



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

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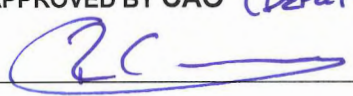
**To:** Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee      **Date:** September 1, 2017  
**From:** Serena Lusk  
Interim Director, Parks and Recreation Department      **File:** 11-7200-01/2017-Vol  
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**Re:** West Richmond Pitch and Putt Golf Course

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### Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "West Richmond Pitch and Putt Golf Course," dated September 1, 2017, from the Interim Director, Parks and Recreation, be received for information.

Serena Lusk  
Interim Director, Parks and Recreation Department  
604-233-3344

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER  	
REVIEWED BY STAFF REPORT / AGENDA REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE	INITIALS: 
APPROVED BY CAO (DEPUTY) 	

## Staff Report

### Origin

The West Richmond Pitch and Putt Golf Course (the Pitch and Putt) has been in operation for 45 years and is nearing the end of its life cycle. The operational costs related to the Pitch and Putt's failing infrastructure are increasing rapidly, affecting the function of the Pitch and Putt as the course is playable for fewer days each season. The City has received numerous public requests for improvement and complaints about the condition of the course.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Pitch and Putt's conditions and provide options for addressing the issues that have been identified.

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #2 A Vibrant, Active and Connected City:

*Continue the development and implementation of an excellent and accessible system of programs, services, and public spaces that reflect Richmond's demographics, rich heritage, diverse needs, and unique opportunities, and that facilitate active, caring, and connected communities.*

2.3. *Outstanding places, programs and services that support active living, wellness and a sense of belonging.*

This report supports Council's 2014-2018 Term Goal #6 Quality Infrastructure Networks:

*Continue diligence towards the development of infrastructure networks that are safe, sustainable, and address the challenges associated with aging systems, population growth, and environmental impact.*

6.1. *Safe and sustainable infrastructure.*

6.2. *Infrastructure is reflective of and keeping pace with community need.*

### Background

The Pitch and Putt is located in the south east corner of the Hugh Boyd Community Park at 9751 Pendleton Road. It takes up 11.3 acres of the total 42.3 acres of Hugh Boyd Community Park. Hugh Boyd Community Park was built in the 1960s and the Pitch and Putt was later built in the 1970s. Since the construction of the Pitch and Putt, the facility has been maintained to an adequate service level for a typical pitch and putt course, with few major or minor capital improvements over its life span. The facility has served the community well over the last 45 years, although some of the infrastructure is at the end of its life cycle.

## General Condition of Infrastructure

### 1. Drainage

The existing drainage system was built according to the standards of the time using products and construction methods that are inferior to current standards. Parks staff have been maintaining the drainage system although, due to the condition of the pipes, flooding of the entire site in winter is common. Complete replacement of the drainage system would be required in order to make the Pitch and Putt more operable and to improve the conditions at the site.

### 2. Irrigation

The irrigation system covering the entire Pitch and Putt site is an obsolete hydraulic system that is failing. Some irrigation stations have been eliminated and so, during drought periods, hand watering some of the greens is necessary. Irrigation system replacement will be necessary.

### 3. Golf Greens

The greens are generally in good condition during the playing season but present a maintenance challenge due to lack of drainage, poor irrigation coverage and the clay subsoil profile they are built over. Extra attention is required to keep the greens in acceptable condition, including more than usual fungicide applications.

### 4. Fairways and Roughs

Both fairways and roughs are in good condition other than irrigation and drainage concerns.

### 5. Trees

The trees were planted 45 years ago when the course was built. Many trees are now past their prime and have been failing. Parks Urban Forestry staff have been removing trees over the years, as necessary, to ensure safety and playability of the site. Few replacement trees have been planted over the years as the existing trees were planted too densely, and in most cases replanting is not recommended. More tree work will be necessary in the future in order to maintain safe and sustainable tree groups that divide the fairways.

### 6. Club House and Caretakers/Washroom Building

Although showing its age, the club house functions well as the entrance to the facility, in addition to housing the operations shop and partial storage. A 20-foot steel cargo container has been placed on site to provide additional storage for the required equipment and materials. The washroom, which is part of the caretaker building, is not wheelchair accessible.

## Analysis

### Usage and Trends

While golf is considered to have high participation rates, since 2010 the actual number of rounds played per year has decreased. Trends indicate that people are engaging in other activities rather than investing the time and money required to successfully play golf, along with a younger generation who is not taking up the sport compared to previous generations. It may also be partly attributed to a possible overabundance of the number of courses nationally and locally.

The Pitch and Putt has seen the number of rounds played per year drop over the past three years. Below is a table showing the total number of rounds played:

Year	2016	2015	2014
Rounds Played	10,166	11,802	13,086
Season Pass and Punch Card Rounds Played	2,037	2,250	2,504
Total	12,203	14,052	15,550

This reduced number of rounds may be attributable to the overall trends in golf, or it may be a result of players choosing other golf facilities. There are 17 golf courses within approximately 20 km of the Pitch and Putt, with two of these courses being par 3 municipal pitch and putt courses. Of the other 14 courses, five are regular length private clubs and four are public executive length courses.

### Green Fees Comparison for 18 Holes of Pitch and Putt Golf in the Lower Mainland

The green fees charged at the Pitch and Putt are comparable to, or lower than, those charged elsewhere. Green fees have not been increased in the last five years in an attempt to make the fees more attractive to participants compared to other courses and activities.

Location	Age	Weekday	Weekend	Twilight
<b>City of Richmond</b>				
	Youth	\$8.15	\$9.60	No discount
	Adult	\$9.60	\$9.60	No discount
	Senior	\$8.15	\$9.60	No discount
<b>Vancouver Parks Board</b>				
	Youth	\$8.86	\$10.76	\$6.52*
	Adult	\$12.24	\$12.24	\$9.29*
	Senior	\$8.86	\$10.76	\$6.52*
<b>City of Burnaby</b>				
	Youth	\$6.25	\$9.75	\$5.25**
	Adult	\$9.75	\$9.75	\$6.50**
	Senior	\$7.25	\$9.75	\$5.50**

Location	Age	Weekday	Weekend	Twilight
City of West Vancouver				
	Youth	\$8.50	\$12.50	No discount
	Adult	\$12.50	\$12.50	No discount
	Senior	\$10.50	\$12.50	No discount

\*Vancouver Parks Board twilight is one hour before closing.

\*\*Burnaby twilight is two hours prior to sunset.

The Vancouver Parks Board, the City of West Vancouver and the City of Burnaby have different rates than the City of Richmond for youth, adults and seniors. The Vancouver Parks Board and the City of West Vancouver have, on average, higher rates than the City of Richmond and the City of Burnaby. Richmond has chosen not to offer a "twilight" rate as the busiest or prime time for the course is the early evening when people are home from work.

### Program Revenue and Expenses

The revenue and expenses shown below show a reduction in the revenue over the last three years. The expenses are for auxiliary staffing and club house costs only, and do not include the Pitch and Putt maintenance costs. Revenue and expenses are at least partly influenced by weather conditions. Weather conditions sometimes result in early closures of the course, which means lower staffing hours and fewer people visiting the course.

Year	Revenue	Expenses*	Net Revenue
2016	\$57,479	\$51,359	\$6,120
2015	\$67,050	\$49,751	\$17,299
2014	\$71,524	\$64,113	\$7,411

\*Above expenses are related to auxiliary staffing and other club house costs only.

### Operations Maintenance Budget

Maintenance costs over the past three years have varied, as in any park, depending on activities required that year. In 2016, there was more urban forestry work required than normal, as well as some fairway maintenance and other asset improvements. As infrastructure ages over the next five years, these costs will likely continue to increase while the quality of the facility will likely decline.

Year	Total
2016	\$99,425.00
2015	\$61,172.00
2014	\$64,944.00

### Marketing and Programs

To encourage beginners to try the sport, the Pitch and Putt works with the West Richmond Community Centre to offer introductory golf lessons through the Parks, Recreation and Culture Guide during the golf season. Other community groups, companies and secondary schools are offered groups rates to encourage their use of the Pitch and Putt course. The number of school programs is impacted by the course opening schedule as they do not offer golf programs as part of their curriculum in the late spring and early fall.

The following marketing initiatives have been undertaken by staff to create greater awareness of the course and increase participation:

- Two for one passes promoted in local papers;
- Community discount coupons;
- Updating course exterior signage; and
- Advertising in various seasonal City of Richmond recreation promotions.

### West Richmond Pitch and Putt Options

Since the Pitch and Putt infrastructure is failing, a decision regarding its future must be contemplated. The following are options for future actions:

#### *Option 1 Minimize Investment in Infrastructure Replacement – Recommended*

Since the trends in golf indicate a shift away from the sport, and the number of rounds and revenues at the Pitch and Putt are in decline, it is recommended the City carry out minor repairs only to continue operations of the Pitch and Putt. The future of the course or any alternatives to it could be considered through a planning process commencing in 2019. Maintenance costs and revenues will continue to be affected, but the course could continue to be in operation for approximately five more years. A capital request of \$60,000 to fund a planning process would be submitted for the 2019 capital program.

This option is recommended as it will allow the operation of the Pitch and Putt to continue while a planning process is completed to determine the best long term use.

#### *Option 2 Rebuild for Long Term Use – Not Recommended*

A complete renewal of the Pitch and Putt would cost approximately \$2,650,000. The cost of the reconstruction of the course itself is estimated at \$750,000 (not including the buildings).

Item	Cost
Drainage replacement	\$255,500
Irrigation system replacement	\$73,000
Rebuilding greens	\$250,000
Rebuilding fairways	\$50,000
Tree work	\$121,000
Total	\$749,500

The cost to demolish and reconstruct the Club House and Caretaker's Suite/Washroom buildings is estimated at \$1,900,000.

This investment would mean the City is committed to providing a pitch and putt course for the long term. With renewed drainage and irrigation systems, the course may be open for longer periods each year which could potentially result in an increase in rounds of golf and revenues, as well as expenses. It may also mean maintenance costs would not increase as quickly, but they would unlikely be reduced if the length of the season was increased.

This option is not recommended as trends indicate the demand for the Pitch and Putt is decreasing at the same time as urban growth and changing demographics are presenting new challenges when addressing park services' needs.

*Option 3 Close the Pitch and Putt and Remove the Golf Related Surface Features – Not Recommended*

This option would allow the City to avoid the high maintenance costs of continuing to operate the Pitch and Putt. A modest level of effort would be required to remove the surface features that serve golf and the portions of fencing that separates it from the rest of the park and to open the area for public use. Some additional trail sections, benches and picnic tables could also be added to make a functioning park area in the interim. It is estimated the cost to carry out this work would be \$185,000. The majority of that cost is for trail construction and so could vary considerably. Planning for future uses could be initiated at a later date.

This option is not recommended as it would result in a shift of use (informal open space) without the benefit of a strategic plan for use of that large area.

**Next Steps**

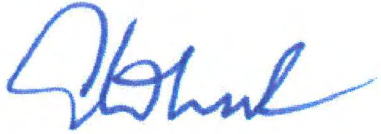
If the recommended option is approved, staff will prepare a capital request of \$60,000 to fund a planning process to be submitted with the 2019 capital program for Council's consideration. That funding would be used to undertake a detailed study of the options and/or potential alternatives for the West Richmond Pitch and Putt Golf Course while continuing normal maintenance and operations.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Conclusion**

As the infrastructure components of the Pitch and Putt continue to deteriorate, the operating maintenance costs will increase while the quality of the facility will decrease. As described in the recommended *Option 1 Minimize Investment in Infrastructure Replacement*, some minor maintenance could be completed that would allow the operation of the Pitch and Putt to continue while a planning process is completed to determine the best use for the long term.



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