

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: JASON NUTT, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
JEN SANTOS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR – PARKS PLANNING
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF SCOPE OF WORK AND PROCESS FOR
BENNETT VALLEY GOLF COURSE OPERATIONAL
EVALUATION

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Bennett Valley Golf Course Ad Hoc Committee and Transportation and Public Works Department that the Council, by motion: 1) approve a scope of work for the Bennett Valley Golf Course operational evaluation; 2) authorize releasing an RFP to conduct a comprehensive operational evaluation; 3) approve the review and selection committee composition; and 4) delegate authority to the City Manager or his/her designee to further modify the Scope of Work and/or Operational Evaluation Process provided such changes are consistent with or do not otherwise conflict with Council direction.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has requested that staff work with the Bennett Valley Golf Course Ad Hoc Committee to develop a scope of work for a consultant to perform a comprehensive evaluation of the golf course, restaurant and banquet/event operations that will be used to develop a solicitation for a new operator prior to the expiration of the current operator contracts on June 30, 2022. Approval of the motion will 1) approve the scope of work, 2) authorize staff to release a request for proposals, 3) approve the review and selection committee composition and 4) delegate authority to the City Manager or his/her designee to further modify the Scope of Work and/or Operational Evaluation Process provided such changes are consistent with or do not otherwise conflict with Council direction.

BACKGROUND

The Bennett Valley Golf Course is a 150 acre, 18-hole golf course with a driving range, clubhouse, and restaurant with banquet rooms. It has been in operation as a municipal course for over 15 years. In 2004, the City sold bonds to modernize the clubhouse and construct the restaurant and banquet room. Upon completion the City entered into individual contracts for both the golf and restaurant operations.

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As a contract requirement, both operators provide a portion of their revenue to the City intended to cover basic operations, improvements, and bond payments. In 2017, the City added an additional fee per round to assist with capital improvements. As a result of the pandemic, the restaurant vendor requested early termination of their contract, which was granted by the City in December 2020. The golf operator's contract is set to expire in June 2022.

The restaurant building has been in operation through a single operator since 2005 and provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner to patrons until 2020. The building houses the main restaurant, a large banquet room that can be divided into two, restrooms, office space, storage space, outdoor patio, and a bar. There are a variety of deferred maintenance tasks at the restaurant building totaling approximately \$200,000 to bring the building up to average functioning standards. The restaurant interior is original from 2005 and the furnishings and kitchen equipment are the property of the City.

The golf course is a par 72, 6,500-yard course from the tips and was built in 1969 on heavy clay soil. This is a fair-weather course and is unplayable in rainy weather due to the soil type. Fairways can hold more than an inch of water for a day in a moderate but consistent rain event. The golf course drainage system is adequate, but the soil type ponds water and half of the course is relatively flat. Power is supplied by PG&E and is subject to blackouts from time to time. Water is mostly provided by a well system and operated via a 50-year old irrigation system.

The golf course is bisected by Matanzas Creek and most of the water east of the creek will percolate towards the creek. There is one original drain inlet that collects and transfers rainwater into the creek via a 12" outfall pipe. The west side of the golf course drains into a 24" storm water drain that eventually returns the water downstream to Matanzas Creek via an existing outfall.

The golf course has an unlit driving range with multiple tee boxes and natural turf and artificial pads. The driving range is a popular range despite the narrowing of the range the farther from the tee box. There is a restroom mid-way through the course and multiple pedestrian bridges in need of repair and updating. The golf operator provides the day to day maintenance of the course and utilizes a large maintenance and material yard, on-site gas filling pumps, maintenance buildings and city-owned maintenance equipment.

The golf course and restaurant share a large parking lot with Galvin Community Park. The park is highly active with tennis, soccer, baseball, a dog park, playground, picnic sites and a fly-casting pond. When sport tournaments are held on weekends the parking lot is full.

In 2013 the City consulted with Sirius Golf Advisors, LLC to provide a review and evaluation of Bennett Valley Golf Course. This evaluation and report can be used as a reference only. The Consultant must provide a current evaluation and review.

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In advance of soliciting for a new golf and/or restaurant operator, the City seeks to retain a qualified consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of operations of the Bennett Valley Golf Course. This evaluation will include reviewing financial and contractual documents, golf and restaurant operations, City support and future capital improvements.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

February 2, 2021 – Staff presented a study concept to Council during a study session to consider whether to pursue an evaluation of using portions of the golf course property to finance capital investments at both the golf course and the adjacent Galvin Community Park.

March 2, 2021 – Mayor Rogers established the BVGC Ad Hoc Committee and appointed Council Members Sawyer (Chair), Alvarez and Tibbetts to serve on the committee and work with staff to develop a scope of work for full council consideration to evaluate the concept presented by staff on February 2, 2021.

April 13, 2021 – Staff provided an Ad Hoc Committee update during staff briefings and explained that the Ad Hoc Committee requested that they focus on a comprehensive operational analysis rather than one that involves a potential real estate transaction.

ANALYSIS

Recommended scope of work

The City requests that the consultant develop a series of recommendations to guide its solicitation for a new operator in Spring 2022 in the form of a report. It is requested that the City's solicitation for the work, at a minimum, include the following:

- Analysis in report form of the future of golf both in California and nationwide.
 - Specific focus on trends in Marin, Sonoma, and Napa counties.
- Identification of comparable municipal golf course operations
 - Contract conditions
 - Restaurant and banquet/event area operations
 - Capital investment strategy
- Detailed evaluation and audit of both the existing golf course, restaurant, and banquet/event area operations.
 - Trends and conclusions
 - Maintenance operations and capital investments
 - Comparison of existing operations to comparable facilities and industry best practice
- Recommendations for future solicitation:
 - Single versus multiple operator contracts
 - Operational contract best practices
 - Capital investment strategy
 - Municipal and public oversight
 - Additional, optional study recommendations

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Open Solicitation Process

Based on feedback and direction from the Council and BVGC Ad Hoc Committee, staff has developed a scope of work and request for proposals consistent with standard city process to solicit a qualified consultant through an open public process.

Review/Selection Committee

The Ad Hoc Committee is recommending following the regular city selection/review process to include a councilmember and member of the public in addition to staff. The public representative will be solicited publicly.

FISCAL IMPACT

Council will be asked to appropriate funds when awarding the contract.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it is not currently a project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378. If application is awarded, environmental review will commence immediately to verify the expectation that the project will be exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 - Class 1 since the project will consist of a repair or minor alteration of existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of existing use.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

July 15, 2021 – BVGC Ad Hoc Committee recommends approval of the scope of work, approval to solicit proposals and composition of the review/selection committee.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable

ATTACHMENTS

None

CONTACT

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