

Don Brooks
168 Tackora Trail
Ridgefield, Conn. 06877

April 4, 1972

Mr. Joe McLinden
First Selectmen's Office
Town Hall
Ridgefield, Conn. 06877

Dear Joe:

I write this letter in response to the article in the Press released by the Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Commission suggesting it operate the Public Golf Course after one year of operation.

In the feasibility study conducted by the five original members of the Golf Committee and presented first to the Board of Finance in October, one of the recommendations was that a separate Commission be established to operate the facility. This decision was not made arbitrarily, but after careful research. I also know that this decision was related verbally to the P. & R. Commission and little opposition resulted at that time. I wonder, then, if the Chairman and Director of P. & R. are acting on their own, or has the Commission actually taken this position?

The National Golf Foundation, the clearing house of information for constructing golf courses, suggests in its literature that separate commissions be established for public golf courses, thereby paralleling a Private Club's Board of Directors. In its publication, "A Guide to Planning a Public Golf Course," the Foundation says, "Golf courses are unique operations. They require day to day attention. A separate commission whose only function is the golf course is best equipped to handle these chores."

The present Commission has drawn upon widespread talent among its members to accomplish its only goal, the golf course. I doubt seriously the Park and Recreation Commission can duplicate this effort when it must and should attend to many other functions.

For instance:

1. Will P. & R. be as dedicated to making the golf course pay its way as the Golf Course Commission? And would it perhaps want surplus income for other objectives?

2. Is P.&R. capable of operating a golf course financial budget and a large bond issue in addition to its other duties?

3. Is it capable of conducting golf tournaments -- such as a Town Championship -- to help promote the golf course, create interest, income etc? A golf professional hired to manage the course cannot do all these things. He will need qualified volunteer help, people who know golf and the rules thoroughly.

4. Is P. & R. capable of handling turf problems? A Superintendent hired at our course for \$10,000 or so will not be the most knowledgeable. The first five years may go well -- they may not too -- but what happens when diseases set in? The entire golf course could be lost. The superintendent will need fast, expert help. More than the Soil Conservation Service will be needed and the sources of help need to be known. The Golf Commission knows them.

5. The present plan is to pay a golf professional a small salary for overseeing the operations of the course. His main income will be derived from other sources. He will report directly to the golf commission. If P. & R. were operating the golf course, I assume the golf course manager would report to the P. & R. Director. The present Director knows nothing about golf, and his successors may not either. Such a Director's decisions could be chaotic.

If you review the names of the present Golf Course Commission members, it will be revealed that financial men, a lawyer, golf club manager, golf professional, and a former golf association employee are among its members. There are other Commission members with credentials equally impressive for operating the golf course, their only concern, and such talent is best suited for operating Ridgefield's Golf Course.

Further, the Town of Fairfield produced a very elaborate feasibility study for its recently-completed 18-hole golf course. They expended \$2,000 and months of research. It recommended a separate commission, and specifically not P. & R. I believe this recommendation was adopted.

Then, look at Westport. It bought a private club for Town public use several years ago and turned over the operation to P.& R. It was a mistake. P. & R. gave all golf cart income to the golf professional who earns \$30,000 a year from carts alone and the Golf Course nothing.

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Yet P. & R. must pay the extra maintenance the carts create. Westport's income is only two-thirds what it should be because of a poorly-devised fee system -- contrary to the National Golf Foundation's recommendations, I might add. The course once made money, but now expenses are outlagging income. And in the past few years, they have been in a rebuilding program that appears to be financed by taxpayers, perhaps from an expanded P. & R. budget.

Therefore, as Chairman of the Golf Course Commission for whom I speak, I strongly urge the Board of Selectmen to keep the golf course under the jurisdiction of a separate commission. As terms of present Commission members expire, equally qualified people will be available to fill the posts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Don Brooks". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Don Brooks
Chairman

DB:dj