

February Chair Chat

The Lenten season has begun; spring is just around the corner, yard work will begin soon. But for some, hours have been spent in our golf course "yards". I want to give special recognition to the many volunteers that have assisted with the flood cleanup effort while we still have much to do the volunteer efforts made a huge impact truly a community effort! THANK YOU!

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Please welcome our newly appointed JAC members and thank those who completed their final committee terms. These members spend considerable time and effort to improve life for all of us here in Bella Vista.

Our committees "grew" in size this year in order to better serve the increasing needs of our community. Jane Barfield leads the recreation committee, John Doyle is the lead bait master for our Lakes committee, Jake Grasmick caddies the Golf committee and Andrew Grover is heading up our Bella Vista Young Views Committee which works directly with the Board Chair. These chairs have a huge responsibility I thank them for their leadership!

SCOTSDALE GOLF COURSE

Your Board announced in December a greens renovation and the addition of 9 to 12 Scottish sand bunkers at our Scotsdale Golf Course. The greens renovation is very well explained in the December Golf JAC minutes on the POA website by our Director of Golf Course Facilities Keith Ihms.

Many have asked, "why add sand bunkers?" Expanding on the information Keith provided, we believe the greens and trap work will:

1. Attract new resident golfers to the area.
2. Increase guest revenues which will keep member rates low.
3. Build a competitive advantage compared to other communities.
4. Each of our golf courses has its own personality. The personality is a result of many factors, terrain, landscape, green configuration, etc. In order to grow our market identity, we must commit to developing the resources we are blessed with. Scotsdale's original design was Scottish links golf inspired. Over the years that look has been neglected. A return to that design gives Bella Vista a golfing experience no other community in this region can offer.
5. Parks and Recreation magazine reports that golf course renovation leads to an increase in play and revenues. There are countless examples of private clubs increasing membership and revenue streams following course renovations.

There are also statistics that indicate many golf courses are closing in the United States. Let's examine some of the reasons:

1. Course owners find their land is more valuable as development land than as a cash flowing business.
2. The course is located in a declining economic community and, therefore, does not have community financial support or has lost the ability to market to golfers that have the financial ability to pay.
3. The courses failed to maintain playing conditions and golfers migrated to other facilities.
4. Golf is declining, examining the golf population one finds that there are more golfers today than there were 30 years ago. A golf bubble developed from 1995 to 2005 increasing the number of golfers quickly followed by a rapid decrease of players. Other than that bubble period there is a steady INCREASE in people identifying themselves as a golfer. This bubble created a growth spurt in course construction that now leaves the US with excess capacity.

As a Board, we can do one of four things;

1. Do nothing and hope that people will move here. That will save money, however, I know of no business that has ever saved its way to growth.
2. Close golf courses and other amenities, as we have fewer users move into our area to pay for them. Does anyone want to volunteer to close an amenity adjoining their property?
3. Repurpose amenities for other use, we have done this with the Branchwood golf course. Golf Courses with any commercial value are located in flood plains and zones. How could we repurpose a lake?
4. Put together an aggressive marketing plan to attract new members and their guests. This takes a commitment to improving all of our facilities including golf.

Your Board believes committing to the last option is in our community's best interests.

Tom Judson, our Chief Operating Officer, has been very busy during his first month. Many of you have taken the time to attend his coffee and questions sessions. Please consider attending these sessions as they give our membership an opportunity to voice opinions and share ideas. Information shared will be used as we continue work on the strategic planning process later this summer.