

# ***Veenker Memorial Golf Course ~ Iowa State University Renovation /Conversion Project ~ 2008***

## ***Public Meeting***

***Mon. July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008. A public meeting was held at the Veenker Clubhouse to formally discuss renovation plans with any interested parties. ISU Staff Present: John Newton, VMGC Manager and Superintendent, Tess Balsley, VMGC Clubhouse Mgr., Chris Seaboch, VMGC Head Golf Professional, Dave Miller, Assoc. Director Facilities Planning and Management – ISU Golfers Present: John Nervig, Cindy Calsyn, Rick Howell, Ed Gagnier, Bob Hartzler, Vince Simon, Bob Thompson, Doug Gemmill, Mitch Hoyer, Rolf Hansen.***

***John Newton opened the meeting with introductions. He then outlined his plans for renovation. See Tentative Timeline document. He then emphasized that the primary objective of this project is to take the opportunity presented to us by the unfortunate weather conditions of this season to make the golf course better for the future. As a public golf facility that is self sustaining, it is virtually impossible to plan to be closed for any length of time for major course renovations. As the golf course will have to be closed for reseeding this fall, the management of Veenker along with the ISU administration feel that this is the best opportunity to make much needed improvements to the golf course with the least amount of financial as well as player disruption.***

***Following Newton's explanation, the floor was opened to those present to ask questions. The following is an outline of the questions asked and answers given.***

***Simon – Once the shapes of the fairways are seeded to bent grass, they will not be as easy to change in the future, is this correct? Newton – Yes, the fairways will be bentgrass and the intermediate rough areas will be low mow Kentucky Bluegrass. Once these areas are seeded and grown in, it will be much more difficult to change designated fairway shapes as we currently are able to do with general mowing practices.***

***Nervig – Will the bentgrass “creep” out of the fairways into the intermediate rough areas over time. Newton – Yes, but this can be controlled by applications of “Tenacity” (mesotrione) 2-3 times per year.***

*Hartzler – Will greens #2 and #3(that have been rebuilt over the last 2 years) be reseeded as well. Newton – Yes, those greens were rebuilt to USGA specifications and the bases will stay the same, however to maintain consistency throughout the entire golf course, we will reseed all greens to T1 bent grass. #2 & #3 were sodded with A-4 bentgrass. The primary reasons for going to T1 are: 1. Consistency throughout the golf course – all greens will be the same grass, 2. Color – The T1 provides a darker green than the A4. 3. Leaf Width – the broader leaves of the T1 will provide quicker recovery from ball marks. 4. Disease resiliency – T1 does seem to be more resistant to some diseases than does the A4.*

*Unidentified – Will the renovation program include expansion of tee areas?*

*Newton – Although we would very much like to expand our tee areas, we cannot financially include this into the current program. The tee areas and some primary landing areas will present a significant maintenance challenge in the future as golfers tend to take bigger divots from bentgrass than they do from the perennial ryegrass that is currently on our tees and fairways.*

*Gagnier – Perhaps it would be beneficial to add a 4<sup>th</sup> set of tee markers to the current teeing areas to promote increased play by providing another choice of yardage to play each hole. i.e. Senior tees. Newton – this along with more forward Jr. tee areas and expanded tee space is definitely something we will try to expand in the future.*

*Miller – Will the bentgrass go dormant sooner in the fall/winter? Newton – Yes? It will start to discolor sooner than the current rye grasses. Additionally, it will take a little longer in the spring to come into the deep green colors. However, the bentgrasses will be more resilient to winter kill and other diseases and will come out healthier than we currently experience.*

*Gagnier – Is there an opportunity to use the current sod that is to be killed anywhere on the course. i.e. between #2 green and #6 walkway Newton – the costs associated with cutting, stripping and laying the sod would be prohibitive. Additionally, the plan is to leave the sod as it is to provide a solid base to establish the new seeds that are to be planted.*

*Simon – Following the floods of 1993, season pass holders were issued partial refunds. Is there a plan to do something like this now? Newton – in 1993 the*

*course was closed in early July. 9 holes were opened in mid to late Aug. for the remainder of the season. We do plan to compensate our season pass holders, but there is not a definitive plan in place at this time. Some of the options that are being considered are: a discount on 2009 passes, range use this fall, vouchers for guest play in 2009 (as suggested by Gagnier) or possibly a choice of several options. Balsley is currently in negotiations with both Ames Golf and Country Club and Honey Creek Golf Course to allow play for Veenker pass holders at discounted rates at these locations this fall. Outings will also be directed to use these facilities if their calendars allow.*

*Nervig – Will there be any additional equipment needs due to the change in grass types? Newton – no, our current equipment should be fine. Bentgrass fairways should actually result in less equipment usage. The nature of the growth patterns of bentgrass results in a decreased need for mowing than does rye grass. Bent grows more horizontally whereas rye grows more vertically requiring more frequent mowing. Bentgrasses should also be more environmentally friendly as they will require less chemical applications as they are more resilient to many of the common diseases that we currently struggle with.*

*Nervig – Will there be additional “no-mow” areas following the renovation? Newton – There is a possibility of increased “no-mow” areas. Again, these areas are environmentally friendly as they require low maintenance. Decreasing labor and fuel charges is also a benefit of converting some large areas to “no-mow”.*

*Unidentified – Will the course open right away in the spring of '09? Newton – given a good fall growing season and a “normal” winter, the plan is to open the course for play as soon as possible in April of '09. However, we will be more cautious this spring than we typically are to ensure that the turf is ready for traffic.*

*Gagnier – Do you anticipate the new “no smoking” laws to result in the loss of pass holders/rounds in the future. Newton – That is a possibility, however we do not anticipate any significant changes as a result. We plan to educate as many patrons as possible and hope that all players will be understanding with regards to compliance.*

*Thompson – How does the golf course get funded for projects such as this? Miller – The golf course, as an auxiliary enterprise, operated under Facilities, Planning and Management and Business and Finance division of Iowa State, is*

*expected to operate as a self sustaining enterprise given “normal” circumstances. However, as experienced this season, during abnormal circumstances, the University does step in to assist with financial difficulties. This year, sources for funding will come from the Iowa State “general fund”, FP&M year end dollars, FEMA, insurance and Veenker’s interest account with the ISU Foundation. The Foundation account is used primarily for capital projects to enhance the golf course such. In the past this has included funding for: the cart storage building, continuous cart paths, the shelter area, water coolers, expanded tee areas, target greens & other driving range additions and drainage/tiling projects on the course and driving range.*

*Hansen – Will the driving range be open this fall? Newton – Yes, we plan to continue normal operating hours for the driving range. The practice greens at the driving range will remain open and will not be included in the renovation project.*

*Simon – Will grubs, raccoons, Japanese beetles etc. continue to be a problem. Newton – yes, changing to bentgrass will not change these issues. However, due to the tighter canopy of the bentgrass, worm castings that are currently an issue on both fairways and greens will be decreased dramatically.*

*Gagnier - Why do golfers tend to get more distance from their shots on bentgrass fairways. Newton – Again, due to the horizontal growth patterns of bent rather than the horizontal growth of rye, there is less resistance to the ball on bentgrass fairways, resulting in increased roll. However, bentgrass is also considered a “softer” surface so the actual differences will more than likely be negligible.*

*The meeting was wrapped up with a thank you to all for attending and an invitation to continue asking questions and staying informed by visiting our website and checking the “What’s happening at Veenker?” section on a regular basis.*