940's. She is a former president of the Ladies' Association. They had around 100 members then. As the greens have gotten worse, the membership has suffered. They are now down to around 30 members. They would very much like to see this golf course come alive; the ladies association will help in whatever way they can.

Vernon Hill, maintenance staff employee, said the Pro and Superintendent are nice people. He is retired military and is a former building and grounds superintendent for the County. The problems are money, equipment and people. You have to spend money to make money. He operates some of the antiquated equipment here, and it is not in good shape. There are three or four full-time people on this golf course. Check any other course and there are anywhere from 10 – 24 people. If the city will provide the money, equipment and people, they can operate a good golf course.

Mayor Flagg said the people here need to 'put their money where their mouth is.' This is not a country club; it is a municipal golf course, and they need to keep that in mind. When the number of players goes down, the cost to play goes up. They have to keep this in perspective. They are in Palatka and Putnam County. That does not mean second class or inferior, but they are the ones with the solution, which is not at City Hall, and they all need to recognize that.

Lucious Noyes, audience, said he has played here 30 years and recognize they need to somehow raise some money. When he was on the advisory board they went to the Commission to ask them to raise fees. The resistance from the players was too great and the Commission would not let them raise fees. They tried to build a fence around the course to protect it from vandalism, but the neighbors ran to the commission and got it

removed. It may not have been the greatest fence in the world, but they tried to do something about it. They need some support from City Hall. Mayor Flagg said they have support from City Hall, but the Commission cannot afford to piecemeal anything to do with infrastructure. This irrigation is old, but there is a much older system providing water to the citizens of Palatka. They have a greater responsibility to make sure everyone gets water than rather than just one place. All of them together can make this the best place they would ever want it to be. When you start talking about money, equipment and people, the most important aspect is people. Your attitude determines your altitude. They need to have a more positive attitude about what they have. The Commission has not micromanaged this facility. They are legislators and policy makers. If people think City Hall is the problem, they are wrong. If they get more money, they can do more. They have to decide what percentage of the city's budget they are going to be able to devote to this. If play is down, there is less money. The city cannot continue dumping money into this golf course. If they are not satisfied, what is more money going to do?

Mr. Noyes said they tried to raise fees, but members went to the Commission and stopped it. Per the question, Mr. Bacon said the last time user fees came before the Commission was in 1992. Mayor Flagg said the people in the audience have the ears of the staff and advisory board members every day, and if anyone on the Board is not receptive to the overall feeling of the members, then they need to know that and start appointing new people. Mr. Noyes said every advisory board has tried to raise fees since he has been on it, but have met with resistance each time. They went to Don Holmes, the City Attorney, to try to find out what kind of fence would be acceptable, and what they thought was acceptable was not. They have tried to take the correct routes and jump through the correct hoops, to no avail. Mayor Flagg said the fence was a knee-jerk response to a problem. There are subdivisions all around here who object to these NIMBY (not in my back yard) projects all over the city. If you have a home of a certain value, you don't want just anything thrown up next to your house. When the Golf Pro brings his list of budget items, the Commission has to be able to annualize and project issues. The priority list should be based on what the advisory board is saying, which should be based on what the members are saying. You only deal with budget once a year; you cannot come back in the middle of the year and take money from one item to deal with another to put up a fence. Mr. Noyes said the Men's Golf Association paid for the fence. Mayor Flagg said the golf course has a serious \$200,000 deficit, and they have to determine how to deal with it. The answer won't come in two weeks before the next budget workshop, because the money is not there.

Don Holmes, City Attorney, asked Mr. Noyes if he is under the impression that he vetoed the fence. Mr. Noyes said no; he got the impression he did not like the idea of a fence at all. Mr. Holmes said he did not like the ideal of the added liability for the city, in case someone ran through it and got hurt, but he and Mr. Bacon did reach an agreement on a fence structure and that everything was resolved. He was not responsible for making the fence come down.

Mr. Bacon said they put up the fence after the #10 green was hit and #13 was hit twice. He went to Mr. Holmes and they talked about the most suitable type of fence, liability-wise. He wanted to put up a crosstie fence, which was not acceptable. They went with PVC stakes, which served 3 purposes. They defined the boundaries of the course, kept the golf carts on the course, and kept people off the course. It was a win-win situation, in his opinion, but then the phones calls from neighbors started.

Commissioner Azula said the City will not sell the Golf Course while he is a commissioner. Both the city and county need the golf course as part of its recreation. The fence was taken down, which didn't cost the city anything, but the repairs to the greens cost the City \$20,000 from removing a fence that was already in place. If people are complaining about how the fence looks, then so be it. Those complainers are not going to come up with the \$20,000 needed to make the vandalism repairs. They have to have a fence; it was in place and didn't cost anything, and this upsets him. It also upsets him that the greens are in bad condition, but some things can't be helped. He wants people to enjoy the course. Money is important. For many years the Commission has been cutting back and cutting back to the point it is costing more for repairs on things that could have been prevented, had they had some vision. They have been cutting ad

valorem taxes for years to the point they don't have any money to do anything. They need to have the foresight to see that some things need to be done. The budget today is not the same as it was 8 years ago. Money is not worth as much. Everyone is tight on personnel, equipment and supplies. This is one place that there is a lot of waste. They have to move forward and listen to the people who work and play here. They cannot overcome the deficit unless they have playable greens so they can bring the players back. He needs some suggestions and some help. The County also needs to get involved; this course provides recreation for citizens of the County as well. There are more members who live in the County than the City. They have had many promises for assistance from the County, but he has yet to see the first dollar from Putnam County. Every deal they make with the County backfires on them.

Danny Byrnes, Board member, said the crosstie fence probably would have been a liability, but any fence that can be driven through would not accomplish its purpose. Police cannot be here full time, and vigilantes are against the law. The irrigation system needs to be replaced if they want to stay in the golf course business. The County should get involved in the course. This course has looked worse at one time or another; it looked worse when he first started playing. They have gotten very good advice from people who know what they are doing. They should commission a study from some engineers to get a cost on an irrigation system. Mr. Bacon said the water irrigation system is going to happen; he has been speaking with Platt Drew, the WWTP superintendent. It will have to be a reclaimed water system. They are going to a seminar in Tallahassee on it this next week. They are trying to get some grants and funding in place.

Mr. Bush said if they can't get a grant for this, they will have to work on it from a utilities standpoint, as they have to get the remainder of their effluent out of the St. Johns River, and need somewhere to put it. People need to remember this is an Enterprise Fund; money is generated for its operation through play, dues, and sales of food and liquor, and it is supposed to be self-supporting. When budget comes around, they need to look at realistic revenues and plan their expenditures accordingly. They may have to go out and borrow some money. The City has carried the golf course for the last three or four years, but they are supposed to be carrying themselves. This is supposed to be an independent operation, supported by its own revenues.

Commissioner Brown said she does not play golf, but she has listened to their problems. She would like to urge people to think outside the box. They cannot sit back and wait for people to do something for them. The state and federal governments have cut back on revenue sharing and they aren't getting as many dollars, so they really have to think twice about where those dollars go so they can take care of everyone. There is genius in this room; it is full of businessmen who make companies work every day. They can prioritize what needs to be done and bring it to the Commission. They can work together to find grant funds or hold fundraisers. They are now trying to target tourism, and the golf course would fit into that package. People complain constantly about what they are not doing. It would be nice if someone would come to them and tell them what is happening. By coming together they can get more done. She hopes this will start a partnership to get what they need for this golf course. They need to start promoting this course.

Cathy Carlin, audience, said she sat on the advisory board for five years. She asked where the money came from for the Clock Tower on the riverfront that doesn't even keep time. Mr. Bush and Mr. Flagg said 100% of the money came from private contributions. The reason it has not been keeping correct time lately is due to amphitheater renovations. They had to disconnect the electricity to the Clock Tower in order to replace the lines.

Jerry Durchholz asked if the city has a grant writer. He is the President of Flagler Estates, and they have been awarded over \$400,000 in grants this year after they hired an engineering firm to write the grants. Mr. Bush said the City writes many of its own grants, and brings in engineers and consultants for other grants. The city has written its share of grants.

Mayor Flagg asked the participants to summarize and give some direction as to where to go from here. They can continue to do business as usual or they can begin to make progress.

Larry Fayard, Board member, said they have heard all these comments, good and bad, for the last two years. They have dealt with these issues through Mr. Bacon and his staff. The staff is too small to handle this course. They need a new irrigation system; if they added a new pump they would blow every line out here. Mr. Robertson has repaired many lines over the last few years. They can get grants for reclaimed water and new plumbing through EPA and SJRWMD. They can't raise fees here at this time. There is too much competition from multi-million dollar courses and they have to remain competitive. They need to discuss these issues with Mr. Bacon so they can make some recommendations. If the course turned green tomorrow and everyone started playing, they still can't make back that \$200,000. It is impossible to get that kind of money. If they don't do something, the deficit will grow larger. They need some help from somewhere. Players are not going to putt on sand for three months when seasonal transitions are taking place. There is no doubt they need a fence, but first they need greens to put the fence around. All the infrastructure has to be in place before they can turn things around, and before the regular base of players will come back. Seasonal players struggled on the course last year and they may not come back. They need a few weeks to work out a report on the condition of the course, where they stand, and what needs to be done.

Perry Parish, Board Chairman, said the membership is around 85% county residents. County Commissioner Hermon Sommers is here tonight, and he would like to hear from him. They want him to know how important this golf course is to the community. Also Realtors need to get involved in promoting the club.

County Commissioner Herman Sommers said the golf course is very important to the City of Palatka and Putnam County. None of them want to see this course turn into anything besides the beautiful course that is here now. He is not trying to evade the issue, but he is not sure of the legality of Putnam County contributing to the Palatka Municipal Golf Course. Within the last year he has heard discussions about a subdivision being developed close to this area. This golf course is key to the economic development of Putnam County. They should have been using reclaimed water a long time ago. They raise money through golf tournaments for nearly every cause in Putnam County; they should have a tournament to raise money for the golf course, and help themselves. They all have an obligation and responsibility to do whatever they can to protect this course and keep it viable.

Doug Feltner, audience, said for many years the City had a recreation program that is now under the County. Play occurs on both city and county fields. There has been precedent set for the city and county to co-sponsor recreational activities. The County should look very hard at helping keep this course going. The City and County have co-sponsored many events with taxpayer funds, such as Blue Crab Festival and bass tournaments. The City and County should get involved and help with the finances.

Mayor Flagg said they have all listened to the comments made tonight, and they now need to decide what the priorities will be. A plan needs to be developed. He thanked the Men's and Women's association for all they do, and believes there may be some things that need to be ironed out between the two groups. He expects those who are here to form a cohesive group and not just to get together for a 'gripe session'. He expects some real solutions from this group. He charged the Golf Course with putting a plan together, regardless of where or who it comes from. He hears comments from too many different people about the condition of the greens, what this person or that person is or is not doing. He wants to hear one voice. Greg Bacon has to be the leader; he needs to know what is going on and everyone needs to follow his lead. They need a check and balance system. There is no need for threats and ultimatums. It is a fact that both play and revenue are down, and they need to face the music. They can all come together and fix whatever is wrong. If egos and personalities get in the way, they will only create more problems. He is not on the advisory board and does not belong on the advisory board; he is not going to try to manage their meetings. He is neither a Golf Pro or a Maintenance Superintendent. The Advisory Board needs to establish a time line on submitting a list of priorities to the Commission. They need to do a comprehensive analysis of everything that is going on. He keeps hearing things about tabs and write-offs. He wants someone to reduce all these issues to black and white so this Commission can take action. His

only interest is in making Palatka the best it can be. He asked for closing comments from Board and Commission members.

Gen Alvers said today on the car radio she heard a commercial for the Jacksonville golf course saying they had the best greens anywhere. That is how it should be. If you don't have good fairways and good greens, you don't have a golf course. The money should be spent on what is outside, not inside.

Larry Fayard said they all need to come together and work out a plan. Without everyone's input, they won't be successful.

Jim Roach said Advisory Board meetings are open to the public. In the last two years, few people besides board members have attended. They will be happy to have them at the Men's Association meetings. Over the last year the Men's Association has spent over \$12,000 on this course. They wouldn't be able to do that without the players.

Perry Parish said the regular meeting of the Advisory Board will be Monday at 5:30, and any comments or information on increasing revenues will be welcome. For the last 6 meetings there may have been one person besides the board members that attended.

Mr. Bacon reminded everyone that he and Mr. Robertson have an open door policy. They have heard a lot of good comments tonight. If someone has problems, they will try to work through them. They are both here to make the course better for everyone.

Commissioner Azula thanked everyone for coming and wanted to remind them that their phone lines are open. They will listen to any comments anyone wants to give them.

Commissioner Brown said she is glad everyone came tonight. She has learned more about the golf course tonight than she had known. She will start asking around about grants to help get things going. They will probably need to start pinpointing matching funds. She appreciates being part of a team.

Mr. Bush reminded Mr. Bacon that when he puts his budget together, he will be making a five-year projection. He knows they have limited revenue. When they start looking they may be able to find some additional sources from the county or whomever.

Commissioner Sanders said there seems to be five factors that need to be addressed first. There is an apparent lack of revenue, lack of staff, lack of irrigation, problems with insects, pests and fungus in the greens, and they need protection against vandalism. He has never heard of an instance where the vandals have been caught and been made to pay restitution. They may need to put a few cameras up to help catch these people. The police cannot spend the night here, so they need to find other ways to protect the course. The money is best spent on prevention rather than repairs. The rains will come eventually. Grants can be obtained. They need to work with the County on obtaining some assistance; they have a stake in this golf course, also.

Mayor Flagg expressed his gratitude to everyone for attending the meeting, to the Advisory Board for all the contributions they make to the facility. The Commission's next scheduled meeting is too close to have a plan together, but their next regular meeting after that will be July 18. He expects to have a plan in their hands prior to that meeting. There is no way this Board can put together a plan without everyone's help. They need to conduct some form of an informal visioning process in order to gather input. They can all band together to make this golf course second to none.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. upon a motion by Commissioner Brown, seconded by Commissioner Azula.