



# TRUCKEE-DONNER Recreation & Park District

*Inspiring Creative Active Lives for a Healthy Mountain Community*

Kevin Smith, General Manager  
Members of the Board of Directors  
Truckee Tahoe Airport District  
10356 Truckee Airport Road  
Truckee, CA 96161

August 30, 2019

Dear Kevin and Members of the Board of Directors,

As you know the Truckee Tahoe Airport District bought Ponderosa Golf Course in 2008 and since that time has been leasing the course to the Truckee Donner Recreation & Park District to provide a public benefit to the community. The District averages 12,000 rounds of golf played each year at Ponderosa Golf Course. Many of those rounds are from kids learning to play the game who cannot access other courses in the area, or afford to play them. When TDRPD took over the golf course it was in disrepair and all the equipment and systems were in need of repair or replacement. The District has worked hard to upgrade the course and replace some of the antiquated equipment.

The greatest challenge for the course is the need to replace the entire irrigation system. The current irrigation system was installed 58 years ago and is well beyond its useful life. The irrigation system is not an automated system and requires manual watering every night. Staff moves around the course during the evening connecting the sprinklers to the quick couplers. The installation of a new irrigation system with automatic controllers will save the District and the community tens of thousands of dollars each year in manual labor costs. The existing irrigation piping is made of deteriorating asbestos piping and every year there are numerous breaks throughout the system. It is just a matter of time before the system completely fails which would require a closure of the golf course. The existing irrigation system is antiquated and labor intensive. Today's irrigation systems for golf courses are automated, zone controlled, and highly efficient. A new irrigation system will reduce labor costs and water consumption by 33%.

TDRPD has priced out a new irrigation system. The cost to replace the irrigation system at Ponderosa Golf Course is \$1.1 million. Working with the Truckee Donner Public Utility District, TDRPD secured a grant in the amount of \$227,000 for water savings associated with a new irrigation system. The funding shortfall for the upgrade remains approximately \$900,000. The District can get a loan for this project, but does not have the resources to pay off the entirety of the debt service. TDRPD is in a position to reallocate approximately \$60,000 in annual labor

and repair costs which are currently being spent on the existing irrigation system, but this is not sufficient to cover the debt service.

TDRPD's goal is to provide customers and the community with a quality recreational product at an affordable cost. There is a lot of competition in the region for golf from which consumers can choose. Quality of play, cost and ease of access are all part of the consumer's decisions. The District sets fees for the course to be affordable for all, with the goal of breaking even each year. Some years we make a little money and some years we lose money. A lot of the courses economics are weather dependent: opening and closing dates for the season; what damage and repairs are necessary for the season; what damage and repairs are necessary after winter; growing conditions; quality of play; etc. TDRPD's eleven years of operational experience show that Ponderosa Golf Course green fees are appropriate and cannot support the debt service necessary to replace the irrigation system.

A new automated irrigation system is a capital improvement that adds value to Ponderosa Golf Course. Since the airport district is the owner of the course, the value of the course is increased once the system is put into place.

Truckee Donner Recreation & Park District would like to request the Truckee Tahoe Airport District consider a long term partnership in the management of Ponderosa Golf Course. This partnership could be similar what TTAD is doing for Waddell Ranch forest management. TDRPD's request is to receive a facility management fee in the amount of \$50,000 each year for the next 20 years. These funds would be dependent on TDRPD installing a new irrigation system and operating the golf course. Effectively this investment would be used to offset a portion of the debt service for a capital improvement owned by the Truckee Tahoe Airport District.

In summary, if the course had to be closed because the irrigation system went down, the value of the property would significantly decrease and the great community benefit that is provided by the Airport District would go away. Additionally, as the owner of the property, the Airport District would have to manage the land to a certain level which would be an expense to the Airport District.



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