



Submitted by Bruce Sidwell, President of Friends of Sligo Creek-- December 21, 2009

Comments on the MCRA and SCGA proposals and related issues

1) I'm open to seeing if we can find other entities besides MCRA operate the course, but I'm glad to see MCRA submit their offer. However, I'm concerned that the MCRA proposal is too far from meeting the goal of making the course financially sustainable. It forecasts the need for a yearly appropriation from the County of up to \$150,000, plus signals that all or nearly all capital expenses will also have to come from appropriations. I have to wonder if the Executive and Council will take this proposal seriously in its present form. I believe the TF should strive to present as focused a recommendation as we can in the short time allowed us, and it should not hide future financial time-bombs.

To help reduce the burden on the taxpayer, it should be reworked to recognize key financial strategies advanced by the SCGA. These include

- increased profits from food services
- dedicating the Holy Cross parking fee to the course
- dedicating the radio tower fees to the course
- adding a \$1 per round dedicated to capital improvements
- developing funding from grants and donations
- making sure the insurance and maintenance (or equivalent) fee is realistically low

-- and recognizing that the capital costs are lower than the \$2 to \$2.6 million assumed by MCRA

I believe the one area that is most defensible in seeking public funding to redress are the capital expenses associated with eliminating ADA, Health Department, OSHA, and Environmental violations at the property. Although we've heard that the course as is, is ok for many disabled vets, it seems as a matter of equity with the other courses and the past long-term neglect of capital improvements of Sligo that the course should be put on a par with all other public courses. I would like to see these broken out in an up-to-date list with expense ranges that could be part of the TF's report to the Council. I imagine that may need to be done with a look at the clubhouse needs in toto. I recommend we spend at least a little time in looking at what \$900,000 was expected to do for the facility.

2) I disagree with the MCRA comment in the fourth paragraph of their proposal that "The SCTF acknowledges the addition of a driving range and miniature golf will be necessary to brand and use the course as an educational center." There are several things wrong with the statement. First, I don't think the TF has concluded or even said that. I have heard no firm support for a miniature golf course and little support for a driving range at this time, and personally, am against them. Plus, we've had no discussion of the potential possibilities of "The Golf Court" practice center available through Adventure Golf Services to adequately meet the needs of an educational center. More importantly, if the consensus of the TF is to broach the concept of an educational center we should make it clear to the Council and others that an educational center will not be a near term contributor to the financial viability of the course, and that a great deal of further detailed discussion needs to occur before plans could be presented to them, Parks and Planning, as well as to the community.

3) Whatever final option or options are recommended by the TF to the Council, should include

our desire to see that the course is environmentally friendly. One mechanism is to have it certified by the Audubon International, but that is not the only way. A key element of helping that cause is to make sure that the community is offered an advisory role. For example, a small committee could have an initial meeting with the golf course manager to discuss and lay out targets. After that, they could meet in Spring and Fall with the manager to assess and assure adequate progress on the overall goal.