

FREE GOLF PRIVILEGES FOR OXNARD CITY OFFICIALS

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury received a complaint alleging that the City's elected and non-elected officials were playing golf without paying a fee. The 1996/97 Ventura County Grand Jury, through Cities and Joint Powers Committee, undertook a thorough investigation into the issue of granting free golf course privileges to elected councilmen, former councilmen, and members of the Golf Commission.

INQUIRY

The Committee interviewed the following persons: several of Oxnard's elected officials, former elected officials, and the City Manager. The Committee reviewed documents provided by officials of the City of Oxnard and the River Ridge Golf Course Management.

The Grand Jury examined the Agreement for Operation, Maintenance and Management of the River Ridge Golf Course Clubhouse and other facilities with the City and the lessee.

FINDINGS

- In December 1993, the Golf Commission, which had managed the River Ridge Golf Course, ceased to exist and the City Council assumed the management responsibilities of the City's golf course. The City Council retained the policies, rules and procedures by which the Golf Commission had managed the golf course.
- Hide Tide and Green Grass was contracted to manage the City's golf course as the lessee. The lessee extended free golf privileges to members of the City Council as stated in their Personnel Policy Manual: "The Administrative function will annually request the City Parks and Facilities Superintendent to update the list of City Councilmen and others who are entitled to free golf privileges."
- The City Council maintains that the free golf privileges were part of their oversight responsibility of monitoring the operations and the conditions of the City's golf course and its facilities.
- High Tide and Green Grass's Personnel Policy Manual does provide free golf privileges to City Officials who utilize the accommodation to view first hand the conditions of the course and observe the lessee's operations.

CONCLUSION

City Councilmen are acting within their authority by monitoring the golf course through free playing privileges at the City's golf course.

RECOMMENDATION

The City of Oxnard should reconsider the provision that allows councilmen to monitor the operations, management and conditions of the City's golf course, by playing without paying fees.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

- Oxnard City Mayor
- Oxnard City Attorney
- Oxnard City Council