

Leggett's Response to Sligo Creek Golf Course (05-27-10)

The following is a report from Woody Brosnan of the Sligo Creek Golf Association. If you have not yet written a letter urging the Council to take action on the Task Force Report, please do so. The call to action was sent on May 18. It's listed below this report.

At a meeting with SCGA representatives yesterday, County Executive Ike Leggett stated that he intended to keep the Sligo Creek Golf Course open past the scheduled expiration of the current operating agreement, June 30, even if they did not have another operating agreement or longer-term solution in place. Leggett indicated that revenues should be sufficient for the Revenue Authority to keep operating the course this summer. But he could give us no timetable for a long-term solution. Next week SCGA representatives will meet with Council President Nancy Floreen to press for Council action on the Sligo Creek Task Force report, which was sent to the council in January.

Leggett and Floreen spoke about Sligo last night on the local Political Pulse report, thanks to a question submitted by Dave from Silver Spring. Here is the transcript:

Dave from Silver Spring

I want to thank you for keeping Sligo golf course open through June 30. I am writing to encourage you to work for a new operating agreement for the next fiscal year. I am confident that through good work, we can have a long-term operator of the course and a lease agreement in place soon.

Leggett

Dave I hope you continue to golf at Sligo because it is a wonderful course. It is a community asset. I think we should continue to try to get a long-term agreement. And hopefully we can get beyond June 30th. That's a very quick turnaround time for us. Maybe we can at least extend the current agreement for a little bit of time while we try to come up with a long-term solution. It is important that we do so. And we had a task force and I assume the council will look at its report and some of its analysis and suggestions. But overall we need to have a permanent solution. Hopefully we can move beyond the June 30 date at least with an extension. So that we don't close it while we continue to evaluate long-term solutions.

Floreen

And we've been in. . . In fact we just had a very deep conversation with the revenue authority, which is the operator of the Sligo creek golf course to understand what the prospects are for the future. We expect to have some better information for the community within the next month.

Call to Action: Positive Sligo Letter Campaign to the County Council

The County Council has not yet considered the recommendations of the Sligo Creek Golf Course Task Force, submitted in January. The short-term operating agreement that kept Sligo Creek Golf Course from closing last fall is nearing its end. It is due to close June 30.

As for the Council, they have been very preoccupied with the harsh effects of the economy.

Please write letters now to help ensure the best possible outcome of an urgent meeting that will take place in early June between board members of the Sligo Creek Golf Association and key members of the County Council. It is important that in those Councilmembers feel your presence behind those few SCGA board members, and equally important that they are aware of your positive expectations for its outcome. These expectations can realistically include Sligo's extraction from the lease being permanently reversed; and alternately, if the Council accepts recommendations to pursue independent operators, that another short-term operating agreement with the Revenue Authority be reached that allows time beyond June 30 for the RFP process to be successful. Please take a few minutes to write a letter.

I think that it is even more important for us to write letters now than it was when we achieved the stay of execution for Sligo last year. Yet, at the same time, strange as it may seem, I invite you to allow a little optimism into your letters.

Also, if you haven't heard, Delegate Ben Kramer was able to lead to passage, and the Governor signed into law, HB1481, which disallows the no-compete clause that was so troublesome in the lease between Parks and the Revenue Authority. That doesn't save the golf course, but it does clarify that only the Department of Parks can make the decision to close it. In other words, they cannot blame the lease or the Revenue Authority.

Rounds are way up at Sligo, due largely to the attention Sligo supporters have generated. How much more would some modest, targeted marketing accomplish? How wrong was the NGF report?

Two independent golf course operators have expressed such firm opinions that the course can be lucrative that their interest in operating it is obvious.

Plus, it's an election year, a good time for Councilmembers to be heroes.

If sufficiently buoyed by our expectations, the County Council can preserve this beloved amenity, protect the property values of surrounding neighborhoods, and save the County from an embarrassing predicament in which the mission and obligation of Parks to the public was being subverted because a poorly written lease allowed an inaccurate report

from a paid consultant-- supplying the RA's desired conclusion-- to be sufficient cause to close the course.

An important strength of your past letters was their personal authority. You conveyed your own thoughts and feelings in your own voices. It's important that you do this again-- and quickly.

Here are the e-mail addresses you'll need. Write Council President Nancy Floreen first.

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councilmember.trachtenberg@montgomerycountymd.gov

councilmember.andrews@montgomerycountymd.gov

You can "cc" Ike Leggett at ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov

If you'd rather call, the phone numbers for the Council are listed at:

<http://www.facebook.com/1/9768e;www.sligocreekgolfassociation.org/howyoucanhelp.html>