

December 19, 2011

Dear Neighborhood Representative,

The Parks and Recreation Department is in the infant stages of engaging the community regarding the Hancock Golf Course parkland's best use. The Public Information office and Parks and Recreation staff have conducted the first meeting with neighborhood representatives surrounding the Hancock Park. You should have received a briefing with details and follow up regarding the initial community engagement meeting and upcoming process for engaging the community.

Currently, the Department is considering an irrigation upgrade to improve course conditions that may or may not increase the financial viability of the course. Coincidentally the department has received unconfirmed information that some Hancock neighbors are interested in an alternate park use. It is the Department's intention to individually address Hancock Neighborhood Associations, citizens and stakeholder groups to inform them of the current operational situation including, but not limited to, financial health, course improvement options, and future opportunities.

After a series of informational meetings, a larger community engagement meeting will be held to determine the neighborhood's desired use for the parkland. With the possibility of a future bond election, the Department is in the unique position of being able to consider alternative future usage possibilities for the course, or make improvements to the course in an effort to reduce the negative fiscal impact on the Golf Enterprise Fund.

The Parks and Recreation Department wants to assure the surrounding Hancock neighborhoods and other concerned Citizens that the Parks and Recreation Department has no intention of developing the Hancock Park for commercial use. Any and all offers to utilize the park for something other than a park have been declined by the City. It is my intention to maintain this property as a park in perpetuity. Should the City of Austin consider future "commercial" development offers, please rest assured this action would require approval by the voters of Austin, as required by the State of Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, Title 3, Chapter 26.001, 26.002, 26.003, and 26.004. I am confident this engagement process, with help from the citizens of Austin, will strengthen the resolve for a wonderful park purpose at Hancock well into the future. Thank you for taking the time to represent your neighborhood and the Parks of Austin.

Sincerely,

Sara L. Hensley  
CPRP, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation Department

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Cc: Kimberly McNeeley, Assistant Director, Parks and Recreation Department  
Kevin Gomillion, Division Manager, Parks and Recreation Department

## Hancock Golf Course Briefing

### Results of Initial Community Engagement:

Numerous questions and concerns were identified during the initial Community Engagement meeting.

Below is a list of questions and Staff's responses in **bold**.

What is the anticipated savings related to use of the reclaimed water line versus the current potable water line? **The golf course currently spends approximately \$80,000 annually on potable water. The anticipated cost with reclaimed water is \$35,000 annually, resulting in \$45,000 in anticipated savings.**

Additional Information:

In order to utilize the new reclaimed water line, the course is **required** to install a new irrigation system. All pipe and irrigation heads will be required by code to have purple pipe and heads. Estimated cost for renovations of the irrigation system will be \$400,000.

The Water Utility Department has tentatively agreed to pay for replacing the irrigation system. The Parks and Recreation Department will repay the Water Utility through future mitigation projects.

The course is unplayable due to poor conditions of the fairways. If the conditions of the course improved, would the course turn a profit? **Although the reclaimed water will provide improved conditions to the course, staff is uncertain the improvements will result in enough new revenue to cover the operational expenditures of operating the golf course.** This is largely attributed to increased golf course competition in the area, and difficulty of the Hancock Golf Course for beginners and youth

Should the golf course close, how would the funding for operations and improvements to the park be made and when? **The Parks and Recreation General Fund would cover all park operations. Any significant improvements to the park would need to be made through an issuance General Bond Election.**

Would the current funding be moved to the Parks and Recreation Department from Golf? **Currently, the Golf Enterprise Fund covers all expenses. Should the course close, the Golf Enterprise Fund would cut the expenditures from the Golf Operating Budget. The Parks and Recreation Department General Fund would need to propose additional**  
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**operating allocation for an alternate park use.**

Several patrons expressed the management of the pro shop operations is not up to par. **The City will take over operations of the pro shop beginning in early February. This will provide consistent operations with the other City golf pro shop facilities.**

Can the golf course consider additional opportunities for food concessions to increase revenues? **Currently, the Hancock Pro Shop sells snacks and packaged items. The pro shop area is not large enough to handle expanding service of hot foods. With the number of available restaurants around the golf course, staff is confident that food sales would not result in additional revenue and may result in additional loss of revenue.**

Can the Golf Division Survey golfers on the course to determine what the current players at Hancock support? **The Golf Division has added an online survey and will conduct an on course survey in January. The online survey can be found at the following link. <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GolfFacilityEvaluation>**

What would the cost be to operate the facility as a park versus a golf course? **The cost estimated to operate the park as open space is estimated to be \$80,000 annually. This estimate is based on operations of similar parks size with basic service, which includes mowing, trash pick up, and bathroom cleaning. It does not include utilities or one time capital.**

What improvements will be made to the Recreation Center with 2006 Bonds? **PARD is working with Cotera+Reed Architects to finalize a professional services contract to complete a facilities assessment of the Hancock Recreation Center. The facility assessment will evaluate the existing structures to assess the condition of the architectural, structural, mechanical, civil, and landscaping improvements to assess the condition and anticipated cost of replacement for those systems in poor condition. The results of the facility assessment will be used to identify critical needs that may be included in a future funding request for improvements at the center. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the Cotera contract, Pard is planning to complete some improvements to drainage and issues related to compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA).**

The City conducted a tree survey for Hancock Park. Plans were in place to replace hundreds of trees and manage the parks trees. What is the status of that plan?

**Regarding tree maintenance:**

**2008: A significant amount of work was performed, including the removal of approximately 30 trees throughout the park; these trees were in poor condition and some were dead.**

**2009: Forestry pruned several trees**

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**2011: Maintenance week; removed 7 trees and pruned 21 trees. Also in 2011, an additional 15 trees were pruned.**

**Regarding tree planting:**

**2009: Planting plans were put on hold due to the pending trail construction**

**2010: Planting plans were canceled due to Golf's budget constraints regarding the cost of water.**

**2011: Plans on hold due to drought conditions and cost associated with potable water.**

**Forestry is still underfunded and struggles to be able to tackle proactive maintenance work in the park systems. Forestry has resumed right of way tree maintenance responsibilities in addition to parkland tree maintenance, therefore some projects have been delayed and are being handled on a case by case basis. Additional trees will be planted as funds are identified and environmental conditions (drought) change.**

The neighborhoods are concerned about development of the park. How would that potentially take place and has the City been approached about development of the park? **The City has been approached over the years regarding development of the Hancock Golf Course. The City has expressed no interest. If the City was to consider this potential, the voters of Austin would need to approve the change in purpose.**

**Chapter 26 (Protection of Public Parks and Recreational Lands)**

**[www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PW/htm/PW.26.htm](http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/PW/htm/PW.26.htm)**

**The City may not use parkland for non-park purposes unless it determines that:**

- 1. There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use or taking of such parkland**
- 2. The project includes all reasonable planning to minimize harm to the park**
- 3. and it conducts a public hearing in which it has "considered clearly enunciated local preferences"**

**Additional concerns identified by the neighborhood representatives:**

Golfers who attended the meeting and live in the immediate area expressed concern that if Lions closes, losing Hancock will place too much stress on the remaining golf courses. In addition, should the two courses close; the City will never have another inner City golf course.

The historical significance of the course must be considered.

Future Community Engagement meetings should be open to all neighbors and the community. The notice for future meetings should be well in advance.

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## **HISTORY:**

Hancock Golf Course was established in 1899 and is believed to be the oldest continually operating golf course west of the Mississippi.

Hancock Golf Course operates as a 9 hole golf course with 14,526 rounds of golf played in 2011; **down 27,476 rounds from 2000**. The golf course is maintained by 3 full time City of Austin employees. The pro shop and food concession is operated through a joint contract for operations of Lions and Hancock. The City will take over operations of the pro shop in early 2012 and manage the pro shop with City employees, similar to the other City of Austin golf course operations.

The golf course is on **less than 50 acres**. **The holes are very short and safety corridors within the property continue to be a hazard**. Several holes run adjacent to very busy roads and stray golf balls cause damage to vehicles and houses adjacent to the course on a regular basis.

Hancock has **not generated enough revenue to cover the obligations** of the course in the last several years.

Major budget cuts in past years and the cost of potable water continue to affect course conditions at Hancock. Hancock is the only City of Austin course utilizing potable water; however affluent water is available.

The City is working to fund the replacement of the irrigation system; however future improvements to the park will require funding in the next City Bond election. While improvements to the irrigation system will improve playing conditions of the course, it is **not certain the course will be self supporting in the future**. **In an effort to determine the Communities desire for future use of the park, the City will conduct a series of Community Engagement meetings.**

## **TIMELINE OF EVENTS:**

October 19, 2011 - The Golf Advisory was briefed on the plan for Community Engagement and presented a PowerPoint presentation detailing the issues surrounding the operations of the golf course.

October 25, 2011 – The Parks and Recreation Board was briefed on the plan and presented with a PowerPoint presentation detailing the issues surrounding the operations of the golf course.

November 15, 2011 – The Parks and Recreation and Public Information Office conducted initial Public Engagement with neighborhood representatives surrounding the Hancock Park. The meeting included a PowerPoint presentation detailing the issues surrounding the operations of the golf course.

December 2011 thru January of 2012 – The Parks and Recreation staff will meet with area neighborhood groups to discuss the park and future use of the park.

February-March 2012 – The Parks and Recreation Department and Public Information office will conduct a city-wide community engagement meeting to determine future use of the park.

Spring 2012 – Staff will present the results of the Community Engagement to the Parks and Recreation Board for review.

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**OBJECTIVE:**

Engage the community and determine best future use of Hancock Golf Course.

**STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS:**

October 19, 2011: Golf Advisory Committee

October 25, 2011: Parks and Recreation Board

November 15, 2011: Hancock Neighborhood Representatives

December – January: Neighborhood Association Meetings

Date to be determined: City Community Engagement Meeting

**FINANCIAL FIGURES:**

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Hancock green Fee Revenues	\$189,487	\$203,022	\$194,258	\$158,717	\$145,644
Pro Shop Concession Revenues	\$ 2,400	\$ 2,804	\$ 2,058	\$ 1,931	\$ 1,572
<b>Hancock Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$193,894</b>	<b>\$207,834</b>	<b>\$196,317</b>	<b>\$160,648</b>	<b>\$147,216</b>
Hancock Operating Expenditures	\$187,004	\$211,608	\$260,408	\$184,255	\$281,664
<b>Direct Operating vs Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 6,890</b>	<b>\$ (3,774)</b>	<b>\$(64,091)</b>	<b>\$(23,607)</b>	<b>\$(134,448)</b>
Mechanics Budget **	\$ 10,416	\$ 13,932	\$ 26,736	\$ 13,777	\$ 12,125
Interfund Transfers **	\$142,669	\$141,442	\$134,008	\$ 79,820	\$ 83,315
<b>Total Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 340,089</b>	<b>\$ 366,982</b>	<b>\$ 421,152</b>	<b>\$277,852</b>	<b>\$ 377,104</b>
<b>Total Operating vs Revenue</b>	<b>\$(146,195)</b>	<b>\$(159,148)</b>	<b>\$(224,835)</b>	<b>\$(117,204)</b>	<b>\$(229,888)</b>
Mechanics Budget **	% of division requirements				
Interfund Transfers **	% of maintenance mechanic budget				
2010 expenditures include \$45,960 in water credit for AWU mitigation. Without the credit the operation would have resulted in a direct operating loss of \$69,567 or total loss of \$139,557 in total operations for 2010.					

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