

Hancock Neighborhood Association Zoom Meeting
Wednesday, January 20th, 2021
7-8:30 pm

Questions for PARD from HNA Members:

1. Alexis Kraus: What equipment, specifically, needs to be replaced. Can you share a financial breakdown of line-items that need updates with us?
PARD: The fairway unit, five gang rough unit, greens mower, and two maintenance transport carts need to be replaced. The total cost for these units would be approximately \$184,000. The life span on the mowing equipment is typically seven years.
2. Kristene Blackstone: Is driving range off the table?
PARD: Nothing is on the table and nothing is off as we are in beginning stages of reviewing all options. However, PARD will continue working with the community to receive feedback.
3. Alex Davern: Why raise prices at other courses and not Hancock? Would \$5/round resolve the fiscal gap?
PARD: It has already been done. An additional \$5 increase would place the 9-hole Hancock course very close to the other 18-hole courses fee structure and that would likely result in less play due to competing courses with similar fees.
4. Alex Davern: What is the mechanism that designates the site as historic? There doesn't appear to be a designation on city's GIS.
PARD: The Recreation center and course are listed on the Texas Historic Commission as a Texas Landmark. The course is listed by the US Department of Interior under the National Register of Historic places. I will talk to our GIS team to see if that is something that can be included
5. Coan Dillahunty: Are nets and lighting for night play being considered?
PARD: While lighting and nets are not on or off the table, any activity would continue to follow the PARD park curfew of 10 pm. However, PARD will continue working with the community to receive feedback.
6. Bart Whatley: Is golf the only park activity that is run by an enterprise fund? How much does it cost to operate/maintain other sports, for instance tennis or soccer operations?
PARD: Golf is the only Enterprise Fund in PARD. We would need a bit more specifics about the request for costs associated with other PARD Activities. Most PARD activities are subsidized by taxpayer support. The Austin City Council has determined the golf activity should cover the costs of operations through the Enterprise Fund model.
7. Ted & Karen Piper: You show revenues going down in 2020 for Hancock, while you show rounds of golf increasing?
PARD: The budget process for the city starts almost a year in advance. The estimated rounds increasing and minimal increase to revenues would have been a result of lower fees associated with the pay station operation. The courses have seen record revenue since COVID impact over the summer. When the course has been open for play, revenues have been up.
8. Ted & Karen Piper: Most parks do not make money and are therefore not solvent. Why is this park different?
PARD: Hancock Golf Course is a fee-based facility. As an Enterprise Division, our generated revenue is required to cover our operational expenses.

9. Ted & Karen Piper: Can we get visibility to the revenues & expenses for the entire Enterprise Fund & break outs by golf course?
PARD: Please see the attached spreadsheet.
10. AJ Lawrence: What makes you believe a concessionary agreement is a path to solvency? Wouldn't that incur additional investment and operating revenue? The NGF report states that municipal courses of this size mostly operate at a loss.
PARD: The concessionary option will place the investment burden on the concession and the improvements to the course and added revenue streams could make the course financially solvent. In addition, concessionary agreements are at no expense to taxpayers for those improvements. The concession would solely focus their attention on Hancock versus multiple other sites.
11. Ted & Karen Piper: You made a comment that bond funds were received and went to shore up shortfalls at other golf courses and did not go to Hancock shortfall? How are the diverting of bond funds made that would exclude Hancock?
PARD: The 2018 bond funds allocated to the Golf Enterprise Fund focused on improvements to the other golf courses needing infrastructure repairs.
12. Michael Nahas: You said it was used for 20,000 rounds. Do you know how many unique users it had? Is it 100 people playing every weekday or 20,000 people playing once a year?
PARD: The pay station used to accept payment do not track unique users.
13. Fadi Kanafani: Have you surveyed the golfers to get feedback about what improvements they'd like and why they may not be coming back? What is the utilization of the course? I.e., percentage of unfulfilled tee times.
PARD: The course will be surveying current users on the course through the golf course monitor. The recent Hancock surveys have been more specific to support of the activity versus what improvements the current golfers would like to see.
14. Harry Swinney: How many acres could be designated for park use?
PARD: The entire property is 45 acres. The amount of possible passive park use that could still allow a golf function is not known at this time.
15. Kristene Blackstone: What if a concessionaire is not profitable? Then what?
PARD: If a concessionaire was not profitable, the contract would allow cancellation. However, the improvements to the facility would not be reimbursed.
16. Etienne: Can you breakdown the current labor costs at Hancock Golf Course? The budget breakdown on the NGF report lists \$210,000 for personnel operating expenses and another \$100,000 for the pro shop. Considering that the golf course has been operating at record capacity without the pro shop during the pandemic, why can't the current deficit be filled by closing the pro shop?
PARD: The average cost for maintenance labor is \$190,533. The average cost for pro shop or golf course monitoring is \$96,043. While the pro shop is closed, the course still has costs associated with monitoring patrons paying at the pay station and safety of the operations.
17. Sean and Sam: Hi there, I'm a runner and I regularly use the trail around the park. I often see more people (joggers, dog walkers etc.) using the passive elements of the park vs. the golfers. You said there were 20,000 rounds of golf played in 2020, do you have comparable data about the usage of the passive elements of the park?
PARD: We do not have comparable data on users of the trail around Hancock.

18. Rachael Biggs: Is there a process to change from an Enterprise Fund to general revenue funding?
PARD: The Austin City Council would have to make that financial change during budget deliberations.
19. Kevin McKinney: in 2020 the course was closed for over two months. Would have had way more rounds.
PARD: All of the city golf courses were closed for 72 days during the 2020 budget year due to COVID-19 response. The course may have generated enough revenue to cover costs if open the entire year. This concept and discussion are based on performance history of the Hancock course. With the increase in play to all the courses, PARD will continue to evaluate each site and hopefully the increased trend in play and revenue continues.
20. Alexis Kraus: Golf Enterprise Fund doesn't appear to be listed at budgetaustintexas.gov.
PARD: The link to the City of Austin budget, including PARD and Golf Enterprise Fund is: [Open Budget ATX \(austintexas.gov\)](http://OpenBudgetATX.austintexas.gov)
21. Andrew Dillon: How is the future of Hancock tied to Lions?
PARD: They are not tied together and are financially independent of each other.
22. AJ Lawrence: To give context to your numbers, can you take an estimate or a SWAG at how many active golfers are in Austin and their percentage of the city population? The National Golf Foundation and United States Golf Association conduct regular surveys of the region and have identified 12% as the average population playing golf in this region.
PARD: The PARD-commissioned national golf foundation study has the following "Golf Demand Indicators" for the Austin / Round Rock area:
- Total households: 800,744**
Golfing households: 177,307
Projected golfing households (2023): 129,417
Projected annual growth rate: 2%
Seasonal Golfing Households: 1,792
Latent demand / interested non-golfers: 380,080
Household participation rate: 14.60%
Number of golfers: 162,951
https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/NGF_Final_Austin_Report.pdf
[Appendix A](#)
23. AJ Lawrence: Also, can you share the data from previous surveys, including the ones that show a supermajority?
PARD: See attached information from the 2020 Golf survey.
24. Justin Clemons: Anthony, you mentioned multiple times that you and PARD know keeping golf an element of Hancock is important to people and the neighborhood. Arguably, the course would be profitable if golf were so important. Do you have any research or data to prove that statement? Is there any research that shows non-golf use vs. golfing?
PARD: Golf historically is a cyclical activity seeing increases and decreases over the years. Currently, golf is seeing record activity which was not the case two years ago. PARD will continue to evaluate this uptick in golf activity. We do not have any other research other than the research provided by the National Golf Foundation.

25. Justin Clemons: Will non-golf options and uses for Hancock be part of the future research?
PARD: PARD is not actively conducting additional research on other activities. PARD will be surveying patrons and golf users to determine next steps for the Hancock Golf course.
26. Justin Clemons: If Hancock were to become a fully passive park, would it be moved out of the enterprise fund and therefore not be required to be profitable?
PARD: If the course was converted to a passive park, the funding would be moved to the PARD General Fund. However, PARD has not been directed by City Council to pursue a passive park conversion. It is PARD's intent to continue golf operations at Hancock.
27. Barbara Epstein: At the February 29, 2020 meeting Parks indicated that they were ready to take bids from private vendors, as recommended in the May 2019 Golf Foundation Report. Your presentation this evening did not make clear whether that recommendation is scrapped, on hold or still ready to proceed. Which is it?
PARD: PARD has not received any formal proposals from any private concession vendors. The concept shown in May was provided by a community member who read the NGF report and submitted it as an option to consider. The image was not solicited by PARD and was not endorsed by PARD. It was shown only as a possibility.
28. Barbara Epstein: If the Hancock Golf Course is leased out, will the public be barred from access to everything except the trail?
PARD: Access to the site would not change and would remain open to the public as a fee-based park.
29. Barbara Epstein: If the Hancock Golf Course is leased out, would any lessee be allowed to remove green space and put in concrete? If so, how much?
PARD: This would be determined in a formal solicitation process. PARD does not anticipate increasing impervious cover with any concept for golf operations.
30. Barbara Epstein: If Hancock Golf Course is historic, why isn't it in the city's interest to maintain it as a priority, and as an amenity for the public?
PARD: PARD supports continuing golf at Hancock. The challenge is operating the course with limited funds, especially as it relates to improvements to the grounds and maintaining equipment.
31. Barbara Epstein: Have the environmental aspects of Hancock Golf Course been evaluated to support keeping it as is? I.e., urban heat mitigation, wildlife assessment, reduction of green space from commercial activity?
PARD: The City of Austin Watershed Protection Department does study storm water runoff above, below and through Hancock golf course and has identified no impact from golf course operations. Additional environmental aspects listed have not been studied by PARD. The activity supported by PARD would be the same or similar to the current use.
32. Mary Trahanovsky: Does PARD have statistics on injuries, accidents (car, etc.) or property damage caused by golf balls? Specifically, does PARD have data on these things regarding their effect on non-golfers separate from golfers? If not, is PARD aware of any other organization that does?
PARD: PARD does not track property damage calls or reports unless a formal claim is made to City Legal Claims Division.

33. Mary Trahanovsky: Which golf courses in Austin have nets?
PARD: City golf courses with barrier netting include portions of the property at Lions, Morris Williams and Jimmy Clay driving range. Grey Rock Golf Course is adding barrier netting in the coming weeks to prevent errant golf balls from hitting the maintenance area and adjacent 9th hole. Barrier netting is utilized at many other golf courses in the area and most golf courses with a driving range or close proximity to homes with a short safety corridor will have protective netting beside that hole or road.
34. Mary Trahanovsky: For courses without nets, what are PARD's guidelines for distances between golf territory and streets, homes, or other passive park space?
PARD: PARD does not have a specific guideline for distance. Each site is different. While the responsibility rests with the golfer for any damage, sites typically place barrier netting where golf balls are commonly hit into non play areas where other activities take place. This is most common near a public road.
35. Mary Trahanovsky: Does the current setup at Hancock meet PARD's guidelines for golf barriers? I.e., could a new course be made as Hancock is now with the same lack of barriers between golfing and trails? Between golfing and streets? Have barrier guidelines changed over the decades?
PARD: See prior response. PARD does not have specific guidelines that warrant barrier netting.
36. Mary Trahanovsky: If a golf/passive park combo was the plan for Hancock, what kind and size of barrier would PARD require between the park space and the golf space?
PARD: Barrier netting may not be required. This will depend on what kind of golf activity might take place. Some would argue the current layout warrants placing limited barrier netting in the more common areas for errant golf balls. Specifically, along Red River street.
37. Mary Trahanovsky: If a non-golfer is injured by a golf ball coming from a golfer on the Hancock course, who is liable for medical expenses? Same for property damage?
PARD: The State of Texas places this responsibility on the person that hit the golf ball. If the property owner is grossly negligent in some way, the property owner (city) could be liable. A good example might be if the course was altered and that new layout resulted in an increased danger to patrons then the city could be liable for that new design flaw. As the course is utilized today, the responsibility rests with the golfer that hit the golf ball. In some cases, it is difficult for the patron to determine who that golfer may have been that hit the golf ball.