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COMMISSION REPORT

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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
COMMISSION

**DATE:** 2018 June 01

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND  
CULTURAL SERVICES

**FILE:** 56000-01

**SUBJECT: GOLF COURSE DIVOT REPAIR PROTOCOL**

**PURPOSE:** To provide information to the Commission with respect to the replacement of divots.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** staff continues to educate the public on golf etiquette with respect to the replacement of divots at all Burnaby golf courses by implementing the measures outlined in this report.

**REPORT**

At the Commission meeting of 2018 April 18 a recommendation to consider the provision of a sand-and-seed program with divot repair bottles at Burnaby's golf course locations was raised.

Divot bottles have been available at the City's golf course since the fall of 2017 and all new power carts will be accessorized with bottles as the fleet is upgraded.

The following information and background details require consideration when developing a comprehensive program to effectively deal with discarded divots on our playing surfaces:

1. All golf courses have different conditions and customer bases to consider when implementing a consistent approach to dealing with the divot repair issue. The rules of golf stress that all golfers should demonstrate good etiquette by being responsible for repair of any divots resulting from the individual golfer's shot. However, the consistency of golfers following this rule has always been a challenge in the public golf industry. Burnaby Golf has over 83,000 regular golfers in our database with online booking access and our courses typically exceed daily player counts by 35% of those seen at other public and semi-private membership clubs. Training such large volumes of public golfers can prove to be challenging; when proper execution of any new procedure cannot be effectively accomplished, the implementation can be compromised.

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2. The vast majority of clubs that have implemented a player-engaged sand-seed program do so via bottles on golf carts. Although Burnaby Golf provides carts at its facilities, statistically only 30% of players ride carts.
3. From an agronomic point of view, staff are trained in the divot repair process to ensure that the right amount of sand-seed is placed per divot; unfortunately, this cannot be said of golfers. Most often too much sand-seed is placed per divot resulting in small mound formations blanketing fairway areas; thus creating a very uneven playing surface.
4. Lastly, what also must be considered is which part of the season the repair is taking place and what specific portion of the landing areas are to undergo repair since Burnaby's fairways and rough areas have a variety of turf species and compositions. Golf Burnaby has been over-seeding fairways with a new and innovative turf mixture that is composed of several predominately creeping growth varieties. These serve to support drought and disease tolerance, and exhibit a fine texture with vigorous growth characteristics for year-round pleasing colour. Through aggressive growing factors of stoloniferous and rhizomatous growth, this particular fairway turf spreads naturally to form a tightly netted grass which actually requires less divot repair than many other common varieties.

Golf Burnaby's Turf Operations division has implemented a four-pronged management program; beginning with the education of our guests about the replacement of divots with turf. For the second initiative, staff would continue to fill and repair divots bi-weekly and over-seed in the landing zones. Thirdly, three times a year staff will utilize large scale mechanical top dressers to top dress and over-seed landing areas to control thatch and enhance playing surfaces. Lastly, the initiative to utilize divot bottles combined with pre-mix sand-seed or sand for public use will be implemented.

Burnaby's customer engagement in the divot replacement program has been deemed a great opportunity to foster pride in patron's home courses while achieving departmental goals for producing consistent playing surfaces. As with all cultural programs required to achieve departmental objectives, this ultimately requires the support of a multi-level turf management program which is continually modified to improve optimum playing surfaces and able to adapt quickly to address any new or developing challenges.



Dave Ellenwood  
DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES