

**THE WORKSESSION  
OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF BENSON, ARIZONA  
HELD MAY 14, 2018 AT 6:00 P.M.  
AT CITY HALL, 120 W. 6TH STREET, BENSON, ARIZONA**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor King called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:**

Present were: Mayor Toney D. King, Sr., Vice Mayor Joe Konrad, Councilmembers Pat Boyle (arriving at 6:16 p.m.), Larry Dempster, Lupe Diaz, Levi Garner and David Lambert.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. **Discussion regarding the San Pedro Golf Course and the Benson City Grille; discussion will include operations, maintenance and proposed events to be held and possible operational alternatives**

Interim City Manager Vicki Vivian stated she would be talking about the San Pedro Golf Course and its financials, what the General Fund contributes to the golf course and what the Council would approve, where it is right now and what can be done to lessen the contribution from the General Fund. Ms. Vivian then provided a brief history on the golf course stating the City leased the property to (AGS) Arizona Golf Systems who built and opened the golf course in 2003, adding sometime in 2010 they closed the golf course and wanted to donate it to the City. Ms. Vivian stated at that time the City was taking in and discharging about 300,000 gallons of effluent a day to the golf course and under the NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit, the City is only allowed to discharge 250,000 gallons a day. Ms. Vivian then stated if the golf course remained closed, the City would be up a creek, noting at that time it was important to have the golf course open. Ms. Vivian then stated Public Works Director Brad Hamilton has started working on the new NPDES permit so the City will hopefully be able to discharge 1.2 million gallons a day.

Ms. Vivian then stated Jim Cox, the City's Finance Director at that time, spoke with Council in September, 2010 about the benefits of having a golf course: the effluent disposal, preserving a \$12,000,000 economic asset which would increase the City's holdings, and that 75 percent of the rounds of golf were played by people outside of Benson bringing an economic benefit to Benson. Ms. Vivian stated on October 25, 2010 Council approved a resolution accepting the golf course after Mr. Cox negotiated a contribution from Tom Hartley, Arizona Golf Systems LLC., in the amount of \$950,000 to pay for upgrades to the club house and supplement the operations. Ms. Vivian stated Ram Jack Arizona was hired and paid \$180,000 to make building repairs and afterwards the City was to receive monthly payments of up to \$25,000 for the next 32 months which is how the City came to have a golf course.

Ms. Vivian then stated there has been a lot of support for the golf course and many people believe it brings in our winter visitors and keeps them coming back. Ms. Vivian also stated if the winter visitors in Tucson knew what the City of Benson had to offer perhaps visitors might keep driving another 40 minutes. Ms. Vivian also stated it is important to recognize the survey from a year and a half ago concluding many of our winter visitors would look for other places to stay if the City didn't have a golf course. Ms. Vivian stated she has had discussions with Director of Golf Joe DelVecchio, Kitchen/Chef Manager Elisia Rodriguez, and Public Works Director Brad Hamilton regarding improvements to the golf course to improve revenue and require less General Fund contributions each year, adding she would like to see more events held at the golf course to help reduce the General Fund contributions. Ms. Vivian stated the goal is to have no General Fund contributions and she is confident future contributions can be reduced to less than \$100,000 in three years. Ms. Vivian then stated she recently attended a lantern festival, "The Lanterns at the Lake" event at Pleasant Harbor at Lake Pleasant, which was a huge success, adding she watched thousands of lanterns illuminate the skies. Ms. Vivian then stated there was also a lantern festival here a few years ago at a Relay for Life event that was very popular. Ms. Vivian stated since attending the lantern event at Lake Pleasant, she spoke to their event coordinator and was told they sold approximately 4,000 lanterns at \$25.00 each, adding they were not expecting that large of crowd and they were

overwhelmed with the response. Ms. Vivian then stated she discovered that a lot of lantern festivals sell lanterns for \$60.00 each and participants must purchase a lantern to attend however the Lanterns at the Lake's approach was to sell lanterns for \$25 and a lantern could be purchased for several people or a family. Ms. Vivian then stated Pleasant Harbor had arranged for food truck vendors although Ms. Vivian waited in the food line for well over an hour since they were not prepared for such a large crowd. Ms. Vivian explained the event was very beautiful and as everyone lit and released their lantern, the sky was just like a scene from the movie "Tangled" but all she could think of was the \$100,000 floating above her that could be contributed to our budget including the golf course. Ms. Vivian then stated she immediately approached others about holding a City lantern festival charging \$25.00 a lantern and possibly selling 1,000 tickets, adding the event would be limited to 1,000 lanterns. Ms. Vivian then stated she started researching the logistics, potential dates, including approaching the Fire Chief about holding it after monsoon season so the fire danger would be low. Ms. Vivian stated she also spoke to Ed Bantel at AMMRP (Arizona Municipal Risk Retention Pool), the City's Insurance Company and was told it would not be a problem, but Mr. Bantel recommended any vendors provide insurance naming the City as an additional insured which is inexpensive. Ms. Vivian then stated she reviewed a map of the golf course and is considering bringing the driving range back and holding the event there. Ms. Vivian then stated the lanterns would burn three to five minutes, they take about one and a half minutes before they heat up enough to rise, noting they should land on the golf course and are 100 percent biodegradable. Ms. Vivian stated her contact at Pleasant Harbor explained they had no problems at all with the lanterns. Ms. Vivian stated if the City could sell 1,000 lanterns, there would be the potential to make about \$20,000 at the event, and she feels the event would grow larger each year.

Ms. Vivian then explained more about bringing the driving range back, adding over the years equipment has been taken from the driving range to use for other portions of the golf course and she is reviewing the installation of a normal park irrigation system allowing the driving range to be brought back.

Ms. Vivian stated another opportunity requiring investment from Council would be to install a shade structure at one end of the driving range and market to those people who enjoy Top Golf and sell that type of experience here in Benson. Ms. Vivian stated they could take a lovely drive to beautiful Benson instead of having to drive to the Northwest side dealing with traffic, and we could promote food and beverages with the experience. Ms. Vivian stated our staff has been exploring all kinds of options and events such as enclosing the patio and expanding the dining area so customers will no longer have to be turned away due to an event taking place. Ms. Vivian stated if the patio was enclosed with sliding glass doors, it could be used as a meeting room housing 40-50 people comparable to the meeting rooms at Cochise College. Ms. Vivian expressed that enclosing the patio would double the space as customers could eat inside as the weather gets cooler. Ms. Vivian explained they have also discussed pouring a new patio or concrete slab for wedding ceremonies and other events. She explained that City staff is already reviewing wedding packages and costs to expand the events offered, adding Benson needs more event venues and the City would be able to offer additional types of event services inexpensively, especially compared to other venues.

Ms. Vivian then stated one other item she discussed with Mr. DeVecchio is that the golf course charges \$25.00 for a round of golf which is very inexpensive considering the condition and layout of the course, adding they charge much more for golf in Tucson and Phoenix. Ms. Vivian explained setting the price is always a balancing act, noting we want customers to make the journey to Benson, then stated a \$3.00 increase per round of golf could possibly generate \$55,000 in the next fiscal year. Ms. Vivian then stated the golf cart payments will soon be reduced by \$30,000 and that coupled with the possible increase per round of golf should decrease losses by \$85,000. Ms. Vivian then stated if the golf course can then hold a few events each year, generating approximately \$20,000 for each event, that would help tremendously. Ms. Vivian then stated one thing she wanted to note is that this year the golf course was closed for 25 days due to weather closures and typically it is only closed for 13 days, adding if next year, the course is only closed for the average 13 days, this would also decrease losses by another \$20,000.

Mr. Hamilton then stated enclosing the patio would provide about 2,400 additional square feet to the building and spoke about the requirements or upgrades needed such as changing the fire sprinklers (noting the fire risers are already in place) and upgrades to the HVAC (Heating and Cooling), and the electrical system. Mr. Hamilton then stated the estimated cost is about \$216,000, which is probably high, but he likes to start with a higher number and go down from there instead of estimating low and requiring more funding as a project moves forward. Mr.

Hamilton estimated that a 2,400 square foot shade structure would be about \$150,000, adding the estimate is high because he is unsure what will happen with the Geotech since a lot of the golf course is sitting on old landfill. Mr. Hamilton stated piers would need to be included in the construction cost. Mr. Hamilton then stated outdoor facilities are running about \$50.00 per square foot and we could consider steel, cable or a canvas type of structure. Mr. Hamilton stated the covered patio would open a lot more options and it can be made into an impressive area for weddings and other events. Mr. Hamilton stated it would be basically comparative to the ramadas at Lions Park with a much fancier set up. Mr. Hamilton then stated Staff has discussed Top Golf, how the driving range is set up with shade structures offering chairs underneath, and the ability to offer a Top Golf-type of experience locally to increase revenue and time on the range.

Ms. Vivian stated if the rate to play increase generates \$55,000 as Mr. DelVecchio estimates, the golf cart payments come off to the tune of \$30,000 and if the City can hold 2 or 3 events that may raise \$40,000, it would result in a savings of \$125,000 for the next fiscal year. Ms. Vivian then stated if Fiscal Year 2020 experiences the same additional \$55,000 in rounds and the golf cart payment is eliminated for the full year resulting in another \$60,000, as well as other equipment lease payments ending in the amount of \$22,000, the savings for that fiscal year could be \$137,000 that could be realized in fiscal year 2020, even with no events. Ms. Vivian stated she would have Mr. DelVecchio talk about the rate structure including the seasonal rate structure, adding that Staff will examine this further. Ms. Vivian then stated she would bring the items she has discussed to Council either through specific action on an agenda item or through the budget approval process with the appropriate action from Council at the time of the specific project.

Mr. DelVecchio addressed Council stating he has been reviewing ideas from the City of Tucson adding that their golf courses became a true enterprise 3-4 years ago and what their City Council did, through direction from the Director of Golf, was set a minimum and maximum pricing for golf basically giving the Director of Golf some flexibility to make changes whenever he needed. Mr. DelVecchio stated he has been saying for years that the San Pedro Golf Course is not a \$25.00 golf course, adding during the winter the charge is \$42.00 for out-of-state golfers and \$25.00 for membership passholders, noting that in order to get a pass, someone must be a resident for at least three months out of the year. Mr. DelVecchio explained that most of the visitors from the north are here for a minimum of three months, allowing them to get passes and pay the \$25.00 rate. Mr. DelVecchio then stated he has taken several Councilmembers around the golf course showing them that the layout is that of a Championship Golf Course; not a \$25.00 per round golf course. Mr. DelVecchio stated he spoke with the previous Director of Golf who explained when the City took over the golf course, it had been closed 6-8 months over the summer and he came up with a \$25.00 rate for the opening launch to attract golfers, but he never meant for it to be a permanent rate. Mr. DelVecchio explained the price started out \$25.00 tax inclusive with \$3.00 in a club tax, and it basically meant people paid under \$20.00 for a round of golf which does not support expenses such as seed, fuel, fertilizer, chemicals and so on. Mr. DelVecchio stated he was planning to raise fees by \$2.00 which made many people upset so he backed off and just did not include tax. Mr. DelVecchio stated he wanted structure and backing so he could enforce the fact that golfers can't keep playing a round of golf for \$25.00 and expect the course to stay open. Mr. DelVecchio stated when he spoke to a few people, they said they understood and increases should be presented to the group as a whole so he planned on doing that, but it would help if the City had a clear-cut ordinance with a pricing structure even if there are 3 prices for 3 different times of the year, with a minimum and a maximum. Mr. DelVecchio stated he would like to take a quick moment to talk about a letter he received from a gentleman out of Scottsdale who was putting together scorecards featuring the best courses in Arizona and these cards would be mounted, framed and showcased at the new golf themed restaurant in Scottsdale. Mr. DelVecchio then stated the owners would like to include and recognize the San Pedro Golf Course as one of Arizona's finest municipal layouts, adding the golf course is even getting recognized from Phoenix and having the money to increase advertising and improve the front end would really help business. Mr. DelVecchio then stated the circle turnaround in front is sinking and may soon be at a dangerous level and by improving the facade, improving the front and adding conference rooms, more revenue can be generated in the long run.

Ms. Vivian stated she neglected to mention that the front of the golf course needs improvements, adding everyone agrees that once you get inside and see the views, you understand the value of the golf course, but the aesthetics of the front and entrance need improvements especially as this is our visitors' first impression arriving to the golf course and their last view when leaving.

Mr. DelVecchio stated in speaking about a shade structure on the driving range, he prefers it not be permanent, adding through the PGA there are two companies that sell portable movable shade structures on big wheels that can be moved from one side of the range to another based on the sun and needs. Mr. DelVecchio stated it could be moved anywhere and it costs less than a permanent structure.

Ms. Vivian stated she would like to bring Kitchen/Chef Manager Elisia Rodriguez, up to talk about the food and beverage aspect and the possibilities. Ms. Rodriguez stated she would like to talk about the benefits of enclosing the patio, adding the City Grille handles multiple events, however these are limited due to the weather. Ms. Rodriguez explained the City Grille has held multiple weddings in the wind and the rain making it hard to set up when there are beautiful linens and flowers all set up and then a big gust of wind can blow it all down limiting setup options. Ms. Rodriguez then explained this past Easter weekend, the Grille had to turn away several guests because they didn't want to sit on the patio due to the wind and because it was too hot, so the Grille lost revenue. Ms. Rodriguez then stated the Grille has also lost contracts because the customer wanted their guests to be all seated together and they didn't want the separation between the dining room and the patio, noting the idea of having a full open patio facility makes sense. Ms. Rodriguez then explained that one long narrow dining room and one long narrow patio make the two spaces very separated and asked the Council to imagine one big open space and off to the side, enclosing another space and being able to rent that space as a conference area. Ms. Rodriguez then stated TMC (Tucson Medical Center) came in last month and the Grille closed the dining room for their event which was nice and they appreciated the fact it was done for them, but guests didn't appreciate the fact that they had to sit on the patio, so while she thought she was doing something great by having the restaurant open and being able to accommodate TMC, the regular guests were upset that they had to sit on the patio. Ms. Rodriguez then explained the Grille could have had a separate conference area for TMC while seating guests in the dining room. Ms. Rodriguez then stated with a conference area, the dining room could remain open and up to 3 events could be held at the same time, and although additional Staff would be needed, the Grille most definitely would make more money. Ms. Rodriguez explained she gets calls all the time for requests and she can make anything work in the current facility, but it would help if it was better designed and enclosed. Ms. Rodriguez then stated that the lantern event can make money, and the food truck idea is amazing because she doesn't think the kitchen can physically handle that many people. Ms. Rodriguez then stated the Grille could handle the liquor, beverages and beer sales and the Grille could do vendor fees. Ms. Rodriguez then stated the Grille puts on a great event and there is money to be made at the City Golf Course, but they need to be given the proper tools to make it happen. Ms. Rodriguez stated the Grille needs something more than a dirt patio; they need money invested in this facility. Ms. Rodriguez further stated that if the Grille is given the proper tools it could be something great and they are asking to be given the tools.

Mayor King stated 26 years ago for his wedding they held their reception at the Turquoise Hills Golf Course and had a lot of fun, adding he could see the vision. Mayor King stated he believes in what the staff at the golf course are trying to do and that the Grille can make money. Mayor King then explained that he has had many conversations with Ms. Vivian, and she believes in it's potential along with Mr. DelVecchio, adding he also feels the restaurant can be amazing, and if it is going to be profitable, the Council needs to put money back into the golf course and the restaurant. Mayor King then stated the golf course is very important for residents, for our winter visitors and it will be important for future development. Mayor King then stated he has spoken to annual passholders and they expressed complaints that some of their benefits had been lost and asked Mr. DelVecchio if he knew what they were referring to. Mr. DelVecchio stated annual passholders pay a yearly amount on their anniversary date and this means basically they are pre-paying for golf. Mr. DelVecchio then stated no benefits have been pulled, adding they can play however many rounds of golf they want up to an absurd amount, noting that in the past, it has ended up where guests played so many rounds, the course was practically paying them to play golf. Mr. DelVecchio then stated nothing has changed since he came to the golf course, and passholders still get their rounds of golf and discounts in the golf shop and the restaurant. Mayor King asked about the beverage cart and it was something that needed to be looked at with Mr. DelVecchio stating the beverage cart was purchased at the same time as the golf carts a little over four years ago, adding it travels the golf course loop consistently but with the current cart paths, it gets abused. Mr. DelVecchio then stated the beverage cart is on its second engine and with the new motor installed about four months ago and while it is up and running, it doesn't look as nice anymore. Mr. DelVecchio then stated the company that built the cart did not build the refreshment center; they are located in Phoenix and offer replacement parts, so he is looking into it. Mr. DelVecchio then stated with 40-50 mph winds, there may not be beverage carts that still have their original roofs, but on the other side, it's not that old.

Mayor King stated he knows the cart paths need improvements and asked if this was something that would continue to be worked on until they were done; then asked if the improvements would improve golf as well with Mr. DelVecchio stating it absolutely would. Mr. DelVecchio then stated people who read the article about the award the golf course won and read the reviews have come in to play the course, adding as they finished their round they came inside and were pleasantly surprised because they didn't think a golf course in a little town of Arizona would be that nice. Mr. DelVecchio then shared that the only thing anyone has ever mentioned is that everything is very dusty when they load it back into the car. Mr. DelVecchio then stated the maintenance staff is working with millings to improve the cart paths and once they get good millings and finish the entire golf course, it will almost look like cart paths, adding nothing would beat the look of asphalt paths which would make the course look like a resort golf course, but the millings do help keep the dust down and the dust is not affecting the golf carts as much as it was, noting they would have to regularly remove the clutches, clean them out internally, and put them back on because they collected so much dust.

Councilmember Boyle asked if the plan on expanding the Grille would be within its current footprint, if any estimates had been obtained and what the cost might be with Mr. Hamilton stating he received estimates for the patio in the back and potentially enclosing it, which would give the restaurant an additional 2,400 sq. ft. inside. Mr. Hamilton then continued stating by moving and replacing the window and walls, the restaurant would still have great views and could create a section that could be used as a conference room able to accommodate 50 people, but when opened, it could accommodate larger events. Mr. Hamilton then stated there would have to be some work on the HVAC systems and using national estimates, the cost would be about \$216,000. Councilmember Boyle asked about the construction of the project with Mr. Hamilton stating there are a lot of advantages in making these improvements as opposed to building something new because the sprinkler system was already sized for the entire steel structure and both the foundation and roof are already in place. Mr. Hamilton then stated another 3,000 sq. ft. patio with a shade structure would be about \$150,000, adding the cost depends on what would be needed for the foundation design, which would probably be some type of piling because it's on a landfill. Mr. Hamilton further explained that Staff will look at the front and what can be done there because there is a lot of settling because of the old landfill. Councilmember Boyle asked if everything had to be done at the same time with Mr. Hamilton stating it can be done in steps, adding the estimates is high, but he would rather it be high and then narrow it down and be more accurate once the project is started, adding the 3 items we are looking at are the enclosure which is straight forward, the patio, and the front to make it more appealing.

Councilmember Boyle stated as the carts and other expenses will be paid off, if the same budget continues, this could be paid for in 3 years. Ms. Vivian stated she didn't include the capital costs in her earlier remarks, and was only addressing how Staff is attempting to reduce the General Fund contribution with events and other savings, noting the capital expenses would be separate. Ms. Vivian then stated the Council could look at applying savings towards the capital projects, look at GADA (Greater Arizona Development authority) loans or bond proceeds, and determine what is worth investing into the golf course instead of having to pay \$200 a year with no end in sight. Ms. Vivian then stated she also talked about bringing back the driving range, using as much in-house staff as we can and getting the sprinklers back up by using the parks sprinkler system, which is much cheaper than the golf course sprinkler system which are \$600 a head, adding those heads were used when a head on the actual course needed replacing. Ms. Vivian stated by doing these things and holding more events it becomes an Event Venue / Golf Course and she would like those to balance each other with the events bringing in more food and beverages revenue. Ms. Vivian stated she has not considered the savings being applied to capital investments, but this is certainly possible, and the Council can look at other funding options such as a GADA loan.

Mr. DelVecchio stated he would like to touch on the events including the weddings Ms. Rodriguez would like to book and explained that typically for events people want nice green grass and they want to use one of the 18 holes later in the day. Mr. DelVecchio then stated they have gone back and forth on what to do about this but to have weddings on the actual course late in the day when golfers are finishing their game is problematic, adding a couple of times we had to reroute the course just for a wedding so if there was an actual spot for weddings at the course, it would help.

Ms. Vivian stated they have been talking about all kinds of events such as putting in a driving range where people can get dinner and a bucket of balls to hit on the driving range, offering movies at the drive-in where with paid

admission they are given a dessert to enjoy while they sit on a blanket and watch movies, noting movies are very popular in our parks and we can turn that into an ongoing event throughout the year, like Valentine's Day and other holidays and events. Ms. Vivian then stated Staff is also discussing events such as a Battle of the Bands or Country Thunder, but on a much smaller scale, joking it could be called Country Rumble. Ms. Vivian then stated she would like to see some additional events such as these and would like to expand them to the driving range where people can create and hold their own event or Staff can create and hold an event, adding she isn't just looking at weddings, banquets and those kinds of typical events.

Councilmember Boyle stated he understands there is going to be some development in the future around the golf course by a developer and asked if this would preclude the City from holding events like Country Thunder due to the condominiums or whatever development is built around the course and future homeowners not wanting events held there. Ms. Vivian stated currently, there is a planned street in the area an event such as this would be held but it would become a City street and in the City's purview to temporarily close it. Ms. Vivian then stated she feels the developer would work with the City in those instances, adding there is a secondary access planned in the development, as required, and it shouldn't be a problem.

Vice Mayor Konrad stated his concern is marketing, adding it may be easy to convince people to come out to the golf course, but we need to get beyond Benson and bring people in. Vice Mayor Konrad then stated he attended several events and the feedback from the golfers is that they want to come back, but again he is concerned about how to get the message out there, adding there will need to be funding spent on that and asked if this was part of the discussion. Mr. DelVecchio stated he has an advertising budget and can always spend the money for radio and television ads, but in June the golf course will get new software, new hardware and a couple of arms from the company that provides their computers, adding the company is giving the golf course their POS software, and the food and beverage software will have a more robust food and beverage banquet software module along with EZLinks Golf. Mr. DelVecchio then stated one of the arms of the company and part of our contract is a marketing company that he has already reached out to, adding this will start in June and will get information from either him or Ms. Rodriguez, and it will market the golf course throughout the State of Arizona as well as in the northern states and wherever else we select. Mr. DelVecchio then stated they will be doing all the social media and email blasts, and they will be done every day, every week, adding the last two blasts were successful. Mr. DelVecchio then stated it takes a lot of time for him to sit down and do it and they will be doing all of it with direction from him on what he wants to advertise, adding this will be done as part of the EZLinks package and there are no extra costs to the golf course. Mr. DelVecchio stated along with that there is another arm that will put a camera up on the tee box and on the green of Hole 15 and Staff can sell chances for a Hole in One, adding there is a course in Florida that sells these tickets for \$5.00 and if a golfer purchases the ticket and gets a Hole in One on that hole, they win \$10,000. Mr. DelVecchio then stated with the actual marketing arm they would take over that part, but noted what has been successful in southern Arizona is the email blast, adding we can track how many people emails are sent to, how many people open them and how many people bring those offers in. Mr. DelVecchio then stated people are all going electronic with social media getting a real foothold in the golf arena, adding people are now booking tee times through Facebook and other social media places. Mr. DelVecchio then stated this marketing company will handle that as he sets the parameters of what they do for the golf course, and he is going to be very aggressive in Tucson and Green Valley on the market blast.

Mayor King suggested reaching out to corporations and inviting them down to play golf, adding Mr. DelVecchio need to go farther than Tucson and reach out statewide. Mayor King then stated Mr. DelVecchio would be amazed on how many corporate offices will bring a group of people down to play a round of golf, adding the one thing they appreciate in their busy lives is shooting a round of golf and enjoying it with their colleagues and friends. Mayor King then stated by marketing to corporations, we may just get a handful at first, but they will spread the word and tell someone who then also shares the opportunity with others.

Mr. DelVecchio stated years ago they used to have corporate clubs that came and played in the afternoons but did not necessarily play 18 holes of golf and agreed that he needed to go after local companies to try and get those clubs back with possibly offering 6 holes and a steak or something like that later in the afternoon. Mr. DelVecchio explained that the golf course is typically done after 2 p.m. in the summertime and he should try and get the clubs back and have it set up to where he has an official club but at the same time reach out to other clubs. Mr. DelVecchio also explained as an example, they had a company out of Scottsdale fly 4 people in to play golf.

Mayor King stated it would be nice to say the next available tee time is a month out, adding he believes in Ms. Vivian and she has been working very hard on this along with everyone else. Mayor King then stated Council has had complaints about how much money the City puts into the golf course and now with all these events, costs can come down and the Council would be able to hear more positive remarks, again adding he believes the golf course is a beautiful place and this can be done.

Ms. Vivian stated that takes care of the marketing side of golf and the Council will start seeing these events. Ms. Vivian then stated she worked with the Finance Director and he set up Express Bill pay which provides the ability to buy event tickets online on the City's website and the Council would start seeing events on Facebook and other places. Ms. Vivian then stated the Lantern Festival event at Lake Pleasant drew 10,000 people shocking them at the unexpected attendance level and she knew people from the Southeast Valley that attended the Lake Pleasant event driving two hours to attend it. Ms. Vivian then stated she envisions people attending a similar event coming from all of Cochise County and from Tucson, adding this type of event is not be limited to any specific group, noting people light their lantern and send it off with a declaration of a goal you want to make, celebration of reaching a goal, in memory of a loved one, and many more reasons, because it is up to each person or family and whatever matters to them. Ms. Vivian explained that not limiting the event to one subject expands potential participants. Ms. Vivian then stated that everyone she spoke to about the potential for this type of event wanted to buy a lantern and planned to attend, adding it's a beautiful sight and anyone who has ever participated confirms it is an amazing experience.

Councilmember Dempster stated it is great the Council is looking at the golf course because bleeding at \$250,000 a year is not acceptable. Councilmember Dempster then stated the attitude expressed here and looking at all you can do including the ideas shared by Mr. DelVecchio and Ms. Rodriguez are all great ideas and there are a lot more to consider, adding right now, the golf course doesn't match its potential. Councilmember Dempster then stated when you come up to the golf course and turn right there is the dump and people comment about that. Councilmember Dempster then stated instead you should be driving down a nicely landscaped road leading to a turn with the landscaping directing you into a very classy place and when you go into the door leading into a very classy place as well. Councilmember Dempster further stated it's going to cost a lot of money to do that, but when El Dorado begins their development, perhaps they can delay their golf course saving a lot of money for them initially, and the City golf course could be an attraction to their potential clients. Councilmember Dempster then stated El Dorado has a first-class landscape architecture firm and he bets they could come up with a wonderful plan for the City for the entrance and for the front of the golf course and would not charge very much. Mr. Hamilton stated the City has been in contact with them. Councilmember Dempster then continued, stating investing is a good thing, although the Council worries about putting out money and investing, but again, an investment as opposed to just spending money is way better than just spending money, adding those are two very different things. Councilmember Dempster then stated he thinks Staff will find the Council willing to find a way to find the money to invest, not spend, but invest. Councilmember Dempster stated the attitude of trying to make this into a profitable deal is great, and he thinks this should go through the whole organization. Councilmember Dempster further explained that every time he goes to the golf course, he looks for coyotes, and there are other people who enjoy doing the same, adding there are coyotes that chase all the mud hens and maybe we could transplant more coyotes. Councilmember Dempster then mentioned a possible fishing derby as there are fish in the pond already so a kids' fishing derby could be planned.

Councilmember Diaz stated the City is in a different state of mind and he has been exploring some of these things with Ms. Vivian. Councilmember Diaz then stated Ms. Vivian has really been promoting ideas and doing a great job communicating back to Council, adding it is good to see the innovation. Councilmember Diaz then stated over the past years, the City hasn't seen much change but just in the past few months, the Council has seen a lot of new ideas come forth. Councilmember Diaz then stated it is important to explore opportunities and the Council has a limited time right now to make changes on the golf course as there currently isn't much local competition. Councilmember Diaz then stated as development grows that may change so the Council really needs to take a good look at this and begin to move forward, especially with the possibility of another local golf course coming into the community competing for business. Councilmember Diaz then stated the Council needs to think about what they are going to do and do it in a timely manner so they can take advantage of the window of time they have. Councilmember Diaz then stated it has been mentioned that the golf course is a good economic draw and all the ideas sound great.

Councilmember Garner stated he was curious how much money the City saved from two years ago until now, adding he knows the City subsidized a quarter million dollars last year. Councilmember Garner then asked where the golf course was this year and what it would need from the General Fund with Ms. Vivian stating the golf course was budgeted to have a General Fund contribution of \$178,000. Ms. Vivian then stated unfortunately, the course was closed 25 days instead of 13 days and there were a few unexpected expenses like the freezer and ordering a kitchen prep table. Ms. Vivian then stated as of the end of March, the contribution would need to be \$250,000 and she would rather budget \$180,000 and come to Council and be able to say we are currently at \$150,000, \$140,000 or \$107,000, which is what Staff is striving to do next year but noted, that would not include addressing any capital investment. Ms. Vivian explained she was trying to keep that separate to bring down the General Fund contribution. Councilmember Garner stated, like Councilmember Dempster's comments, he would be happy to see some investment ideas.

Councilmember Dempster stated there is an attitude that a City shouldn't run a business competing with other local businesses and he thinks the City should address this concern. Councilmember Dempster then stated one of the things the Council can do is to say the golf course is a major asset the City has and if we can't make it work without using taxpayer money, it will bring people into our town for other business. Councilmember Dempster stated the restaurants will get more business because of the people the golf course brings in benefiting everyone, adding it's really a win-win, and the Council should address that head-on.

Mayor King stated he would like everyone to dare to dream and dream big because the best is yet to come, and the golf course and restaurant are going to be awesome. Mayor King then thanked everyone involved in this worksession.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mayor King moved to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. Seconded by Vice Mayor Konrad. Motion passed 7-0.

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Toney D. King, Sr., Mayor

ATTEST:

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Vicki L. Vivian, CMC, City Clerk