



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 17-012**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Luke Follwell, Director, Recreation & Leisure Services
Date of Meeting: December 20, 2016
Subject: Belle Park Working Group Update

Executive Summary:

As per Report Number [14-075](#), submitted to Council on February 4, 2014, staff is providing the third progress report from the Belle Park Working Group (BPWG).

The 2016 BPWG was comprised of Mary Louise Adams, John McLean, Rick Stratton, Mariah Hamilton and Conrad de Barros. The working group and staff had monthly meetings and site visits to discuss the issues on the course and how improvements could be achieved over time. Changes and improvements made with the support of the BPWG have been achieved through existing operational and capital budgets. The results of the meetings to date have been summarized in this report.

As a result of the monthly meetings, reviewing surveys completed by members of the public and recognizing ongoing revenue declines, it was discussed as to what possible next steps could be taken to improve Belle Park. The BPWG members noted the efforts by staff and hoped that membership numbers and revenues would have increased over time. BPWG members indicated that efforts have been positive in most areas with the exception of revenue generation. The survey results clearly indicated that Belle Park is used by a wide range of the public and BPWG indicated that consideration should be given for a process to review the possible reduction or elimination of golf activity and increase alternate outdoor recreational and naturalization opportunities. It was suggested that staff coordinate public consultation to receive feedback on these opportunities and report back to Council.

December 20, 2016

Page 2 of 11

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to explore options to reduce, modify or eliminate some or all golf activity and increase alternate outdoor recreational and naturalization opportunities at Belle Park; and

That Council direct staff to report back to Council with recommendations on the future opportunities and planning for Belle Park after public consultation.

December 20, 2016

Page 3 of 11

Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Denis Leger, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	Not required
Jim Keech, President and CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desiree Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	Not required

December 20, 2016

Page 4 of 11

Options/Discussion:

This is the third progress report to provide City Council with an update on the Belle Park Working Group (BPWG). The working group and staff met monthly throughout the year to discuss and provide feedback and advice on the following five (5) Belle Park related functions:

- A. Maintenance & Operations
- B. Programming
- C. Events and Potential Sponsorships
- D. Advertising and Marketing Opportunities
- E. Capital Renovations/Upgrades

The 2016 BPWG was comprised of Mary Louise Adams, John McLean, Rick Stratton, Mariah Hamilton and Conrad de Barros. The working group and staff held monthly meetings and site visits to discuss the issues on the course and how improvements could be accomplished over time. Changes and improvements made with the support of the BPWG have been achieved through existing operational and capital budgets. The results of the meetings to date have been summarized below with the action taken or recommended.

A. Maintenance & Operations**1. Golf Industry Standards**

- a. During the 2016 season, detailed policies and procedures were developed for employees working at Belle Park:
 - employee training
 - golf membership sales, marketing and relationships
 - driving range operations
 - golf cart fleet maintenance
 - golf course, clubhouse and golf club operations and programming
 - golf course maintenance (a very wide-ranging topic)
 - golf course agronomy and forestry
 - golf industry relationships
 - long-range planning

2. Member Sign In

- a. Upgraded Facility Booking/Membership software to ACTIVE Net – CLASS providing better quality reporting. Aligning Belle Park with the entire recreation facilities portfolio in a bid to breed consistency within processes and procedures.

3. Member Rounds Played to Date (as compared to 2015)

Table 1.0: Rounds Played

Month	2016 Member	2016 Green Fee	2015 Member	2015 Green Fee	Difference (2016-2015)
May	1,097	367	806	348	310
June	1,127	390	863	338	316
July	1,023	479	965	453	84
August	954	356	902	379	29
September	973	320	781	311	201
October	283	108	365	243	-217
Sub Total	5,457	2,020	4,682	2,072	723
Total	7,477		6,754		

4. Membership Summary

- a. This represents the total number of memberships as some members have multiple packages (golf, range, locker, cart, etc.).
- b. It was noted by members of the BPWG that they had hoped to see membership numbers increase more significantly than they have over the last three years since the working group started.

Table 2.0: Membership Summary (2010-2016)

Year	Restricted				Full			SUB Total	Other			TOTAL
	Couple	Senior	Adult	Junior	Couple	Senior	Adult		Range	Locker	Cart	
2016	3	44	10	2	0	6	1	66	2	29	8	131
2015	2	29	9	5	0	2	1	48	4	29	12	129
2014	6	57	10	12	0	9	1	95	5	29	15	191
2013	13	74	10	4	0	9	6	116	6	31	16	229
2012	15	74	22	1	0	13	6	131	7	33	13	252
2011	0	90	18	5	0	17	8	138	7	35	17	266
2010	0	110	25	6	0	16	8	165	9	32	20	312

5. Revenue Summary

- a. A review of revenues for Belle Park is included in Table 3.0 below.
- b. The BPWG is tasked with addressing the impact on revenues based on a 10 year decline in membership.

Table 3.0: Revenue Summary

Revenue	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Locker rental	\$2,046	\$2,045	\$1,901	\$2,224	\$2,389
Club rentals	\$2,122	\$2,910	\$2,549	\$1,444	\$7,404
Cart rentals	\$12,758	\$11,491	\$12,985	\$16,874	\$10,637
Daily green fees	\$32,155	\$31,519	\$31,634	\$44,532	\$60,768
Driving range fees	\$26,727	\$26,654	\$24,587	\$32,989	\$37,689
Cafeteria revenue	\$969	\$1,092	\$3,889	\$6,908	\$8,922
Memberships	\$31,089	\$35,903	\$38,450	\$46,060	\$50,417
Merchandise sales	\$787	\$831	\$1,414	\$1,773	\$2,406
TOTAL	\$108,653	\$112,445	\$117,409	\$152,804	\$180,632

6. Rates and Fee Review Suggestions

- a. Ongoing comparison of other similar local golf courses to justify the rates applied at Belle Park will be completed as part of the annual Fee’s and Charge’s review.
- b. New lower cost youth/student membership created to attract youth/student population.
- c. New monthly promotional fees are included for 2017 Fees and Charges to greatly increase the inventory of what can be offered to golfers.
- d. The new fee structure will attempt to align Belle Park as more competitive in relation to what private golf courses offer when considering seasonal variances.

7. Operational Performance

- a. Belle Park has been operating with a yearly deficit that ranges between \$134,000 and \$236,000 which is funded through the property tax base. Weather does have an impact on the length of the season and on operations; therefore, it can be challenging to predict the exact revenues as well as financing required to fund the yearly deficit.
- b. Table 4.0 shows the operational deficits financed by property taxes for the last five (5) years of operations.

Table 4.0: Operational Deficit

2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
\$236,424	\$204,566	\$195,248	\$227,496	\$171,363

December 20, 2016

Page 7 of 11

8. Golf Course Actions

- a. Water Restrictions – the City’s Environment Division installed remote monitoring devices on the water wells that provide live real time data. This improvement meant that, in some instances and by using a strict procedure, staff would be allowed to water new areas to establish new seed.
- b. New greens mower acquired as the previous mower was nearing its end of life cycle. It was replaced with a modern unit which helps to address course conditions in a more efficient manner.
- c. Cross Cut Strategy - continuing the 2015 strategy, staff were able to use part time labour in a more strategic fashion as operations were able to add an additional cut to the fairways on a specific trajectory to capture more grass on the cut.

B. Programming**1. Survey – Summer 2016**

- a. In the summer of 2016, staff created and promoted a City wide survey to be completed by residents who currently use Belle Park in any capacity. The goal was to capture data from our current golfers, but also to reach a broader audience and capture those that use it solely as parkland. The survey received 290 completed responses. Of these, 67 respondents use it for golf (23%) and 167 use it as a park (57.5%).
- b. This suggests park respondents outnumber golfers by nearly a 3:1 ratio. Furthermore, 52 of the respondents indicate pickleball as their number 1 use, meaning they are almost as large a respondent group as the golfers, while 109 respondents said they use the park for walking (themselves and/or their dog), running and/or cycling.
- c. Based on this data, the BPWG recommends shifting towards servicing these users in a more proportional manner.

2. Survey – Fall 2016

- a. In consultation with the BPWG, staff circulated a survey directly to the golf members of Belle Park asking for specific information on the status of operations and their recent experience during the 2016 season.
 - The overall satisfaction rating was 7.4 out of 10
 - Positive comments: staff, location, flexibility in tee times and maintenance
 - Negative comments: course condition, most specifically fairways

December 20, 2016

Page 8 of 11

3. Clean Up

- a. Staff spent considerable efforts in cleaning up the course/yard before the start of the season. Staff also aided in removing several items from Belle Island that accrued over the winter.

4. Belle Park Fall Open House

- a. On October 15, 2016, staff hosted an open house at Belle Park. The public were invited to try the driving range or play a round of golf for free. Several dozen potential new members tried out the driving range and fifteen potential new members played a round of golf.

5. Pitch in Kingston Day

- a. Belle Park was added to the list of parks and facilities that actively participated in Pitch in Kingston Day in 2016.
- b. Staff worked with the organizers and Public Works staff to provide garbage bags and to remove the debris once collected.
- c. Belle Park will continue to be on the list of parks in the future.

C. Events and Potential Sponsorships**1. Monthly Scramble Tournaments**

- a. Staff organized monthly scramble tournaments for members and guests with an average of 27 participants. Additional events will be held during the 2017 golf season in an effort to promote Belle Park.

2. Youth Events

- a. Two events were organized this season which targeted youths aged 10-14 to try out our driving range. With some helpful tutelage from staff, these events saw more than 50 students participate and enjoy the grounds. An additional event was held in the fall which saw approximately 25 new students play 9 holes of golf.

D. Advertising and Marketing Opportunities**1. Rack Cards**

- a. Staff produced rack cards for distribution to City owned facilities including the INVISTA Centre, Artillery Park and the Tourism Information Centre.
- b. More focus will be given in 2017 to distribute through Kingston Accommodations Partners (KAP) and surrounding hotel providers.

December 20, 2016

Page 9 of 11

2. New Scorecard

- a. A new scorecard was developed in 2016 as work was completed to remove golf activity from Belle Island and as a result new 4th green and 5th tee decks were created.

3. Fit Pass Introduction

- a. Starting in 2016, the annual fit pass membership included 6 rounds of golf and 2 buckets of driving range balls in a bid to drive new users to Belle Park that are active within Recreation Facilities. Although not a significant uptake in 2016, staff will continue to promote this opportunity in 2017 to help expose our broader fitness clients to Belle Park.

- 23 scans for 9-holes
- 51 scans for a large bucket of balls

4. Golf Ontario

- a. The BPWG suggested that Golf Ontario be asked to attend the course after the new holes have been completed. A Handicapping & Course Rating Coordinator completed several site visits this season. The new information will be included into the materials for the 2017 season.
- b. Additional engagement is required to better understand the membership opportunities and how this could be applied at Belle Park.

5. Tourism Oriented Directional Signage (TODS Program)

- a. Installation of signage along the highway 401 corridor was investigated.
- b. Space is currently not available, but may open up in 2017 on the westbound lanes.
- c. Belle Park is on the waiting list for the eastbound lanes.

6. Belle Park Communication Plan

- a. Recreation & Leisure Services and Strategic Communications staff have been working together and implemented a communication plan for Belle Park in 2016. The plan includes social media strategies to increase awareness and to market Belle Park.

E. Capital Renovations/Upgrades

1. Remove golf activity from Belle Island in support of the City's Agreement with the First Nations.

December 20, 2016

Page 10 of 11

- a. Work was completed in the spring of 2016.
2. Tree Strategy
 - a. Working with the City's Environment Division, a tree planting strategy has started in 2016 which will be executed in the spring of 2017.
3. Naturalization of Manicured Areas
 - a. Areas of Belle Park have been identified for naturalization projects to reduce the amount of manicured fairways, rough and unused areas to decrease maintenance costs.
4. Short, Mid and Long Term Planning
 - a. Additional discussion regarding the short, mid and long term planning will continue to be addressed and recommendations will be presented for further consideration.

As a result of the monthly meetings, reviewing surveys completed by members of the public and recognizing ongoing revenue declines, it was discussed as to what possible next steps could be taken to improve Belle Park. BPWG members noted the efforts by staff and would have hoped that membership numbers and revenues would have increased over time. BPWG members indicated that efforts have been positive in most areas with the exception of revenue generation. During the City wide survey, it was clear that Belle Park is used by a wide range of the public and consideration should be given for a process to review the possible reduction or elimination of golf activity and increase alternate outdoor recreational and naturalization opportunities. It was suggested that staff coordinate a public consultation to receive feedback on these opportunities and report back to Council.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

Not applicable

Notice Provisions:

Not applicable

Accessibility Considerations:

Not applicable

Financial Considerations:

Changes and improvements made as part of the discussions with the BPWG have been achieved through existing operational and capital budgets.

Contacts:

Lanie Hurdle, Commissioner, Community Services 613-546-4291 extension 1231

Luke Follwell, Director, Recreation & Leisure Services 613-546-4291 extension 1815

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Adam McCluskey, Manager, Recreation Facilities, Recreation & Leisure Services

Exhibits Attached:

Not applicable