

Written Testimony

Golf Subcommittee, Parks and Rec,

I am concerned about the future of Oak Knoll Golf Course which prompts me to share some thoughts. As an avid golfer who plays Oak Knoll 3 or more times a week, I am aware of the need for a reliable source of water to keep the course in good shape. I know that the course and its related activities beyond regular play (music in the summers, special catered events, weddings, programs for children etc.) have been a boon to the community and that revenue has increased considerably since Patrick Oropallo has come on board. There would be every reason to expect that trend to continue if he would stay with us, AND if there was a clear long range plan for water and financing.

As the oldest golf course in the Rogue Valley, designed by a renowned golf course designer, our Oak Knoll is a historical gem and a civic jewel. It attracts visitors to Ashland, it provides a green belt on the south side of town, and an opportunity for recreation to young and old alike.

Please make the continuing viability of the course the high priority it merits. It is a resource that cannot be replaced for Ashland citizens. During the past two years. golf was one of the only outdoor activities still available and safe for our community. It is accessible to all people, is very reasonably priced, and is even a wonderful place for non-golfing locals to enjoy a walk.

I ask you to listen with an open mind to all suggestions about securing the future of Oak Knoll Golf Course. I know that a reliable source of water is the biggest stumbling block, but putting your heads together and your determination to accomplish what is required will certainly be rewarded in the long run. Other golf courses are maintaining their operations in the valley, but none of them provide the unique experience that Oak Knoll offers. Please consider all options to save Oak Knoll.

Avram Chetron

I have Two purposes:

1. Support for Patricks:

a. contribution to quality of play at Oak Knoll and integrity he's established through his actions and the results of his efforts. These include:

b. his outreach to recreational golfers and even non golfer through his advocacy of live music on regular basis (and I'd add please support and find a way to add local winery to these music events, to offer wine for tasting and by the glass).

c. Patricks outreach to the community to use our beautiful course as background for weddings and meetings for nonprofits and businesses.

d. His input that led to improved care of our tees and approach areas.

e. The improvement of seasonal water running through the property, that in past led to significant areas as unplayable due to not being able to mow grass... those of us who continued to play through the "rainy season" had to wade through water on path from tee to green. Oak Knoll lost many players.

f. Adding tee markers to accommodate interest and challenge golfers of varying abilities in their challenge to improve their joy to play and improve their skills...

g. There are so many more, like his consideration of adding Pickle Ball Courts to bring more recreational play and support the Club House and a restaurant.

h. His advocacy and support of bringing a restaurant back to the course. A valiant effort that deserves reconsidering. We've learned some important lessons. Let's try again!!

Their are many more but enough for now!!

2. Regarding the current challenge we are facing in this drought, please consider the values Patrick has contributed and how to serve the playability of the course.

I've asked:

- can those of us who play and practice regularly bring 2-5 gallon containers of water to each day we play?
- I lobby for keeping the greens viable and second on the approach shots that are chipping shots to the green (75 to 110 yards in)
- consider adding ponds in key locations (that being in current creek areas?) with fountain to aerate the water, adding feature to integrate pond as an obstacle to playing skills, and a pump to deliver water to areas needed.
- consider cut a deal with Ashland Fire to use their tanker trucks to deliver Grey water to holding ponds on Oak Knoll".

Again water greens and short game approach areas!!

Paul Finwall

TO: The Golf Subcommittee of the Ashland Parks Commission

FROM: John and Mindy Ferris 1115 Barrington Circle

Ashland, OR 97520

The best thing that has happened to the Oak Knoll Golf Course in a long time has been Patrick Oropallo. He has enhanced this important asset of our community with his energy and professional approach to running the course and dealing with its patrons, both adults and youth. Although it may be too late to keep Patrick here an effort should be made to lure him back, up to and including consideration of leasing the course to him much as has been done in the not too distance past.

Patrick has made the golf course a part of this community not only for golf itself but instituted the popular "Music on the Knoll" and has actively promoted the club house and surrounding area as a beautiful event site. The shop is attractive and stocked with useful items. Patrick has attracted helpful staff and trained them well all of which create a welcoming experience for everyone who enters the facility.

Furthermore, Patrick is an excellent golf teacher who has attracted golfers from around the valley to the driving range facility for instruction. The importance of having the driving range cannot be overstated. It provides a place for practice and attracts young people who are learning and is important to the high school golf program.

Within the greater Rogue Valley, Oak Knoll is an important because it is the least expensive course and welcoming to new golfers. It is also a place for families to enjoy the sport together. On any given weekend day you can see parents with young kids both at the driving range and on the course. In this community we hear golf at Oak Knoll described as elitist but one needs only to come to the course to see that label is inapt. It is no more elitist than pickleball at Lithia Park or birdwatching at North Mountain Park.

We are concerned that the course will be left to languish this summer as water becomes more and more of an issue. Oak Knoll is the only park on the far south edge of town and is used not only by golfers but is a place for walkers and joggers before and after usual golf hours. We, personally utilize the golf course

daily both to play golf and to take long walks in the evening around the perimeter. In this community where we value open space Oak Knoll is a lovely park and should be saved.

We urge you to spend the money necessary to provide water to keep the course alive. Of course, water is essential but having the right personnel is also essential. If it's not possible to attract Patrick back to our course we urge you to hire a manager with an equal passion for the facility and for golf.

March 30, 2022

I am concerned that the Golf subcommittee and the Parks Commission will be making decisions based on incomplete and erroneous data. Several aspects of the presentation yesterday to the Golf subcommittee disturbed me.

1. The dollar costs for maintaining the entire course (\$35,000 per month during the dry season) seemed to be based on one extraordinary month confounded by other circumstances. The estimate should be based on a calculation that begins with the needed acre-feet of water per dry month and then priced out.
2. The 50% estimates are arbitrary. Beside maintaining the course fully, a reasonable plan might be to just maintain the greens and a few selected tees. Their area would not be nearly 50% of the total acreage.
3. In fact, the course has experience, two years ago, with dealing with no TID water during the dry season. A reasonable place to look for cost data would be to look at those months. Note we, OKGC's loyal golfers, already know what will happen to the course with minimal water based on that experience. We also know how well it came back - not badly but could have been better with a little more attention and thought. Note - the course did come back. Any talk of a temporary closure condition leading to a permanent closure is entirely premature.
4. The Parks Department spent a lot of person-hours trimming and cutting trees on the course grounds that had or have no impact on the golfer's experience. Those hours should not be used as part of any future estimates of course maintenance costs.
5. The word "subsidy" was used too many times yesterday. All aspects of the Parks Department activities are supported by "subsidies." The ice rink, youth sports, Lithia park, senior activities, the pool and others are all "subsidized." That is the very nature of public parks. As the Commission deliberates, they should be comparing the subsidies for all entities rather than looking at just the golf course. A fairer way to make the comparison would be to compare subsidy dollar per user or subsidy dollar per acre of green space. The presentation of one scary number is a disservice to rational decision making.
6. Personnel issues were briefly mentioned. I hope that any costs from those situations will not be charged to the golf course budget. In fact, it is possible that those situations contributed to past course maintenance costs and if so, they would need to be adjusted.

Jim Hatton