

Robin Schifflet
Development Project Manager III
City of San Diego Planning Department
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San Diego, California 92101

Re: De Anza Revitalization Plan

Dear Robin:

This is addressed to the City of San Diego Ad Hoc Committee handling the De Anza Cove Revitalization Plan project (DARP). I am Chair of the City's Municipal Golf Committee (MGC), a body appointed by the Mayor and Council to advise the City's Park and Recreation Department with respect to the activities of its Golf Division. Included within the operations of the Golf Division is the Mission Bay Golf Course (MBGC), an executive 18 hole course which has been included in the scope of the DARP.

Since becoming aware that MBGC was affected by the DARP, several of our members have attended the workshops and meetings and attempted to communicate what we consider to be a great opportunity to blend the recreational, environmental and revenue generating features of a golf course with the values and objectives of the Mission Bay Park Master Plan. However, we are concerned that our message has not been adequately focused to the Ad Hoc Committee and would like to take this opportunity to summarize our message to the Committee.

There is a view held by some that golf courses are elitist and abusive of the environment. Along with each of the other courses operated by the City's Golf Division, MBGC is neither of these. First, MBGC is a people's course of only about 46 acres in size. Its customers are families, kids, entry level golfers, and golfers on budgets of either finances or time. It takes only about two hours to play the entire course at a resident price of \$10.50 per month for juniors, \$24 for adults, \$17 for seniors, and \$29 for non-residents. An estimated 28 percent of the players are under 18 or over 65 and there are countless members of local men's and women's golf clubs that utilize this facility. Many players learned to play here and have done so for decades. Over the past 4 years Mission Bay has seen incremental increases in the rounds played. This past fiscal year, it was estimated over 100,000 customers used the facility.

One of the challenges of this course has been the resources to make it even more attractive to new players. In 2001, the clubhouse was condemned because of asbestos regulations and, as a result, the public areas of the course have been very limited and unmemorable. A food cart is about it. Accordingly, it currently does not enjoy the reputation which it once did as a popular meeting place and location for socializing and events such as weddings. One of the best aspects of the DARP, from our perspective, is the potential that the course and its pro shop could be associated with a new dining

and meeting venue which is being discussed for De Anza, possibly on the Rose Creek Channel which could adjoin the west perimeter of the course. MBGC could be a valuable feeder to the new dining and meeting location and, in return, such a facility would bring back to MBGC the users who enjoy the social as well as golfing aspects of the sport.

We have surveyed the character of MBGC as a compatible use to those who would seek to convert the entire area to uses for nature lovers only. In fact, MBGC is, in the words of the president of the San Diego Ornithology Society, a paradise for birds. It has several fresh water ponds, falls and creeks and is home to many plants which, while right now they look scruffy, are perfect for nesting birds. Plants and birds are natural companions at a golf course and MBGC already has a lot of habitat for both.

Beyond that, we think that the financial resources which necessarily will have to go into reconfiguring De Anza could also be well applied to making MBGC even more environmentally ideal. More trees, some osprey or other bird boxes, perhaps more marshlands and water features using some of the canal systems contemplated in the DARP workshop discussions, could make MBGC a signature golf course for environmental sensitivity and usability by people and animals alike.

In this regard, we have made connections with Audubon International, Inc., a non-profit which works with golf courses to maximize their opportunities for being the best that they can be environmentally. Audubon is very anxious to work with us to advise on best methods for improving MBGC and we are urging the City to take steps to avail itself of this opportunity, in both the short and long term. In our opinion, if the City of San Diego could advertise that its public courses are all Audubon-certified Sanctuary Golf Courses, there would be golfers and other visitors who would actually seek out MBGC and the other City courses as being examples of responsible environmental management of municipal golfing resources.

There may be organizations other than Audubon for this effort but the point is that we have reached out to bring such resources to bear on MBGC and participation with the DARP program in this regard would be instrumental in moving MBGC (and hopefully the other public golf courses in the region) even further along the spectrum of outstanding environmental golf management. We believe that this is a wonderful opportunity to not only serve the golfing community but also send a message to golfers and non-golfers about what good golf management should and can be.

We also think that, in collaboration with the planners of De Anza, the golf course could partner with uses other than just golf. For example, it has been suggested by the ornithologist that opening the course up to birdwatchers in the early mornings, and installing pathways along the perimeter creek of the course would permit uses other than just golfing. The course could open to golfers a little later each day, or only on weekdays, but pathways for birders and walkers could co-exist with golf in hours set aside for them.

It has been suggested at the workshops that the course could be scaled back to a 9 hole course or 18 short holes rather than what it is today, a course where a player can actually use every club in his or her bag. While most of the holes are short, there are several good, long ones for variety. If MBGC were cut back in either of these manners, it might as well be completely eliminated. Very few people would come to play 18 three par holes nor would most take the trouble to come and just play nine.

Others have proposed more intense uses to replace MBGC, such as a high tech driving range with social amenities similar to a bowling alley. Turning this area into a concrete mega-range is surely not a better alternative to the grass and water and trees of MBGC. While there might be room for discussion about the role of the existing driving range, even that area is full of habitat.

It is also worth noting that the automobile parking impacts of several of the suggested uses for this area are highly questionable in comparison to a golf course. At any given time, there is a need for minimal parking to serve the golf course relative to its acreage because only so many players can be on the course at the same time and many come together. By contrast, the parking which would be needed to serve an amphitheater, for example, is in the hundreds because all users of the facility are necessarily present at the same time. We join many fellow citizens in hoping that the Ad Hoc Committee has full sensitivity to the need to minimize the amount of land at De Anza which is occupied by asphalt parking lots and cars rather than people and wildlife.

In closing, we want to make sure that the potential of incorporating MBGC, as an 18 hole course, into the De Anza final proposal is appreciated by the Committee as not only a good option today, but an even better partner to the project if some of the suggestions offered in this letter are considered. We look forward to working with the City to facilitate the betterment of the MBGC, and to its successful partnership with the other De Anza uses.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or concerns and we very much appreciate the Committee's consideration of the points made in this letter and the position of the City's Municipal Golf Committee.

Sincerely,



Michael Zucchet
Chairman, City of San Diego Municipal Golf Committee