

Comments by Woody Brosnan, president of North Woodside Montgomery Hills Citizens Association and representative of the Presidents Council of Silver Spring Civic Associations, on the submissions by the Montgomery County Revenue Authority and Friends of Sligo Creek.

### The MCRA Recommendation to the Task Force

The recommendation by Keith Miller is an important step forward by the MCRA in recognizing that Sligo Creek Golf Course needs the involvement of the community to survive. But it is far too limited in scope and direction, misapplies the role of community volunteers, and continues to rely on taxpayer subsidies. I believe the proposal needs to be fleshed out in more detail, particularly with regards to the commitments by MCRA, and that elements of the recommendations by myself and six other task force members should be melded into the Miller proposal.

The rest of my comments will follow the Miller proposal section-by-section.

### Capital

I agree that the current condition of the golf course is the result of decades of disinvestment by the county and that a sizeable contribution from the county is warranted, but probably not feasible at this time.

I agree that the irrigation system needs replacement but I would set aside sufficient funds in a reserve to pay for the first-year costs of a note equal to the cost of replacing the system and only replace the irrigation system if it breaks down completely. It is a worthwhile risk to work first on other parts of the course that could more immediately result in drawing additional customers.

I disagree that creating a golf education center can bring the operating costs into a state of self-sufficiency and that miniature golf is necessary to brand and use the course as an education center. I do not believe miniature golf teaches golf skills. But I recognize that the Miller proposal does not call for moving forward with either a driving range or miniature golf at this time.

The recommendation should add a \$1 per round capital fund surcharge.

## Operations

If the county is unwilling to solicit bids from private companies to operate the course, then it will take a cooperative effort by several county agencies AND the community to keep the golf course open. However, the county should first look to revenues produced at the course, including greens fees, a more ambitious restaurant effort, parking lot rentals and the radio tower rent, before taxing county revenues. And the Revenue Authority should be the first agency to contribute using a lower management fee and revenues from other courses if necessary. County taxpayer expenditures should be reserved to redress long-neglected course deficiencies including the lack of handicapped-accessible bathrooms and golf education and outreach efforts.

I don't agree or disagree with the number of 2,400 golfers. Comparing the number of rounds played at Sligo to the system as a whole between 2000 and 2009 is irrelevant because in 2000 the two systems were split and because 2009 was a bad year for all golf courses.

## The Miller Recommendations

### MCRA

Continuing MCRA as the operator: I'm not opposed to MCRA operating the course but I believe they should have to bid against private companies.

Environmental measures: I agree with training volunteers to plant and maintain flower beds and with operating SCGC in a more environmentally sensitive way.

Closing Dec-Feb.: Not opposed, but I would allow for the possibility of special Polar Bear tournaments or other activities on the weekend in conjunction with the Sligo Creek Golf Assn.

Modifying the management fee: The management fee needs to be specified and frozen for at least five years, not just FY2011. After five years, the fee should be set as a percentage of gross revenues, but no more than 5 per cent.

## The Community

I appreciate that the recommendation recognizes a formal role for the Sligo Creek Golf Association, but I am afraid it does not propose the most effective role for volunteers.

Planting flower beds: Yes.

Marketing plan: People will respond better to appeals for funds to improve the course, not to pay for a marketing plan. The course should be run by someone who would spend most of his or her time marketing the course to local businesses and neighborhoods. The SCGA should raise funds for the capital fund.

Volunteers as starters/rangers: I disagree. This is a very manpower-intensive recommendation for little cost recovery. Assuming one volunteer would work four hours a week, it would take for just a 12-hour, 7-day-a-week operation, you would need a minimum of 21 volunteers. Assuming three-hour shifts it would take 28. It is possible you could use volunteers to supplement employees.

### Parks

No comment on the recommendations except that in addition to supplying flowers the Parks Department should supply native grasses.

### County

Continued subsidy of \$150,000 for one year: I disagree. Any subsidy for Sligo should come from MCRA and other golf course revenues, not the taxpayers.

An appropriation for emergency capital repair: I agree until a capital fund can be raised through donations and a \$1 per round surcharge.

Finally, I do not agree that the task force should reconvene in another year to make a further assessment of Sligo. I do not believe this is a long enough time period to turn the course around and I do not believe the Council will accept this kick-the-can-down-the-road approach.

### Comments on submission by Bruce Sidwell, president of Friends of Sligo Creek

I would only add any driving range added to the course be limited in size and hours and be intended largely for teaching. Any environmental impact should be mitigated by planting more trees or native grass areas.

