

South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

Davie buying Arrowhead Golf Course for \$4.6 million

By Susannah Bryan, Sun Sentinel

10:14 PM EST, March 2, 2011

DAVIE

Five months after bidding on the state-owned Arrowhead Golf Course, the Town Council agreed Wednesday to move forward with the controversial \$4.63 million purchase.

Mayor Judy Paul cast the lone dissenting vote, saying the maintenance costs were too high.

"I'm really torn," she said. "I am. Golf hasn't been doing well in this economy. All this boils down to what we feel is the right thing to do for the whole town."

Councilman Marlon Luis said he was worried about losing the town's \$500,000 deposit if Davie walked away from the deal.

"I'm going to hold my nose and vote to buy this golf course," he said. "Hate it. Hate it."

But council members Susan Starkey, Caryl Hattan and Bryan Caletka said the town was preserving open space and had made a good deal on the land. The state bought the course for \$7.4 million in December 2008 to provide drainage for the expansion of Interstate 595.

The town will use \$3.2 million in emergency reserves to help pay for the 134-acre course. The rest will come from open-space bonds and impact fees.

Town officials tentatively agreed on Nov. 3 to buy the 18-hole course despite arguments from residents who feared the town would lose money.

On Wednesday, council members rejected plans for a no-bid contract that would turn over management of the greens to a private company for 15 years.

Mitch Osceola, president of Arrowhead Golf Group LLC, and his two partners had offered to maintain and manage the course for 15 years. In return, they would spend \$1 million on improvements to the clubhouse and \$400,000 per year maintaining and operating the course. The company had offered to begin paying Davie \$24,000 a year in 2012, with payments increasing through the years.

Instead, the council agreed Wednesday to put the contract out to bid.

Caletka criticized the no-bid contract as being a sweet deal for Arrowhead Golf Group.

"We are assuming all of the risk and they are keeping all of the revenues," he said. "That doesn't seem right to me."

Arrowhead Golf Group was Davie's lone competitor in bidding for the golf course on Sept. 30. The company offered \$1.4 million less than the town.

Town officials agreed to hire Greenway Golf Associates to maintain the course for \$52,500 a month until another company is hired to maintain the course.

The Florida Department of Transportation put the 18-hole course up for sale after completing drainage work for the expansion of I-595. State officials have extended the closing deadline several times at the town's request.

The state agency has agreed to give Davie a credit of \$703,500 as long as the town takes on the cost of planting wetlands on the course.

The council agreed to the deal Wednesday night.

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