



**CITY OF SANTA BARBARA**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

**AGENDA DATE:** September 23, 2015  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Golf Division, Parks and Recreation Department  
**SUBJECT:** Santa Barbara Golf Club Marketing Update

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Commission receive an update on Marketing Strategy at Santa Barbara Golf Club.

**DISCUSSION:**

Santa Barbara Golf Club, commonly referred to as 'Muni', is the City's only 18 hole municipal golf course and operates as an enterprise fund without general fund taxation support. All operating expenses are covered by revenue earned and, in recent years, lower revenues required the use of reserves. On March 10, 2015, City Council directed staff to increase marketing budgets in an effort to grow play levels and subsequently revenue at Muni. Staff worked with a Golf industry consultant who advised that industry standard practice is to invest 3% of greens fee revenue in marketing each year. As a result, \$50,000 was budgeted for Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) and staff has developed a comprehensive plan for allocating these funds.

The Golf Division issued a Request for Proposals to find an external marketing consultant to help determine the marketing strategy, measurable tactics and provide the execution to help grow rounds and revenue. A Department review committee met with each of four proposers to discuss their ideas and selected two companies, BBM&D and Welborn Social Media.

BBM&D and Welborn Social Media were selected due to their strengths in different areas. BBM&D has many years working in the Santa Barbara community and has a proven track record developing engaging branding and promotional activities. They are currently provide marketing services for the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport. Welborn Social Media specialize in utilizing online tools such as facebook, twitter and email to authentically communicate and create communities of like minded people. The Golf Division has been working with Welborn Social Media since November 2014. In working with both firms, Staff expects that they advise and deliver targeted aspects of the marketing plan in accordance with the mission of Santa Barbara Golf Club.

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## Marketing Strategy

Santa Barbara Golf Club is dedicated to providing residents and visitors an exceptional and affordable Golfing experience in a friendly, inclusive environment for socializing and enjoying nature. The marketing strategy in support of this mission has four key objectives:

1. Drive Rounds and Revenue while maintaining an affordable golf experience:

This is a large and somewhat overarching objective that is influenced by a multitude of factors such as price, promotions, advertising, weather, competitor competition, external factors such as economy and finally the popularity of Golf in general. Advertising is an important tool in raising awareness of Muni and this is being delivered across many forms of media. Social media is a key part of the plan to encourage an authentic and engaging dialogue with and between the customers growing loyalty and sharing rewards in a two way relationship.

2. Develop untapped markets

Santa Barbara is an extremely popular tourist location. Efforts to encourage tourists to play golf at Muni have been, and will continue to be, increased by providing compelling offers to these potential customers where they frequent online and in person. Staff developed advertisements for the visitor center flat map issued to tourists, coupons within the pocket concierge flyer, cruise line specials, and a special deal with Airport customers who save 20% by presenting their boarding pass. Extended efforts to appeal to a younger demographic via social media has seen increased play from college students. Efforts to increase the strength of the partnership with Santa Barbara City College include the free advertisement of the golf course on their newly installed large screen video screen during SBCC Football games. Finally, growing youth and women's programs has the effect of introducing new people to the game of golf.

3. Promote SBGC as a community and environmental asset

Muni is an ideal place for the business community to entertain, reward and meet new clients. Attendance at Santa Barbara Chamber events is spreading the word that Muni is an asset to local business people and willing to work with the business community. New programs for the Police Activities League, along with the continuation of existing subsidized youth programs, will be included in a new 'Inside Santa Barbara' program to air on City TV and online. Communicating the opportunities to learn golf and important life skills in a safe and controlled environment will help to enhance the reputation of Muni and encourage others to become advocates and try golf.

4. Improve online presence and communication.

Santa Barbara Golf Club received its 1000<sup>th</sup> facebook “like” this month, and has had interactions on social media dramatically increase following the daily posting and interaction of Welborn Social Media. A new website was launched in April 2015 and provides a more professional and corporate look to the golf course and enables mobile and desktop booking of rounds. Emails are currently sent once a month whereby interested parties are advised of the goings on at the golf course. This is set to continue while enhancing the targeting of specific information and offers based upon customer interests and behaviors.

Santa Barbara Golf Club is a wonderful place to spend time, play golf, enjoy a meal, and to socialize. Many people already know this and spend a great deal of their time making the most of everything on offer. Sharing this with a lot more people via targeted marketing has, and will continue to lead to a payback on the investment. Play volume is 5% higher in the first two months of fiscal year 2016 in comparison to FY 2015. While executing the strategy takes time, the actions taken to date have positively influenced people to play more golf, seek out Muni for the first time or enjoy a meal at Mulligan’s.

**BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

The FY 2016 Golf Division budget includes \$50,000 to be used for marketing and advertising. An improvement in revenue equal to that investment was included within the FY 2016 revenue budget.

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**APPROVED BY:** Jill E. Zachary, Acting Parks and Recreation Director