

To: Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee
From: John K. Bracken
Subject: River Road – proposed closure
Date: February 11, 2021

Dear Members of Council;

Thank you for giving City golf members an opportunity to express some of our concerns about the future of River Road.

As a director of the London Seniors Tour here in London with about 60 members playing out of the City golf courses I can confirm that they would definitely support keeping River Road open. I am confident that most of them would also agree with the emails sent by other City golf members here.

As members of Council I am sure you are all too familiar with the excellent points made by City golfing members regarding: 1) tee time problems this year due to COVID-19; 2) projected growth estimates in the eastern part of the City; 3) the huge increase in new players taking up the game in 2020 etc etc. I do not intend to belabour the many points already raised here. Suffice it to say that many new young members who took up the game this year because of COVID will make every effort to come back to the game of golf, if at all possible.

Instead, I want to focus primarily on the financial aspects of the situation. It seems that the principal reason for KPMG and City staff recommending the closure of the course is that it would never be able to generate sufficient net revenues for the reserve fund.

You will note from the Financial results for the year ended in 2020 that Thames Valley had a surplus of \$60,331, while Fanshawe had a surplus of \$149,049. River Road shows a surprisingly large deficit of \$315,345 for the year. Of course this deficit was incurred because it was closed for the entire 2020 season. It had NO revenue whatsoever and yet still had large carrying expenses such as wages, supplies and equipment operations etc. (see Table on p.13).

If River Road had been open in 2020 like the other two City courses then the worst it would have done, given the recent upswing in the popularity of golf, is break even. If that had happened then the City would have saved \$315,000 in expenses. Then the \$210,000 total profits from both Thames Valley and Fanshawe could have been deposited in the reserve fund. That would have been a far superior result than what actually happened.

It is worth mentioning that there are many current City members who would be glad to pay a bit more for their annual dues if they could be assured that the course would remain open.

Finally, with the reality of COVID, there is bound to be less international and domestic travel before things get back to normal. Consequently, people will stay at home and look for things to do. Golf is by far the healthiest outdoor sport activity available, particularly for seniors who are the most compromised demographic.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

John Bracken
London, ON