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MAYOR
NORTH CANTON, OHIO

Special Meeting
Arrowhead Golf Course Purchase

January 8, 2003

Present:



Kim Cooksey, Superintendent of Recreation & Grounds
Doug Foltz, City Council
David Held, City Administrator

Recreation Board Members:

Debbie Goldthorpe
Sue Van Vranken
Steve Bozeka
Mark Cerreta
Larry Grove

Kim thanked everyone for attending. He went on to stress that we are working on a time frame, as bids for the sale must be in by January 31, 2003. City Council and our City Administration are asking for input regarding the possibility of the City purchasing the 105 acres the comprise Arrowhead Golf Course.

Kim noted that the #1 reason the City is looking into the purchase is water accessibility. We could add as many as three new wells for residents' use.

Question: Has the water been tested? Doug answered yes, and it is a viable water source.

Question: Would the water wells interfere with the golf course?

Answer: Wells would not affect the course at all. Doug said that we would tie into the lines at Glenwood and back to the treatment plant.

Question: How much money would that save the City?

Answer: Doug said that it would be considerable. It will take some time to evaluate.

Question: Would the "Canton Connection" become unnecessary if the City purchased the property?

Answer: Doug - Absolutely not. It is very important to keep this connection. It gave us a secondary line into the treatment plant that we never had before.

Comment: Kim expressed his desire to look to the future. Whether the City expands, or not, we would have resources for water. Another thing to look at is, do we look at this as Greenspace for the City, possible development, etc.

Comment: Larry voiced an opinion that there should be no question as to the City trying to purchase the property.

Comment: Sue has concerns about any possible residential development.

Question: Debbie asked if it is a selling price or up for bids?

Answer: Bid.

Question: What is the zoning restriction at the current time? Doug answered, P. and I. (Park and Institution) However, you can put single family dwellings on the land as a conditional use on it.

Comment: Dave Held said that from the zoning prospective, we are not in a good position. Under our present Park and Institution guidelines, a buyer could come in and develop the land. We are in the process of trying to develop a new zoning ordinance. But right now we are vulnerable in two areas. The first phase of our decision making process should be - If the City has the desire to purchase the property, how much is the City willing to spend? Secondly, we would need time to develop a plan as to how we intend to make use of the land.

Question: Is there anyway to "fast track" the zoning issue?

Answer: No, not in the normal process.

Comment: Mark said that he thinks the residents are going to want to know where the money is coming from. The City makes a lot of it's money from the sale of water. Is it a matter of the money we would be making if we had the additional 3 wells for water production to sell to the residents and others who are on our water? We need to be able to answer any and all questions that might be asked.

Question: If the City bids 4.8 million, and someone else bids 4.85, does the sell automatically go to the highest bidder?

Answer: Any sell must be approved by 2/3 of the membership. It obviously would not benefit the members of Arrowhead to approve a sell to a developer. Mark shared a letter sent out to all members of the club. In that it is stressed that the desire is to retain the club as a Country/Golf Course.

Comment: Dave mentioned that even if the City did purchase the property, there would be a certain amount of time that the club would operate as it has been. This would give the City time to explore our possibilities.

Comment: Larry mentioned that if the City did operate the golf course as a public course, it would literally be a "Gold Mine" for the City.

Comment: Dave thinks that the biggest concern right now is should the City move ahead with the intention of trying to purchase the property? Everyone seems to be in agreement that we should proceed. The next issue is the cost. How do we convince the residents of the necessity of moving forward in this respect? Will they complain that improvements are needed in other areas such as roads, water systems, etc.?

Comment: Sue said that she can not imagine that there would be more people against the purchase than there would be in favor of it. People in North Canton do not want to see any more growth. Residents she has talked to do not want to see any more development within the City.

Comment: Dave stated that any new housing development in that area would mean an immense burden as far as improvement that would be necessary to accommodate all of the storm water.

Question: Who would be responsible for the sewer and roads needed for a new development? Would it fall on the City or the developer?

Answer: The City would be responsible for the sewer and roads, and the developer would pay for infrastructure improvements to the property.

Comment: Dave stated that under our present zoning ordinance, you can put as many as five homes on every acre of land.

Comment: Doug gave his opinion: We should buy the property, and let everything come together. I am not for putting housing on it. (It might be feasible to put, say thirty house up, in order to recoup some of the money). Being a "parks guy", I am for it remaining open space as much as possible. There are grant opportunities through the Ohio Natural Resources. Mayor Rice has been working with individuals in Columbus to see what else is a possibility for us. I agree with Larry, Mark and Kim. I discussed it with Tom a couple of years, if it is available, we should go after it. It is important also, that we protect the integrity of the neighborhood.

Question: Does the City have the money to purchase the property?

Answer: Dave - Yes, we do have the funds. Such as the "Rainy Day" funds. What the Finance Director is going to want to know is, where are these funds going to come from? Are we going to raid the savings?

Comment: Larry - Let's say that we keep it for five years, and kept the mineral rights. Maybe we realize that the golf course is losing money, and we would probably know that within the first year or so. Say you are charging \$50.00 for an 18 hole round of golf, with a certain amount of golfers, your expenses are this and that. The banquet room is making this amount of money, or not making money. The bottom line is that you never lose on land. You've got 105 acres in the middle of North Canton! We put it up for sale for 5.6 million, or 6.2 million, whatever, you are going to find somebody to pay that kind of money. North Canton is a prestigious place to live.

Comment: Mark - The public is going to want to know how we justify spending the money.

Comment: Steve - After talking to a number of people, no one was against the City buying the property. One member of Arrowhead voiced concern that the course would go public. He preferred it remain private.

Comment: Dave - Several developers have inquired and some have already contacted Arrowhead. There will probably be over two dozen bids. Kim asked the Recreation Board members, as private citizens, how high would they think the City should bid? The consensus is that 4.8 is low and it will probably go for quite a bit more.

Comment: Sue thinks that some residents have the idea that the City doesn't have a lot of money. Also, she said that there is a lot of dissatisfaction with all of the fighting on City Council.

Comment: Dave - Again says that we just need to reassure the residents that purchasing Arrowhead is the right thing for the City to do.

Comment: Sue asked if we should hold a Town Hall meeting? To address questions and be able to have answers?

Comment: Kim thinks that we are going to see a large attendance at the next Council Meeting.

Comment: Debbie suggests that some people may not be comfortable attending a council meeting. Maybe an open meeting held at Arrowhead would be a better idea.

Comment: Sue said that Monday night's Council Meeting should show a united stand among Council members. The City needs to be ready to have answers for any questions that may come up.

Question: What does it cost to run Arrowhead? We need to know that.

Comment: Dave – What if we purchased the property, but made an agreement with Arrowhead to lease it from the City for a certain amount of time. We need time to develop a plan of action.

Question: If we leased it back to Arrowhead, would it remain a private club?

Answer: No, it would have to become public.

Question: Sue – Has it been discussed with the Finance Department as to where the money would actually come from? How it could really be financed?

Answer: Dave – Yes, we are doing that now.

Question: Sue – About the gentleman that did the Street Scape Plan for Main Street. Is there a plan that was drawn up for Arrowhead? Kim said yes, and he proceeds to read a list of possibilities. Everything from golf and banquet facilities to snowmobile and ballfield areas.

Comment: Dave said that between now and January 31st we need to get everyone in agreement, and settle on our bid amount. This is the first step.

Question: Debbie asked why Arrowhead is having financial problems? Do we know where there problems areas are?

Answer: Mark thinks that they are trying to be a “Country Club” but do not get that clientele to play their course and use their facilities.

Comment: Dave runs down where we are. Everyone agrees that we do want to purchase the property, and we have a fair amount of flexibility with what we can offer. Flexibility with some sort of lease agreement, but we should not get into the details as far as the land use. We would rather see it remain green space rather than developed.

Question: Dave asked if we need an additional meeting, besides next Monday’s Council meeting? Perhaps open to the public? Feeling is that we decide that after Monday’s meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

DKC/mlr