

***Delegation to Committee of the Whole, Monday March 4, 2024
In Support of Agenda item 11.1 Recommendations for the Evolution of Tyandaga
Golf Course, Report Number: RCC-04-24***

My name is Deedee Davies. I am here today as I have an interest in seeing our Tyandaga Golf Course remain viable for the future. I am a member of one of the women's leagues that plays the course weekly all season. In winter, I cross-country ski the course and bring my grandkids tobogganing when there is snow. Although we only play 9 holes, we alternate the 9 played each week. To play the same 9 each week would be too boring.

Tyandaga is truly one of Burlington's jewels. We cannot rely on the intent of our current City Councillors and the Mayor to promise it will stay a golf course, for when they are gone, so is their promise. Rather it needs to be made indispensable as a critical city asset.

I read the Staff Report RCC-04-24 on today's agenda that recommends Tyandaga remain an 18 hole golf course with capital upgrades. I support this notion as well. I am here today to explain where and why I diverge from some of their conclusions. In my remarks I will address Safety and Risk, and Customer Experience.

Throughout the report there was much emphasis on safety and reducing risk to the city. At the bottom of page 230 it states staff discussed, (quote)"What is an acceptable level of risk for the city to take on given inherent risk to the game of golf? It is evident that as an operator, it is the City's responsibility to mitigate as many of the risks possible." (end of quote) Note it said as many risks as possible, not reasonable. These statements suggests to me that staff want to bring the level of risk to zero if possible. What is the cost of doing this, is my question?

The chart depicting the Consultant's primary concerns as it pertains to risk and safety on pages 239 and 240 mentions future and mitigated risks. In the following paragraph, staff discuss the need for reducing potential risk on holes 4 and 5. The chart stated netting was installed for hole 4 and there have been no complaints. What further risks need to be mitigated on 4? For hole 5 it stated there was one ball that entered the properties every 4 to 5 years. Given that in the chart of Comparative courses on page 243, there were over 34,000 rounds of golf played at Tyandaga in 2023. That means one ball in 136,000 caused a reported concern by a homeowner backing onto hole 5 over the last 4 years. Maybe I have a high risk tolerance, but it does not seem like a cause for concern to me. Rather, my concern is that by being overly cautious and attempting to eliminate all risk, the City sets itself up for litigation over minor issues, rather than egregious issues. Homeowners living along a golf course must expect to receive the occasional ball in their yard. If you lead them to believe it can never happen, you are asking for trouble when it does. And it will, regardless of how you bubble-wrap the course.

How the risks were reduced at Holes 14 and 18 by turning them into Par 3s, causes me and many other regular golfers greatly reduced player enjoyment. These were some of my favourite holes and now, even 9 years later, it still irks me every time I trudge my way past where we used to tee off on 14 to where the current red tee box is, which happens to

be within throwing distance of the green. Using Google Earth to estimate distance, it may be around 400 metres from the green on 13 to the red tee on 14. The equivalent of an entire hole! Likewise for the more recently converted Hole 18. It was already an extremely long walk from 17 to 18, and now with 2 thirds of the 18th hole removed from play, it is closer to 3/4 of a kilometre walk. For both these holes I think a different solution could have been found to mitigate risk to something reasonable, not zero, and protect the viability of these holes. It is not too late, so I encourage staff to take another look at what could be done. This would go a long way to bump up Tyandaga's ratings on GolfNow and increase player satisfaction in general.

Golf courses all over various vacation islands and Florida at which I have played are surrounded by homes without safety fencing and co-exist peacefully. My family member lives in Naples Florida, in a gated community on a golf course. They regularly find about four balls a year against their home. They presume this is on the low side as with no fences, golfers may collect their balls off the private properties. Finding stray golf balls on their property is expected living on a golf course. Their course is designed with tee boxes angled to reduce the number of stray balls, but not eliminate them. And this is in the litigious USA! Are we being overly cautious?

Netting as a means to protect homes is often mentioned in the report. I want to reiterate, as I noted in previous correspondence to you, that fencing rather than netting should be used. Fencing similar to the baseball diamond fencing around home plate. Tall and sturdy, where it remains for decades. There is no spring and fall maintenance required to put it up and take it down. While homeowners may not like the fencing to remain in the winter, when they start paying for the costs of dealing with netting, then perhaps they could have a say. The golf course was pre-existing to the homes. **No risk** to homeowners is over compensation, as they receive the benefit of a tranquil park-like setting outside their yards, year-round, traded off by a small potential for minor inconvenience.

Moving on from safety and risk as I have already started talking about Customer Experience, I want to raise the matter of benches. These were removed during the Pandemic and have not been replaced. For anyone walking the course, benches are an essential part of having a good experience, as sometimes one just needs to rest for a moment while awaiting one's turn to tee off.

And finally, I want to talk about cart paths or the appalling state of what passes as cart paths at our Tyandaga Golf Course.

I totally agree with the report that cart paths need to be improved. I'm not sure how many of you have used the existing cart path system. It is mostly hard dirt with embedded gravel, crisscrossed with huge potholes, deep ruts, and large tree roots. It is almost impossible to pull a cart with a golf bag on the path, so the grass is used instead where possible. It is bone jarring for power carts. A proper and complete cart path system would also negate cancellation of play after a heavy rain for the many people who can only play the course by power cart because of its undulating and challenging terrain. Think of all those green fees lost from last minute cancellations due power carts not being

permitted on the grass after a heavy overnight rain for safety reasons. When it is last minute, these green fees lost cannot be made up by new bookings. With Climate Change these heavy rains after periods of drought are becoming more common.

One of your stated goals is to make better use of the acreage aside from golf. A proper path system would go a long way to encourage walking and cycling throughout the greenspace. To let users know it is permitted, safety signage posts could also be used for wayfinding signage, as it is not always easy to figure out which way one should turn to get to the next hole. A Trailhead sign in the parking lot would also create more confidence for hikers and walkers if they could see the route options and distances, before entering the park – just like at most hiking trailheads and cross-country ski parks.

In summary, I support the conclusion of the staff report to retain an 18 hole golf course and to invest capital to update aspects of the course. I hope I have been successful in convincing you that a reasonable amount of risk, rather than zero, is a better approach to keeping Tyandaga Golf Course financially successful and thriving for generations to come.