

MARIN COUNTY
PARKS
PRESERVATION • RECREATION



OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
REGIONAL PARKS & PATHWAYS
COMMUNITY PARKS
LANDSCAPE SERVICES

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July 17, 2018

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
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SUBJECT: RECEIVE PRESENTATION ON SAN GERONIMO GOLF COURSE OPERATIONS AND EXPANDED PUBLIC ACCESS DURING DESIGNATED PERIODS.

Dear Board Members,

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a presentation about the San Geronimo Golf Course property regarding golf course operations and expanded public access during designated periods.

SUMMARY:

Background

On November 14, 2017, your Board entered into a purchase and sale agreement with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) for the purchase of real property and certain improvements associated with the San Geronimo Golf Course. The agreement stipulates the close of escrow is to occur prior to December 31, 2018, allowing the County time to acquire funds for the \$8,850,000 sale price through a combination of county funds, as well as through applications for public and private grants. On December 12, 2017 your Board held a public hearing and adopted a resolution confirming the County's agreement with TPL to purchase the property. On June 27, 2018, a Preliminary Injunction was issued by the Court prohibiting the County from taking any further action pursuant to your Board's resolution approving the purchase and sale of the property.

Golf Course Operations Update

At the request of your Board, in early January Parks staff released a Request for Proposals ("RFP") to solicit an entity who would maintain and operate the golf course and clubhouse facility over an interim period of two years.

Through the RFP process conducted in early 2018, Touchstone Golf, LLC ("Touchstone") was chosen from three potential operators to move forward and negotiate a potential agreement for golf course operations. On March 27, 2018 your Board authorized an agreement with Touchstone to operate and manage the San Geronimo Golf Course property for a two-year interim period. The agreement also commits the County to a \$140,000 annual expense. This amount is equal to what

would be required by County Parks to maintain the land and facilities while the County would have gone through a community engagement and planning process during this time period if no golf operator had been found.

Beginning April 1, 2018, Touchstone assumed operation and management of the course, and officially reopened for golf on April 14. Since that time, they have received a good response from the golfing public, thus far exceeding their initial revenue projections. They are focused on developing methods to optimize revenue and profitability by repositioning and marketing the golf course using creative and thoughtful strategies. Touchstone's goal is to make necessary facility upgrades, establish service protocols, develop appropriate marketing, and improve maintenance, which will increase the overall golfing experience.

In realizing these goals, Touchstone has thus far:

- Appointed a general manager, course superintendent, director of sales, and a food and beverage manager to lead day-to-day operations.
- Improved golf course conditions.
- Developed a 'Preferred Player' discount program.
- Transferred the liquor license from prior operator to Touchstone.
- Performed numerous improvements to the kitchen as required by the Environmental Health Department and is close to a reopening of the restaurant with improved food and beverage selections.

Future opportunities for improvement include:

- Launch a new website and point of sale system.
- Increase both private and created events and golf tournaments.
- Reinforce the pace of play program and community outreach with the Touchstone Golf Foundation.
- Improve the clubhouse condition and curb appeal.
- Control payroll and operation expenses to ensure an efficient operation.

Per the management agreement's requirements, Touchstone will continue to provide monthly reports to the County, which includes such items as income, expenditures, and rounds of golf played. These reports will allow staff to monitor Touchstone's operation and provide an opportunity for immediate review and/or necessary actions.

Expanded Public Access

Following your Board's approval of a lease and management agreement between Parks and TPL on January 30, 2018, the San Geronimo property was opened for limited public use from dawn to dusk. Allowed uses included pedestrians, dogs on leash, and bikes on paved pathways. For the safety of others, golf and equestrian use were not initially allowed. This initial public access period continued until April 1, 2018, when Touchstone assumed maintenance and operation of the course and facilities and the property transitioned to restricted public access for the public's safety.

Per your Board's direction at your March 27 meeting, Parks staff and Touchstone Golf were asked to re-evaluate the possibility of public access after 60 days of golf and event operations. This time has allowed Touchstone to better understand operations, the property, and the community.

From discussions with staff, public comments, and experience gained since reopening the course, Touchstone is offering several opportunities for public access to the San Geronimo Golf Course property. Their goal is to create a vibrant public asset to be

enjoyed by both golfers and non-golfers throughout this interim operation period. Thus far, they have received a positive response from the golfing public and guests. The next step is to open the golf course property for non-golf activities and allow for access at various days and times. These expanded public access opportunities will be paired with programmed events to encourage the public to explore and enjoy the property, facilities, and amenities.

Touchstone will open the property on the following days and times for non-golf public access opportunities:

- **Sundays (front 9):** 3:00 p.m. until sunset. The public is invited to explore and enjoy the front 9 parcel, including the clubhouse.
- **Third Friday (back 9):** 3:00 p.m. until sunset. The public is invited to explore and enjoy the back 9 parcel, including the clubhouse.

In addition to these access opportunities, Touchstone is planning a variety of activities and events including, but not limited to, family outside movie nights with a buffet dinner, beer maker dinner, and a Breakfast with Santa event. Parks will also hold programmed events during these public access periods, inviting people to enjoy the property. Such events include: a naturalist walk, senior stroll, art in the park, and group bike rides. These Ranger-led programs are also held at other parks and open space preserves.

Touchstone will also encourage the public to explore nearby Marin County Open Space District preserves by promoting the clubhouse and parking lot facilities. The direct benefit for the public is use of the paved parking lot, flush restrooms, convenient trail access, and opportunities for food and beverages. Nearby preserves include Roy's Redwoods, Maurice Thorner Memorial, French Ranch, and Gary Giacomini. Touchstone is engaged with staff and will accommodate requests for access needs related to the planning process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

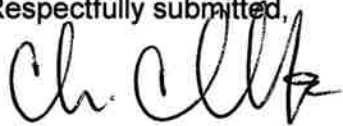
None.

REVIEWED BY:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Finance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County Counsel | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |

Senior Landscape Architect Tara McIntire is the principal author of this report.

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Chamberlain
Assistant Director