

COMMUNICATION

For Information Only

DATE: February 22, 2010
TO: Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners
FROM: Recreation and Park Golf Advisory Committee
SUBJECT: Privatization of Recreation and Park Golf System

Submitted on Behalf of the Golf Advisory Committee by _____
Ted Winship, Chairman

The privatization of the operations and maintenance of the Department's 14 golf facilities represents a sea change in the way the City of Los Angeles manages its municipal golf program – a sea change of epic proportions that would affect the system for generations to come, perhaps irretrievably so.

The Golf Advisory Committee recognizes that it has been raised against the backdrop of an acute fiscal emergency, and does not seek to in any way downplay that fact or the need to address it with bold measures.

However, we would ask you to not confuse boldness with foolishness.

Contracting out a large municipal golf system is a complicated and time consuming task requiring a certain specific expertise – an expertise born of at least a modicum of experience in the matter. The City of Los Angeles simply does not possess such expertise or experience. Indeed, this is the city that cannot seem to contract out anything in its golf program with any measure of success – not golf carts, driving ranges, golf shops, or restaurants. And these are the easy things. Contracting out the complete operations and maintenance of multiple golf courses is anything but easy, even under the most relaxed of circumstances. Against the backdrop of the rush created by the present crisis, it is a Herculean task.

There are myriad contract models for modern municipal golf management. Picking the one most appropriate to the city under current circumstances, the most salient of which is the palpable fact that the current moment could not be worse for listing properties or fetching offers from the private sector, will require considerably more than the expertise at the fingertips of the CAO's Office or the Department of Recreation and Parks – if the city expects a result anywhere close to serving its interest and the public interest, as opposed to serving only the interests of the interested parties no doubt preparing to feast on the city's inexperience in these matters.

In addition, at some point this discussion needs to be taken from behind closed doors and brought into the light of public processes. It is not unreasonable for the public generally to expect some engagement in the decisions affecting the long-term fate of public assets, and it is not unreasonable for the city's golf community specifically to expect to have some input in the processes determining the long-term fate of the Department's great golf system.

We do not brief for delay – just a reasonable measure of intelligence, knowledge, inclusion and wisdom.