



February 14, 2020

Via e-mail: [thomas.barwin@sarasotafl.gov](mailto:thomas.barwin@sarasotafl.gov)

Mr. Tom Barwin  
Sarasota City Manager  
1565 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Sarasota, Florida 34236

Dear Tom:

In follow up to your request and after having become very familiar with the Bobby Jones Golf Club ("BJGC") in Sarasota, I am happy to provide and reiterate some of our thoughts on the direction we feel will ensure the future operational success of the golf club for the city.

The City of Sarasota has a great opportunity to revitalize a community asset with its Donald Ross 18-hole layout within the current 45-hole, 283 acre BJGC property. However, given the current national "flat" trend of new golfers entering the game, coupled with the fact that the annual rounds of golf being played at the BJGC is down to a current estimated 60,000, in itself is not adequate to justify maintaining a 45-hole operation. It is our opinion that the city should consider renovating the Donald Ross 18-hole course and couple it with a more family friendly, less intimidating and less time consuming enhancement. What we are seeing today is more courses having to rethink the old way of doing business to continually attract new players and retain loyal players. It is imperative to attract beginners and non-golfers alike and having a less intimidating option for beginners is a way to introduce and help them learn the game. In our opinion a state of the art lighted practice facility and short game improvement area along with a putting course (natural or artificial) is a way to achieve this, along with a par-3 course of 9 holes. The approximate space required to accomplish this concept would be in the range of 145-165 acres, leaving approximately 120 acres which could be dedicated to a community park / conservation. Dedicating the remaining land to a park setting allows the city to offer other outdoor activities for non-golfers in the community to enjoy, such as fitness and biking trails, disc golf, outdoor picnic areas, and wildlife viewing stations to serve the local community and not just golfers. It is important to make the local community feel welcome.

Page 2  
February 14, 2020  
Mr. Tom Barwin

A great example of a successful "municipal" golf course is the 18-hole North Palm Beach Country Club, located in North Palm Beach. Over the past five years they have averaged approximately 43,000 rounds of golf, and during the peak season (January-April) they are charging \$125 per round and in off-peak season (May-September), a low of \$55 per round. They are unique in that they command a premium given the course is a "Jack Nicklaus Signature" course, and the BJGC may want to consider having a renowned designer involved in the club's eventual plans, not only to charge a premium to optimize revenues, but to provide a boost for the marketing and promotion of the golf course. North Palm Beach has also aligned itself with some of the local hotels allowing for their guests to have preferred access at a per-round rate in excess of \$200, which also has contributed to their success.

We believe there is no need to have 27 holes for the purpose of rotating or closing 9 holes for maintenance each year. A well designed and maintained golf course with ample tee space and green surface area, particularly in Florida, will not have any problem recovering from high cart and foot traffic. There may be more visible wear during the peak season (winter) with the primary recovery occurring during the off season (summer).

Our conclusion is that this facility must offer a place for young adults and families to enjoy golf in less time and structure than the normal four to five hour 18-hole round. The clubhouse, dining facility and other amenities need to be designed to work for the entire 283 acres. Therefore we believe the golf courses, clubhouse, practice facilities and new park with all amenities need to be designed and planned together to ensure success for the City of Sarasota.

The above outline is just an opinion based on our experience, and should you wish to discuss any of the above ideas further please just let me know.

Sincerely,  
NICKLAUS COMPANIES, LLC



John R. Reese  
Chief Executive Officer