

Good morning Mayor Coleman and Councilmembers,

I would like to address a few concerns I have with the golf course privatization issue. I've worked for the City of St. Paul golf courses for 14 years and I think it's sad that several employees will be losing their jobs or will be demoted in some form due to a lack of accountability on the part of Parks Director Mike Hahm and his staff. They've tried to sugar coat the situation by claiming that affected employees will be moved to Highland Golf or other positions in the parks department, but that's only half the story. When confronted with the issue point-blank during the Jan. 15th Parks and Rec. Commission meeting, they admitted that a couple supervisory positions would be laid off, and that at least one would be transferred to a position on the Como Campus making less money performing a job they know nothing about. In addition, they stated that up to 20 non-certified seasonal positions could be cut. While they shrug that off as no big deal because they're students who are planning to move on anyway, the reality is that several of those workers are actually committed, long-time employees who loyally return year after year waiting for a certified position to open up. They count on the job as much as the rest of us.

I know at least one way management could have softened the blow had they been concerned about the golf course staff. Last summer, nine people were hired in the Parksworker III position in the Operations section. Only one of those was a current city employee. Several golf maintenance employees are qualified for that position, and I think it would have made a lot of sense to give us a heads-up that an RFP was imminent and that we should apply for those positions. That would have meant a lateral move for some and even a promotion for many of us. Instead, we were not informed of the cuts that we were facing and now there are eight new employees who were not previously with the city filling those positions.

Another concern that I have, which is shared among some of my coworkers, is the question of how we've gotten to this point and why those responsible do not appear to have been penalized for it. I understand that there is a loss of money that needs to be made up, but it doesn't seem that Mr. Hahm and his staff have really made an attempt to do their job and improve the situation before dumping it off on someone else. To reiterate a sentiment I've expressed in a previous letter, the performance plan that was in place during 2011 and 2012 was quite a lazy measure. None of us who are on the course day in and day out have seen any real effort made to shape things up. I expected to see members of the management team on-site regularly to ensure that practices laid out in the performance plan were successfully being carried out, but this was not the case at all.

Finally, Finance Manager Tom Russell mentioned during the Parks and Recreation Commission's public hearing last week that food and beverage service isn't an area of expertise for the city, that Prom Catering would do a much better job with that and that's where they plan to increase revenue. If that has been an issue, why didn't the city hire someone whose expertise includes food service and concessions management long ago? In the Pioneer Press article last week, Parks and Rec. Spokesman Brad Meyer stated that Prom "may have new proposals that we haven't thought of," such as special season passes, as the article stated. Shouldn't the Parks management team have been held to a higher level of responsibility to come up with those kinds of solutions years ago? I've lived in St. Paul my whole

life and have worked for the golf courses for 14 years. I've never personally seen any kind of flier in my mailbox or special promotions to attract golfers. I know people who drive from St. Paul to Sawmill Golf Club in Stillwater because they can walk 18 holes for \$18 during the week.

I think it's ridiculous that this has all been overlooked while we just dump the problem off to someone else, but I suppose when someone who doesn't have a background in the golf industry is hired to oversee all the city courses - business and maintenance - this is where we were destined to end up. Hopefully a better job will be done in the future to select adequate management.

Sincerely,
Ben Robetor