

Date: January 25, 2008



TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: First Tee Youth Golf

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board receives the First Tee Youth Golf Report for information.

BACKGROUND

The Park Board offers many opportunities for youth to participate in the game of golf. To encourage youth play, the Board offers discounts on green fees, supports various youth golf programs and provides lessons programs through the contracted golf professionals. Combined youth participation in 2006 was over 5,000. In October 2006, staff presented a Youth Golf report to the Park Board Planning Committee, and discussed the possibility of establishing a new program called “The First Tee”.

The First Tee, an initiative of the World Golf Foundation, was created in 1997 to introduce young people of all backgrounds to the game of golf and the life lessons it teaches. Through the First Tee life skills experience, a curriculum for teaching character education through specific life skills, children and teenagers around the world discover how the skills essential to success on the golf course can help them flourish in life. These skills include self-management, interpersonal communication, goal setting, and mentoring and effective conflict resolution. The life skills experience sets the First Tee apart from other junior golf programs and youth initiatives, and ultimately hopes to instill in participants the First Tee nine core values; honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy and judgement.

First Tee currently has over 200 chapters in the United States, as well as international chapters in Montreal, Ireland, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand.

DISCUSSION

A Typical First Tee Program

A First Tee junior golf program is designed to be both fun and educational. First Tee participants are offered six lessons in each of the three levels of the program. The three levels offered are "Par" (beginners), "Birdie"(intermediate) and "Eagle"(advanced). At each lesson, participants are taught the fundamentals of golf, as well as, valuable life skill lessons. All lessons are taught by qualified golf professionals, and all necessary equipment is provided. The program is subsidized and designed to be accessible to children and youth aged 7 to 17.

The program is flexible and is being successfully operated out of different types of facilities that range from pitch and putt to championship golf courses. Facilities are required to have a classroom, driving range area and accessibility to a golf course.

First Tee Program Requirements

At the invitation of Commissioner Zlotnik, staff has explored the possibility of establishing a chapter of The First Tee that would operate out of Vancouver Park Board golf facilities. There are a number of requirements and commitments that are necessary to make this program a reality.

The program requires the formation of a foundation that takes on the role of administration and raising funds for the chapter. The model being considered would have an Executive Director, Board of Directors, paid staff and volunteers.

To establish a chapter, the Park Board as the facility owner is required to make a 15 year commitment to provide access to classroom facilities, driving range and golf course.

The First Tee program would be delivered by the Park Board's contracted CPGA Professionals and qualified staff.

Operating Costs

The First Tee Organization requires that each Chapter is to fund all aspects of the program. Operating costs of the Foundation would include staff salaries, rental of office space, promotional material and supplies. Park Board costs would include staff time, facility rental and revenue charges for access to the driving range and tee times. The cost of lesson delivery by CPGA golf professionals would also be covered. The estimated annual operating cost of the program is in the range of \$250,000.

Progress to Date

Park Board staff, golf professionals and Commissioner Zlotnik have met on a number of occasions with representatives from The First Tee, the CPGA and the BCGA to discuss bringing this program to Vancouver. There has been enthusiastic support for the idea. With Commissioner Zlotnik's personal involvement, a Foundation has been established, and a Letter of Intent signed and forwarded to The First Tee Organization. A promotional video has been produced that outlines the benefits and values of the program.

Next steps in the process are the development of a business plan and fund raising by the Foundation. In order to proceed to the next stage of establishing a Chapter, the Foundation must make a two year financial commitment and have acquired 25% of the annual operating budget.

SUMMARY

The First Tee has proven to be a successful developmental program that teaches life skills and values to youth through the game of golf. By supporting the establishment of a chapter for Metro Vancouver, the Park Board would take a lead role in providing affordable access for children and youth to a unique recreational program.

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