SAINT PAUL
PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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June 26, 2026

TO: Saint Paul Planning Commission

FROM: Nellie Jerome, City Planner

SUBJECT: Golf Course Zoning Code Text Amendments

BACKGROUND

The Saint Paul City Council is initiating amendments to the Saint Paul Zoning Code Chapter 65.230 to allow limited lighting use and remove a ban on miniature golf. The Council, in City Council Resolution 26-962 (attached), is forwarding the proposed amendments to Chapter 65 of the Zoning Code to the Planning Commission for review and report as required under Minnesota Statute § 462.357, Subd. 4.

Golf Courses are a conditional use in most residential zoning districts. Standards and Conditions for Golf Courses are listed in Sec. 65.230 of the Zoning Code. There are five golf courses in the city, four public courses are operated by the Department of Parks and Recreation, and one private course is operated by Town and Country Club.

City Council initiated Legislative Code amendments for golf course standards in response to a request from the Department of Parks and Recreation, who would like to update their operational plan for the driving range at the Highland National Golf Course. Changes would allow for a regular closing time of 9:00pm and one-hour clean-up after closing. The driving range currently closes at dusk. Lighting is also used to light ski trails on Como Golf Course during the winter season (as conditions allow). There are no plans to add minigolf or “pitch and putt” to any golf course, but Park and Recreation would like the flexibility of removing that limitation.

The proposed changes will have no effect on lighting standards, which are regulated under Sec. 63.116 of the Zoning Code.

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PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

The proposed amendments remove unnecessary restrictions to Golf Courses. As the operator of most golf courses in the city, these restrictions have a limiting effect on the Department of Parks and Recreation's ability to adapt over time. It is unclear why the lighting restrictions are stricter for golf than other sports, such as soccer and baseball, or why the zoning code restricts the type of golf that can be played. Zoning does not impose similar restrictions for other outdoor sports. The increased flexibility is extremely unlikely to result in negative impacts because of Parks and Recreation's public outreach process during any proposed changes to park space or operations, changes in lighting technology which reduces light spillover, and the existing requirement for any new golf course to obtain a conditional use permit. For these reasons, and as noted in the initiation resolution, the proposed changes are consistent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, specifically:

- Policy LU-7. Use land use and zoning flexibility to respond to social, economic, technological, market and environmental changes, conditions and opportunities.
- Policy PR-13. Account for seasonality and climate resiliency in the design, maintenance and programming of Parks and Recreation assets to maximize activity throughout the year.
- Policy PR-25. Strive to make programming financially self-sustaining.

The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed Zoning Code amendments on July 22, 2026. Minnesota Statute § 462.357, Subd. 3, requires a public hearing on proposed zoning code amendments, held either "by the planning agency or by the governing body." Given the minor nature of the proposed Zoning amendments and that City Council has proposed the draft amendments, a Planning Commission public hearing is unnecessary.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Planning Commission recommend approval of the proposed amendments to Golf Course Standards and Conditions, Zoning Code Chapter 65.230, which were initiated by City Council and are attached.

ATTACHMENTS

1. City Council Resolution 26-962 (pending signature)
2. City Council Proposed Amendments to Sec. 65.230 of the Zoning Code
3. Draft Planning Commission Resolution