

Prepared for:

Vancouver Park Board

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May 1, 2001

Vancouver Park Board

**Public Consultation Process
on Green Fee Increases**

Summary of Comments Received

Executive Summary

The Vancouver Park Board owns and operates three golf courses: Fraserview, McCleery and Langara. Revenues from the three golf courses fall short of projections and options for raising revenues are being considered. Public open houses were held in February 2001 at the three golf courses to present background information on the need for an increase in golf course revenue and options for making the increase, and to seek public input on the options. Information was presented on display panels and input was gathered from comment forms. Two focus groups were then held in March 2001 to discuss the results of the open houses and obtain further input.

Open Houses

Four options for increasing revenues were presented at the open house. The options included a gradual fee increase, different green fees for each of the three courses, an advanced booking premium and a non-resident rate. Some constants formed the basis of all four options, a gradual reduction in the seniors discount from 75% to 50%, continued 50% reduction for juniors, twilight and sunset fees standardized at 75% and 50% of the rates and winter green fees continued at the twilight and sunset rates.

Participants were asked to indicate their level of support on a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 was no support and 4 was full support. A comparison of the responses to the level of support indicated for each option shows that Option Four received the most support, followed by Option One. The third and fourth ranked options were Two and Three respectively.

Option	Indicated (low or no support)	Average Score (Mean)	Rank Order
1) Gradual fee increase	55%	2.2	2
2) Different green fees for each course	64%	1.8	3
3) Fee increase offset by advanced booking premium	72%	1.5	4
4) Introduction of a non-resident rate	42%	2.8	1

Written comments were provided to explain why participants indicated support or no support for the four options.

Participants offered other suggestions for increasing revenues, the most common including return revenue to golf courses, make better use of clubhouses, use incentives and promotions and improve the booking system. Other general comments included concern about increased costs for seniors, a suggestion to draw out the time required to pay off the loan repayment, and suggested improvements to maintenance and marshalling practices.

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Of the participants, 67% were male and 33% female; 67% lived in the City of Vancouver while 33% indicated they resided outside Vancouver city limits with 78% of the respondents over the age of 50.

Focus Groups

A new option (Option 5) was presented in the focus groups as a modified version of Option 1, this time with a more gradual fee increase. Focus group participants unanimously supported Option 5 as the basis of fee increases. They also supported the idea of exploring other methods of generating revenue so that those found to be most effective could be added to Option 5 to reduce the fee increase. Ideas worth pursuing were making better use of the club houses (by focusing on increasing use of these facilities by golfers rather than the general public), implementing promotions and incentives to reward loyalty (particularly ideas aimed at getting more golfers out during low-demand times), and possibly through an annual booking fee (on the condition that the booking system is improved considerably).

It was agreed that Option 4, non-resident fee was not worth further consideration because charging non-City GVRD residents more was unfair and divisive and charging out-of-province residents more would not increase revenues enough to warrant the effort (because there are so few).

There was a desire to find creative ways to lessen the blow of increased rates and decreased discounts to seniors. Some suggestions focused on setting aside one course (e.g. Langara) and/or times (e.g. mid-week mornings) with a higher seniors discount.

Summary of Public Input

1. Option 1, gradual fee increase was not gradual enough, but thought by some to be the most fair approach
2. Option 2, different rates at the courses, was opposed because some thought it was not reflective of a public golf course system to have different rates, although some thought it was reflective of the golfing experience
3. Option 3, advanced booking premium, was opposed because it would result in a two-tiered system, decreasing access to golfing for

those with less disposable income. This was seen as inappropriate for a public system.

4. Option 4, non-resident fee, was supported by those who incorrectly thought that City of Vancouver residents were subsidizing the golf courses, but opposed by those who recognized that non-residents were contributing to general Park Board revenue. There was strong opposition to increasing rates for non-City GVRD residents on the basis of fairness and a realization that a non-resident rate would generate very little revenue because there are so few non-residents playing at the courses.
5. Option 5 a more gradual fee increase was supported unanimously in the focus groups as a basis for fee increases
6. Other Options such as making better use of clubhouses, promotions and incentives and improving the booking system were supported to offset the increases in Option 5.
7. There was a desire to find creative ways to allow seniors and others with less disposable income continue to play golf (e.g. setting aside one course (e.g. Langara) and/or times (e.g. mid-week mornings) with a higher discount.
8. In addition to discussion of the options for increasing revenues, there was very strong opposition to the decrease in the seniors' discount, the contribution of 18% of golf course profits to general revenue and conditions surrounding the loan repayment.