A Message From The Golf Course Renovation Team

A 2014 Member Survey identified various aspects of our golf course which were of high importance to the membership yet were also in need of improvement. Based on that need for improvement, the Worthington Master Board approved in the Fall of 2014, the formation of a Golf Course Renovation Team. The charge of the team was to study the golf course and make recommendations, if necessary, for the future of Worthington and development of a golf course Master Plan. The focus of the Master Plan was to be twofold: address those areas in need of improvement now and address the future use of the golf course and its infrastructure. For the past 18 months, the Renovation Team has: toured the golf course several times to ensure all areas of concerns have been addressed; conducted an analysis of the irrigation and pump system; had soil samples analyzed from greens and fairways; and consulted with a USGA Agronomist to assess the overall condition of the course.

Based on our findings we found the following:

In Southern Florida, unlike our northern counterparts, the environment here is extremely harsh on golf course turf and other conditions.

Bermuda greens typically last from 15-25 years. We had core samples taken from 4 greens and analyzed by a turf research center. The greens at Worthington were rebuilt in 2002 over a sand base. Generally, a base of gravel is used to promote good drainage. Although not built with a gravel base, the core samples indicated fair to good infiltration in the lower portion of the greens. The top 4 inches of the greens had developed a fair accumulation of organic matter and thatch, not uncommon or unexpected in aging greens. The water to air ratio in this tier of the greens was very high, effecting the health and sustainability of the root zone. As the greens continue to age it becomes harder to maintain the root structure and the greens invariably must be rebuilt. (The most recent report from the USGA shows the organic matter accumulation at 7 inches). We are at the tipping point.

Organic matter buildup also occurs in the tees, fairways, collars and rough. Many areas of the fairways and rough where the original turf was a select Bermuda strain known as 419, have been encroached upon and invaded by a more aggressive general Bermuda grass. We have sparse areas throughout the course where this has had an effect. We also have several fairways where the sub soil must be replaced.

The course drainage has been affected in many areas of the fairways and rough.

The conditions of our teeing grounds are very poor, mostly from lack of teeing space and wear and tear from the amount of golf rounds played. Experts we spoke to, all recommended enlarging the teeing grounds to accommodate our current and expected level of play.

The bunkers have long been in disrepair. Photos taken in 2002 after the last bunker restoration compared to photos taken of the bunkers today are dramatic. The bunker faces have broken down and eroded and drainage is poor.

The practice area is in dire need of expansion and upgrade.
Finally, the irrigation system is over 25 years old. Although still operating adequately, it is a hydraulically operated system that is becoming harder to maintain as parts break or wear out. (Please see “Current Worthington Irrigation System”).

The condition of our golf course, our most valuable asset, has a significant impact on our property values. Therefore, based on information gathered and evidence we’d seen, the renovation team came to the conclusion a Master Plan be developed to encompass a golf course renovation including irrigation, drainage, enlarging tees, rebuilding bunkers, rebuilding greens and turf replacement throughout.

We heard extensive presentations and interviewed three prominent golf course architects. To that end we recommended Ron Garl, Golf Course Design to develop a Master Plan for the future of Worthington Country Club.

To gather the membership’s concerns and wishes, focus groups were conducted in the Spring of 2015. Additionally, members were encouraged to provide comments and suggestions to the Renovation Team when preliminary plans were drawn. The Master Plan represents the culmination of all the analysis conducted, the inclusion of member input where appropriate and feasible, and numerous consultations with our architect.

The various improvements to the golf course will not only preserve its competitiveness, but also allow for a more playable course by all members.

The improvements include:

Replacing the 25 year old antiquated hydraulic irrigation system with a state of the art electronic system which, will save on operation and maintenance expenses while providing more efficient watering of the course.

The greens will be rebuilt with a gravel base per USGA Standards which, allows for better drainage and a healthier more sustainable root zone.

Tees would be enlarged and where possible provided better ventilation and sunlight to promote better turf growing conditions.

Tees, fairways and collars would be re-grassed with Celebration Bermuda.

Fairways and roughs will be improved through better drainage, re-contouring and re-shaping.

Bunkers will be completely rebuilt including drainage.

The practice area will be re-designed and enlarged.

Cart paths will be resurfaced and replaced in several areas to improve playability.
A member’s informational meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 1st at St Leos Church. The architect will be there to share his expertise on the project. Pending membership approval, the renovation of the golf course would begin April 2017, continue through the summer, with a potential October/November re-opening.