



## CITY OF SAN CLEMENTE

### MINUTES OF THE REGULAR GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE MEETING

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2014, 7:00 P.M.**

An adjourned regular meeting of the Golf Course Committee of the City of San Clemente was called to order on Thursday, August 7, 2014, at 7:00 p.m., at City Council Chambers, 100 Avenida Presidio, San Clemente, California 92672.

#### **1. ROLL CALL**

Committee members present: George Gooch, Rick Divel, Parker Steel, Nick Azzollini, Tim Kiernan, Kevin Kellerman, Dick Veale

Committee members absent: None

Staff present: Gus Nelson, Golf Course Manager  
Sharon Heider, Beaches, Parks and Recreation Director  
Dennis Reed, Beaches and Parks Manager  
Mary Colletti, Recording Secretary

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Chair Azzollini called for approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Golf Course Committee held July 3, 2014.

MOTIONED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER DIVEL, SECONDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER KIERNAN, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED (WITH CM VEALE ABSTAINING), TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE HELD JULY 3, 2014.

#### **3. OLD BUSINESS (Re-ordered from agenda item 4)**

Continuation of Discussion on Private Cart Policy

This item was opened for public input, and resident Rebecca Farrow stated that she had heard from a police captain that there is an approved "crossing" path for private golf carts to cross El Camino Real. GC Manager Nelson said that there was an old ordinance that defined where carts (not DMV legal) can operate. His recollection was that it was the area immediately adjacent to the golf

course, and that it was his understanding that it is not legal for private golf carts to travel on or cross El Camino Real. Ms. Farrow asked for a copy of that ordinance, which Mr. Nelson will email to her.

Resident Dan DuBois, in favor of allowing private carts on the Golf Course, stated that if the public knew private carts were welcome, play would increase, and it would also allow for better, safer parking, and an advantage for the environment. He cited the private carts allowed on Catalina Island as an example.

Resident Alex Banes, in a fax he had sent to Golf Course Manager Nelson, stated that the use of private carts saves electricity and maintenance costs and improves parking conditions. He thinks banning them will decrease play on the Golf Course and cause a glut of private carts for sale, reducing their sale value.

One resident brought an email from his neighbor, resident Matt Stabley, who in his words, is a registered private cart owner of 15 years, and considers “it to be a real local privilege for the residents of San Clemente who have chosen to take part in the great game of golf.” He would like to see this Committee reconsider the ban on private carts, and said he does pay \$325 a year to register the cart with the City.

Golf Course Manager Nelson and the CMs discussed the issue before them, with CM Divel suggesting setting a maximum of 125 private carts allowed, with a wait list for any numbers over 125, a trail fee and required for the driver and passenger, and routine cart inspection. CM Steel agreed, and elaborated that the carts would have to meet size, weight and tire requirements so as not to damage the Golf Course. Nelson said that carts had changed much over the years and the policy regarding cart requirements would have to be looked at. Nelson also stated that the private cart issue primarily affected the golf pro concession revenue, as the golf pro receives the lions share of cart rental fees. Nelson advised against renewing carts independent of negotiations with the Golf Pro as that would be done in bad faith.

After discussing ancillary issues such as the effect of private carts on the Golf Pro contract (which expires June 30, 2015) and the possibility of delaying the ban on private carts on a month-to-month basis while this Committee thoroughly reviews the issue, as well as a possible policy (if private carts are reinstated) of offering first right of refusal to former private cart owners, requiring an annual trail fee, per play trail fee, a maximum limit to the number of private carts allowed, and a 2-year probationary period on private golf carts, as well as routine private cart inspection, the CMs made the following motion:

**MOTIONED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER KIERNAN, SECONDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER VEALE, AND CARRIED (6-0-1), WITH COMMITTEE MEMBER GOOCH OPPOSED, TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL TO ALLOW CONTINUED USE OF PRIVATE CARTS ON THE GOLF COURSE, SUBJECT TO CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS, TO BE ESTABLISHED.**

**4. NEW BUSINESS (Re-ordered from agenda item 5)**

Discussion of Policy Regarding Requests to Relocate or Replace Public Trees for Private View Purposes (see included memorandum from Beaches, Parks and Recreation Director Sharon Heider, dated August 7, 2014).

Sharon Heider, Beaches, Parks and Recreation Director, introduced the topic above, saying that City Council is garnering input from this Committee as other City committees, and that areas being considered for such a policy are the Golf Course, City beaches, City parks, residential streets and public utility areas. She said the question is whether to revisit the existing policy which does not allow for removing, relocating or replacing trees for private view purposes. Ms. Heider said that in researching this complex issue, staff has not found similar criteria to which to compare the idea of private view protection in regard to trees, although Laguna Beach's policy for view protection in regard to public buildings could provide some criteria by which to compare. To summarize, she asked this Committee to consider the idea of amending the current policy so that residents with private view issues could request the Golf Course to remove/relocate trees to enhance or restore their views.

This item was opened for public input and resident Al Tilk said that the trees near his residence have grown 40 feet and have obstructed his view of Dana Point Harbor and the city completely. He would like those trees replaced with slower-growing trees, and said that their HOA is in favor of this, with the homeowners paying for this, contingent upon the City sanctioning this action.

Resident John Hazeltine asks that the existing policy not be changed. He cited noise reduction and aesthetics, as well as not wanting to open a "Pandora's Box" with residents bringing their demands for tree removal to the Golf Course staff. He thinks view protection for a few is not worth sacrificing the well-being of the many.

Resident Bob Steele distributed photos to this Committee illustrating poor tree maintenance, and he said "the City took our views". He added that poorly maintained (broken, overgrown, etc.) trees are full of oil, and a fire hazard which could cause a "fire storm", as well as being a menace to homes that could be damaged by fallen branches. He cites the City with neglect and wants to recover his view; he is in favor of removing trees for private view preservation.

Resident Dave Gralnic concurs with Mr. Bob Steele's comments, and reiterated that "neglect of trees" is the "culprit". He says the trees are never trimmed or thinned, and are in danger of falling. He added that obstruction of views devalues homes. He favors trimming/replaced trees as needed, and said the City could be a conscientious "good neighbor" by providing better tree maintenance.

Resident Lois Law brought a bag full of golf balls she had recovered from her property, to illustrate that large trees don't necessarily screen property from stray balls. She said her view is totally gone. She would like to see trees trimmed on a regular basis.

Resident Patricia Holloway said that our City leaders must protect public assets. She objects to tree removal for private view protection, and thinks HOAs should not have the power to cut them down or dictate tree height; she cited a stand of trees they (her HOA) had removed which have

“denuded” the entrance to her community. She said cutting trees down to protect private views will open the door to multiple law suits. She added that she would like the trees at the Pacific Shore community to remain.

Resident Georgette Korsen gave a reading describing the beauty and benefits of trees. She would like the current tree policy to remain unchanged. She said our community is proud of our Golf Course and that the trees contribute to the beauty as well as cleansing the air and providing a noise buffer. She said the City should protect our valuable trees.

Resident Larry Culbertson agrees with Ms. Korsen. He would like to see the policy left intact, but with better maintenance/thinning of trees on the Golf Course.

Resident Clare Kenney said she has lost her ocean view that she had 10 years ago when she purchased her 2-storey home. She does not understand why eucalyptus trees can't be topped. She would rather have a view and put up with a few stray golf balls. She asked that trees near her residence be cut down or topped/trimmed every year.

Resident Curly Snider has lived here 49 years, and there is a tall tree that he has cited in a law suit, due to loss of his ocean view. He said the City should trim those trees like they used to, and he cited his memo to this Committee (included in the CM packets, refer to it for details), dated 8/7/14, entitled “Policy regarding requests to relocate or replace public trees for private view purposes.”

Resident Lance Walker does not want to see the policy changed. He said that our landscape is beautiful, and the character and value of our trees worth more than a single view. He added that a change in policy would be a slippery slope of lawsuits, and would clearly be a mistake. He also thinks that trees add value to property and does not mind a few stray golf balls.

Resident Rod McKuen does not want the current policy changed. He said he can't see cutting down a 60 year-old tree just to see the ocean, and added that there is a reason other cities don't allow tree removal for view protection.

Resident Duane Hilborn thinks that judicious tree trimming and/or removal will recreate views that were obliterated, and enhance play.

Resident Janet Kingston “paid for a view” when she bought her house and now it's blocked by eucalyptus trees. She called them “widow makers” because of their tendency to fall. She asked that “these awful trees” be replaced with another type of tree that doesn't create a safety issue.

Resident Heidi Hitt had an ocean view years ago but says that now the trees are like a “gigantic green fence”. She's concerned about falling branches causing property damage, and says those trees have not been trimmed in 20 years. She realizes eucalyptus trees have a weak base and are particularly dangerous in windy/rainy weather. She'd like a “happy medium”.

Resident Alan Korsen stated that a tree ordinance should protect the Golf Course’s beautiful trees. He thinks the stands of eucalyptus and other trees beautify the golf course and enhance play, as well as enhancing other areas of the City. He could not imagine the Casa Romantica or the Pier Bowl without their trees, and he does not consider them a fire hazard.

Resident Judy Jones has lived in a “view community” for 18 years, and from residents there she’s heard conflicting views; some want more screening for privacy, others want unobstructed views. She thinks changing the policy would lead to many problems. She would like to see the existing policy remain.

Resident Betty Sayer said that falling trees cause property damage and are a dangerous fire hazard, per the Fire Department.

Resident George Key said he used to be able to see Seal Rock and Dana Point Harbor from his home near the #17 hole, but no longer. He can only see huge trees from his second story, and would like the most obstructive of the 3 trees, located 40 feet from his house, removed, and, if necessary, replaced with a smaller tree. He cited homes made of wall-to-wall glass that have lost their views and are now devalued.

In discussion of the public input, the Committee Members generally agreed that the current policy should remain. They agreed that trees are a major feature of the Golf Course and enhance play. Mr. Dennis Reed, Beaches and Parks Manager, confirmed that trimming every 7 years is the common municipal cycle. The Committee Members and GC Manager Nelson discussed the current practice where Golf Course staff judiciously replaces or does not replace fallen trees depending on the effect it would have on the Golf Course. For instance the blue gums on #7 that fell during storms did not get replaced because of excessive shading of the grass and view obstruction from the seventeenth green. GC Manager Nelson said that staff reviews trees often and makes decisions on what’s best for the Golf Course on a case-by-case basis, and that staff takes a balanced approach to tree replacement/removal, including taking into consideration views from the course. Nelson said his guiding principle is to do what is best for the golf course and the people that use it. He stated that especially with tight budgets, it is important for the staff to maintain the course from a golfers perspective or “from the inside out, versus from the outside looking in.”

MOTIONED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER VEALE, SECONDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER STEEL, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, TO RECOMMEND TO CITY COUNCIL THAT THE CURRENT CITY ORDINANCE/POLICY IN REGARD TO TREES ON THE GOLF COURSE, BE MAINTANED.

**5. PUBLIC INPUT (Re-ordered from agenda item 3)**

None.

**6. COMMUNICATIONS (Re-ordered from agenda item 7):**

None

**7. ITEMS FROM STAFF:**

None.

**8. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

None.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTIONED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER DIVEL, SECONDED BY COMMITTEE MEMBER KIERNAN, AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. to the next regular meeting of the Golf Course Committee, to be held September 4, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at City Council Chambers.

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Nick Azzollini, Golf Course Committee

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Gus Nelson, Golf Course Manager

Date: \_\_\_\_\_