

Golfers Concerns Regarding Maintenance at the Golf Course

Purpose:

We would like to bring to your attention the deteriorating conditions at the Los Alamos Golf Course. This is in response to the, "GOLFER'S QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING NEW ROUGH CUT LINES" that was handed out to golfers on the weekend of August 10. We would like to ensure that the Parks and Recreation department and county counsel understand the severity of the maintenance problem at the golf course. Many of us have been playing at this course for over 20 years, some over 30 years, and have never seen this level of poor conditions. Golf course staff have informed us that they have made repeated requests for staffing augmentation to help address the issues with no response.

Below are specific details as well as observations and recommendations for your consideration in resolving this issue.

Course Conditions

Grass

The grass throughout the golf course is too long and in many instances not being mowed at all. This results in a shaggy overgrown course that does not lend itself to golf play. The fairway, rough and greens are not mowed low enough or frequently enough to make play enjoyable or provide even a second-class experience. It is especially annoying since this is the first year in a long time that we enjoyed a wet winter and fairly good precipitation as well a new water supply system (the storage tank and delivery system for the affluent water).

Roughs

Many locations on the golf course are no longer mowed or mowed so infrequently they are 6 to 10 inches high in the grass rough and up to 2 feet high in the natural areas. These areas include what used to be considered natural rough areas and first cut rough which is grass that is usually kept at 2.5 times the height of the fairway. These overgrown conditions result in an above average golfer (0 -5 handicap) losing 1 or more balls on average per round and an average golfer (5-15 handicap) losing 2 or more balls per round. The loss of a ball typically raises the golfer's score by 2 strokes, reducing the enjoyment and interest of the golfer. It also increases the time it takes to play a round and reduces the enjoyment of the experience.

The grass and weeds in the natural areas is so long (12 to 24 inches high) and thick that it is essentially impossible to find the ball once it enters these areas. This is too big of a penalty for a shot that may only miss the fairway by 10 yards. In the previous 20 to 30 years these areas have been maintained at a height that punishes the offline shot by providing a poor lie but not a lost ball. These overgrown areas can be found within 10 yards of the fairway on holes 3, 4, 5, 11,12,13,15,16, and 18.

Grass found in the grass rough, next to the fairway is kept well above 6 inches (much longer than the USGA recommended 1.5 to 2 inches). Many locations of the grass

rough have not been mowed for weeks and are so long that balls are often lost in them because it takes too long to locate them and play is held up on the course.

Recently a survey was provided, "GOLFER'S QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING NEW ROUGH CUT LINES" (referenced in the purpose statement above) to get golfers input if it is worth mowing many of these areas that are so long. Again these areas look bad, cause play to be slowed down, often result in a lost ball and reduce the enjoyment of the experience. The golf course has a long established course maintenance document that is not being followed. This document establishes the height of the greens, fairways and roughs.

Fairways

Grass in the fairways are currently and have been throughout the summer at 1 to 1.5 inches long and well above the USGA recommended 0.35 – 0.5 inches. The goal should be to provide golfers with a clean lie in the fairway so the ball sits up with little grass between the ball and the club at impact allowing the club to impact the ball before the turf and allowing the golfer to impart more spin and control. However the grass in the fairways is so long it sits down in the grass almost like being on the rough resulting in poor shots and diminishing the enjoyment of the game. Also noticeable when walking the fairways is how uneven the cut is and areas where it appears the mower is not cutting. The grass is cut so infrequently that it is not possible to make clean cut in one pass. <https://www.usga.org/course-care/forethegolfer/2019/finding-the-right-fairway-height.html>

Putting Greens

Grass on the greens is so long that some players have seen the line of the putt after the ball is rolled which results from the ball making a rut in the grass as it proceeds to the hole. Golfers throughout the round are in disbelief at how slow the greens are and how hard one has to hit the putt. Golfers visiting from out of town have never encountered such slow greens. The USGA recommends keeping the greens at a speed of 8ft to 10ft on the Stimpmeter. It is unlikely our greens are above 5 ft. Some days the greens speed is faster but golfers should expect consistency in the speed of the greens. This more than anything makes the round painfully discouraging because the resulting number of extra strokes is disheartening.

Tee Boxes

Grass on the tee boxes is for the most part acceptable, too long but livable, since one can tee the ball up. Par three tee boxes can be a problem since the ball is kept low and can be impacted by the long grass. Recently damage from Ravens has caused serious damage to many of the tee boxes and fairways and there does not appear to be any action to mitigate this problem like controlling the grubs or borers the Ravens are after.

Pin Locations

The location of the pin on the greens is not moved for periods of a week or more. Typically this is done daily or every other day for purposes of making the course more interesting for regular players and to reduce the wear on the green in and around the hole.

Sand Traps

Sand traps are periodically groomed although the frequency should be daily. The quality of the greens in general are very poor and the county should consider how to improve the sand traps for the long term.

General Condition of Facilities

The areas around the putting green, cart storage, first tee box are suffering from inattention. Flowers are not maintained, weeds are prevalent and if not for the wet summer weather the grass would be brown and dry. This gives the initial impression that there is no care given to maintenance of the facility in general.

Observations

1. Resources

Recently it was communicated in the, "GOLFER'S QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING NEW ROUGH CUT LINES" that the golf course does not have the resources to mow the golf course properly. Further it was suggested that more people are needed to mow the grass and take care of the course properly and it will take too long to get such resources - so get use to the poor conditions.

SUGGESTION: Since the Golf Course is under the Parks and Recreation Director, can labor resources from the parks maintenance be utilized as necessary to support the needs of the golf course to get conditions under control and help with mowing requirements as needed through out the year. This way a base labor force can be in place at the course and as conditions change requiring additional resources they can be augmented by Parks laborers.

SUGGESTION: The County has equipment that is used to mow the areas along major roads such as San Ildefonso to cut down weeds and growth that get very thick and high. This equipment would seem to be perfect for cutting the overgrown weed areas that are near the fairways. It would probably take one or two days to cut these areas with those machines and would not need cutting again for more than a month – if that. This is a county resource that could be made available for the golf course to periodically cut these areas. This seems to be a way to most efficiently use equipment and labor to meet the needs of the County. The county also has staff that cut the ball fields, parks and other open spaces around the county. This staff should be available to the golf course in times of need.

SUGGESTION: We are at the course throughout the day all week and notice that mowing tends to stop at noon and rarely is any mowing done after noon. Are we using all of our current labor resources most effectively (are they not working) and can they work overtime when the course needs the attention?

SUGGESTION: Identify a path which will allow for volunteer help. Many of us would gladly volunteer to help out at the course with improvement projects or to help mow. This is a pretty large resource.

Conclusion:

We would like to see the County and Parks and Recreation Department put a plan in place that would provide the necessary labor and equipment in maintaining the course.

We the undersigned agree and support the comments, observations and suggestions provided above:

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