

Public Life Foundation

Hillcrest Golf course Forum

5/20/10

5:30pm

OCTC Advanced Technology Center—Multi-purpose
Conference Room

Polling Results

May 20, 2010

Total number of participants 100

Total Ballots Collected **83**

Findings

Those living in the City of Owensboro	61
Those living in Daviess County outside the City Limits	22
Those living outside Daviess County	0
Those that play golf primarily at Hillcrest Golf course	39
Those that play golf primarily at Ben Hawes Park	3
Those that play golf primarily at other courses in Owensboro / Daviess County	10
Those who seldom play golf	24

Those who support:

Leaving Hillcrest as a golf course	72
Converting Hillcrest to a park	1
Leasing the course to a private manager	4
Developing the Hillcrest property into a subdivision	0

Action Checklist

Total Collected 44

Those who would:

Contact a City or County official	33
Contact a candidate for public office	29
Appear before relevant governmental bodies	18
Sign a petition	33
Support or volunteer for a candidate who shares your views	21
Write a letter to the editor or an “in My View” column	16
Stage a rally	8
Start a network through a newsletter, email or facebook, etc.	4
Participate in activities of supporters/opponents	11
Speak to a civic or service club	4
Speak to a student group	4
Make a contribution to a group that supports your points of view	14

Citizens oppose decision to close Hillcrest Golf Course

Public forum and survey both point to significant opposition

Results of a May 20 public forum and a May 26-27 public opinion poll point to overwhelming opposition to the City of Owensboro's decision to close Hillcrest Golf Course.

“At the forum, we attracted an overflow crowd and spirited discussions after we presented both sides of the issue,” said Rodney Berry, president of the foundation and moderator of the forum. “But because most of the forum participants were either golfers or residents of the Hillcrest neighborhood, it was suggested to us that we supplement the forum with a professional poll that would reflect a scientific sampling of the community.”

The results of the poll conducted at the conclusion of the public forum:

- 72 to 5 support keeping Hillcrest as a golf course
- 76 to 1 oppose converting Hillcrest to a park
- 73 to 4 oppose leasing Hillcrest to a private manager
- 76 to 0 oppose selling the property to a developer for a subdivision

In the follow-up poll of 500 registered voters, by more than a two-to-one margin, citizens say that closing Hillcrest Golf Course is “the wrong thing for Owensboro to do.”

The survey was conducted by Survey USA and sponsored by the Public Life Foundation of Owensboro, an organization that promotes public participation in community decisions and public policy.

Of the 500 people surveyed:

- 67 percent said Owensboro has about the right amount of public parks.
- 26 percent said Owensboro has too few public parks.
- 6 percent said Owensboro has too many public parks.
Note: During the May 20 forum, it was reported that Owensboro has substantially less public park acreage than comparable cities in our region.
- 44 percent said we have about the right amount of golf courses.
- 41 percent said we have too few.
- 13 percent said we have too many
During the forum, it was reported that, according to the National Golf Foundation, Owensboro-Daviess County has more golf courses than the market can support.
- 42 percent said that city-owned golf courses should be allowed to run at a loss
- 41 percent said they should be required to break even financially
- 48 percent said that Hillcrest should remain open as a golf course, but increase green fees enough that it breaks even

- 31 percent said the course should remain open and continue to run at a loss
- 17 percent said the course should be converted to a park
- Even those who do not play golf supported keeping Hillcrest open: 75 percent to 19 percent who support converting the course to a park.
- 36 percent said it would cost about the same to maintain a public park as a golf course
- 26 percent said a public park would cost more to maintain than a golf course
- 22 percent said a public park would cost less to maintain than a golf course

With regard to closing Hillcrest Golf Course to reduce financial losses:

- 61 percent said it is the wrong thing for Owensboro to do
- 26 percent said that it is the right thing to do
- 13 percent are not sure
- Those who said it is the wrong thing to do increased to 71 percent among golfers
- 19 percent of golfers said it is the right thing to do
- 51 percent said that Hillcrest would not serve very well or at all well as a city park
- 45 percent said that Hillcrest would serve very well or somewhat well as a city park
- 44 percent said that Hillcrest golfers will not switch to the Hawes Park golf course if Hillcrest is converted to a park
- 31 percent said they would switch to the Hawes Park golf course
- 25 percent were not sure
- 54 percent do not agree with the plan to close Hillcrest and attract more golfers to Hawes Park in order to reduce the subsidy for the Hawes Park course
- 25 percent agree with that plan
- 21 percent are not sure

The random sample survey had a margin of error from +/- 4.2 to 4.5 percent.

“I would like to think that officials and candidates appreciate this information and will take this professional survey under consideration in making their decisions,” Berry said. “Sometimes in a rush to show progress, officials don’t take time to engage the community at-large, and in particular, the affected stakeholders. Citizens know that officials can’t please everyone, but they want their voices heard.”

The full report is available on the SurveyUSA web site:

<http://www.surveyusa.com/client/PollReport.aspx?g=832cb30e-0ace-4e6b-af0e-e78e1fedff04>