

Good afternoon Councilmembers,

First, I want to thank those of you who oppose the idea of privatizing city golf courses and are requiring more evidence to be shown that this will be a successful move before approving it.

I have worked for the City of St. Paul golf courses since I was 15 and have been introduced to the game of golf through my job. After 14 years it has become more than a career to me, it's my life. I went to school and got a degree for golf course grounds management and it's the only work experience I have. I would hate to see all of that thrown away just to maybe somehow save some money. If Como and Phalen are privatized, Highland will most likely be as well when the renovation debt is paid off. When Highland is privatized, then where will all the golf employees end up?

One of my biggest concerns with this whole thing is that we have been left in the dark. Hahm and his staff want to push forward with this, but have essentially told us they don't exactly know what will happen with us. He specifically stated during the Oct. 23rd meeting that they don't know what to do about the six management positions at the golf courses, and that lay-offs may need to be implemented. That certainly isn't as simple as "moving the staff to Highland Golf or elsewhere within the parks". In addition, we'd love to hear what positions in the parks maintenance section are available. Are they equivalent positions, or will employees be making less money?

We don't disagree that something needs to be done to make up for a loss in revenue, but only after we were notified that they want to privatize were we encouraged to offer ideas or suggestions. The "performance plan" they keep referring to is a big joke. Many of the golf staff didn't know anything about that until now, and those of us who did were told that it wasn't a concern. If the situation is as bad as they claim, why weren't Hahm or any of his staff frequently visiting the golf courses to implement the ideas laid out in the performance plan and ensure that changes were taking place? We were not involved in any way with attempts to make changes and save money. How could it have ever been successful if they stayed in their offices downtown and didn't actively work with us to try making improvements? It seems that they don't want to run golf courses for some reason and that they've just gone through the motions to get to this point where they can try to dump them off and take the easy way out.

The city has been providing the service of golf courses to its citizens for decades. If the current regime of management staff doesn't want to run it the way it has been for so long, maybe the city should get managers who actually want to make an effort to continue providing the service while actively working to minimize losses. The current management is almost never on site at the golf course to see if things are being done efficiently or making suggestions if they aren't. They just look at numbers on paper that come to their desk downtown and react when the results aren't favorable.

One last thing I'd like to mention, for those of you who are worried about children's programs throughout the city being jeopardized in order to subsidize golf, is that Highland National has an excellent First Tee program which introduces kids to golf and gives them something productive to do while they're off school during the summer. This could be expanded to have more

involvement at all of the city golf courses and possibly increase the number of golfers playing our courses. But if the snowball gets rolling with Como and Phalen, it will eventually take out Highland as well and then you will have still eliminated another kids program.

I ask that you consider all of these things when making your vote on this issue during the City Council meeting this Wednesday.

Sincerely,
Ben Robetor