CITY OF CLEWISTON
GOLF COURSE ADVISORY MEETING MINUTES

AUGUST 21, 2025

Call Meeting to Order:
Mr. Miller Couse called the meeting to order at 11:06 a.m.

Present:
Miller Couse, Michael Vargas, Brannan Thomas, Gus Dominguez, Joe Whitehead, Parks and Recreation Director Ashly Sergent, Golf Course Director Robbie Rush, City Clerk Lakisha Burch and Deputy City Clerk Fransheska Berrios.

Absent: Toni Couse and Luke Kurtz.

1. **Committee swearing in and election for new Chair and Vice Chair.**

   City Clerk Burch administrated the Oath of office to new committee members and asked the members to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair. Following the swearing-in, a motion was made and passed to elect Miller Couse as the committee Chair and a subsequent motion was made and passed to elect Joe Whitehead as the Vice Chair.
   Motion passed unanimously.

2. **Approval of meeting minutes.**

   Chair Couse called for a motion to approve the previously distributed minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes without additions or corrections.
   Motion passed unanimously.

3. **Department Reports, Program Plans & Project Updates.**

   Golf Director Rush reported a significant positive performance for the fiscal year, mentioning that the rounds played are projected to be up by 2,638 for a total of 15,200, representing a 24% increase over the previous year. All revenue streams, including beer sales and range balls, were up and the required city

subsidy is projected to be approximately $242,000, roughly half of the budgeted $500,000.
Chair Couse asked Golf Director if the board will start receiving monthly reports comparing rounds played.

Golf Director Rush said yes that the Board will receive monthly reports comparing rounds played year-over-year now that the city is implementing a new Tyler system, which is expected to enhance data reporting and provide daily operational insights. The current golf course system will continue to be used and will be better integrated with the city's finance department system to ensure key metrics like rounds played are tracked and reported.

Parks and Recreation Director Sergent mentioned that this new system is a great and if they start receiving updates at the monthly meetings.

The Board had a brief discussion on installing a new sign to increase the golf course visibility.

Golf Director Rush mentioned that he recalls a very large previous sign on the north side of Highway 27 that effectively advertised the course. There was a proposal for a new sign which included a golf ball on a tee and - was estimated to cost around $25,000. At the time, this was considered expensive, but now he believes it is a reasonable price for a large, effective sign.

Parks and Recreation Director Sergent mentioned that there are plans for marketing and attracting younger players. In addition to physical signs, a new social media push is planned to increase awareness. The strategy will focus on engaging content like videos and reels to capture attention, moving beyond simple tournament announcements. An outreach initiative to local hotels has begun, with hotel owners agreeing to place promotional materials at their front desks. The goal is to establish the course as the best option in a large regional area, especially with the closure of the Lake Placid course.

Board Member Dominguez mentioned that social media is seen as a key tool for attracting younger players.

Golf Director Rush mentioned that the average age of a golfer has shifted significantly, now falling between 18 and 34, compared to the much older demographic of previous years there's a recent surge in youth participation, citing the high activity during the first girls' golf team match in August as evidence of a growing interest among kids which is great.

Golf Director Rush mentioned the upcoming tournaments and junior golf programs on schedule.

The Board had a discussion regarding new rate structures, including dynamic pricing and membership incentives, effective October 1st.

Golf Director Rush mentioned that the general rates will increase by approximately 10%, and membership will increase by 20% to help lower the city subsidy. It was noted that even with the increase, annual membership offers significant savings (estimated at $1,500/year) for frequent players.

Parks and Recreation Director Sergent said that the dynamic pricing will be introduced for non-members starting October 1st.

The Board debated how to simplify and present the new fee structure to the public. Chair Couse questioned the complexity of the fee breakdown, which separated the total cost into a green fee, a capital fee, a cart fee, and tax.

Chair Couse argued that for public-facing communication, the fee should be simplified. For example, customers should be told a single price for "green fee with cart" and a single price for "green fee if walking."

Board Member Vargas mentioned that he is new to golf and noted that terms like "green fee" are not universally understood, reinforcing the need for clear, simple pricing communication.

The Board clarified the non-member green fee and how it is broken down for internal accounting versus customer communication and discussed a strategy for converting frequent non-member players into member.

Chair Couse identified a significant inconsistency in the proposed non-member fee structure and questioned the source of the $40.69 green fee, tracing it to a document where it was derived by summing three numbers ($30.00, $5.31, and $5.38).

The Board discussed upcoming needs for the golf course, including staffing, equipment and reviewed the status and financial details of acquiring three new mowers. The mowers will be leased rather than purchased. Leasing was deemed more affordable and practical given the current staffing. The lease includes maintenance, with the lessor providing a replacement or fixing the machine if it breaks. The golf course staff is only responsible for changing oil and filters.

Chair Couse advised that equipment purchase decisions should be driven by the approved budget.

Golf Director Rush provided an update on recent course maintenance activities and proposed eliminating single-rider golf carts to reduce wear and tear on the aging fleet.

The Board had a discussion that confirmed funds are available for the immediate purchase of a necessary slope mower, by passing a previous leasing plan. It was determined that no formal board motion is required to purchase the slope mower as sufficient funds exist within the current budget.

Chair Couse confirmed that approximately $40,000 remains unspent in the capital improvement budget for the current fiscal year.

The Board mentioned concerns about overgrown grass at the course entrance, and responsibility for its maintenance was clarified.

Golf Director Rush had already contacted Mike Pittman about the issue and also discussed it with Danny, who confirmed that the course staff would handle it if Mike could not.

The Board commended Golf Director Rush and his team for significant improvements to the golf course.

Chair Couse and the Golf Director Rush acknowledged that Mark, who "knows how to grow grass," also plays a crucial role in the course's condition.

Golf Director Rush confirmed that Mark is included in the new budget with a slight pay increase.

4. **Board member comments:** None

5. **Next Meeting**: October 16, 2025, Regular meeting at 11:00am at City Hall

ADJOURNMENT: Chair Couse adjourned the meeting at 12:14 p.m.

Fransheska Berrios

Fransheska Berrios, City Clerk

Miller Couse

Miller Couse, Chair