

**December 2014**  
**Fenwick Golf Course**  
**Strategic Master Plan Narrative**

Since 1894, when tin cans were first placed in the ground near the Fenwick Hall, golf has been played in Fenwick.

A full nine-hole golf course was opened in 1896 and, for over one hundred years, it has provided pleasure to golfers of all ages and abilities.

This Strategic Master Plan establishes a framework for maintenance and potential improvements consistent with the history, design and links-style nature of the course.

The Strategic Master Plan, as defined in the Mission Statement adopted by the Board of Warden and Burgesses, “will outline for each hole the purpose of the architectural design, highlighting where the current design promotes or occasionally conflicts with the links nature of the course and the other attributes described above. The Strategic Master Plan will also establish maintenance guidelines to ensure the health of the turf and playability of the golf course.”

The Board of Warden and Burgesses has requested that the Strategic Master Plan Narrative for Fenwick Golf Course “will include an overview of the golf course and the direction in which it should move forward, embracing its long history; a review of the course agronomics that includes ways to improve the health of the turf as well as methods to save money and a review of architectural alterations dating back to the early 1930s . . . including a hole-by-hole assessment that will provide suggested modifications to improve the Fenwick Golf Course and make the course more enjoyable and challenging for players across a broad spectrum of abilities.”

This Plan has two principal goals. The first is to help maintain and recapture the attributes that make Fenwick a historic links-style course and to prevent imprudent modifications, while ensuring the layout is fun and challenging for all levels of golfers. The second goal is to give the Board of Warden and Burgesses and the Fenwick Park Commission (present and future) a framework and philosophy for future maintenance, repair, upkeep and alterations; this Plan is meant to lay out a “to-do” list for coming years so

that budgetary and other decisions can be made in keeping with an integrated plan and strategy.

It is imperative, for long-range goals to be met, that the superintendent be permitted to employ proper and proven methods to create and sustain healthy turf. The superintendent must also be equipped with the proper machinery and manpower in order to accomplish the goals. Moreover, the Park Commission and the Golf Course Consultant will work very closely in regular consultation with the Superintendent about all aspects of the implementation of this Plan.

For work outside the normal maintenance practices, such as the rebuilding of bunkers and greens, a qualified golf course construction company must be engaged to perform the work.

### **The nature of play**

“Bump-and-run,” or “the ground game,” is the method of running the golf ball along the terrain of the golf course. These phrases are most commonly used in reference to approach shots to green. The opposite of the bump-and-run is the “aerial game,” where shots are flown onto greens.

The ground game is the basis of all links golf courses. The turf on fairways and greens is maintained firm to allow for the bump-and-run. This is because links golf courses are built by the sea where wind, sometimes strong wind, is an integral part of golf. The best way to keep the wind from affecting a golf shot is to play below the wind.

As stated in the Mission Statement: “A links course is located near the sea and built on a sandy soil. The turf is maintained firm so golf shots can be played on the ground. The views from throughout the course are expansive, including water vistas.

“At the core of links style golf is the requirement that the turf on fairways, approaches and greens be maintained as firm. Golfers should be able to use the ground game, or bump-and-run, throughout the course. It is this method of play that allows golfers to manage the wind and firm turf that are an integral part of seaside golf.”

Since Fenwick is a links-style golf course, it is imperative to keep the course firm so the ground game can be used. This will require the use of proper agronomic techniques so that the approaches to greens are firm enough for players to bounce their approaches before the green, or to “run” their shots onto the greens.

The Park Commission and staff will have to develop an understanding that if these areas are slightly brown because they are watered less, that does not necessarily mean they are unhealthy. Watering and turf care should be designed to have healthy and firm turf, not necessarily green turf.

## **History**

To understand the Fenwick Golf Course of 2014, a brief history is helpful.

According to *Harper’s Official Golf Guide* of 1900, the Fenwick course was 2,550 yards long, annual dues were \$10 and there were 85 members. F.E. Cooley held the amateur course record of 42. The president (and the individual who laid out the original golf course) was J.B. Moore, the secretary was M.B. Brainard, and the green-keeper was John Graveson.

By the end of 1900, golfers throughout the United States knew about Fenwick because the 1898 U.S. Amateur champion, Findlay Douglas, played in the first Fenwick Open in 1900.

Douglas, of Fairfield Country Club, now Greenwich Country Club, had won the U.S. Amateur in 1898 and finished second the next two years. In 1900 he lost to Walter Travis at Garden City Golf Club, before competing at Fenwick.

“The fact that Findlay S. Douglas played in a contest for the first time since the Amateur championship attracted attention to the tournament at Fenwick for members of the Connecticut State League clubs. The ex-champion, who showed that he was suffering from want of practice, nevertheless reached the finals, and won by 2 up and 1 to play in a thirty-six-hole match with J. T. Cheney,” read a story in the Hartford Courant.

After 1900, the members appeared to be content to just enjoy Fenwick and it never hosted a tournament of that caliber again.

The course Douglas and the members played in 1900 had many similarities to the Fenwick of today. Some greens and tees are where they were in 1900, and the current fifth and sixth holes are almost exactly as they were that year.

On the other hand, the greens were larger and had more square corners, and the grass on them was longer and less uniform than today.

In 1900, *Connecticut Magazine* described Fenwick this way: “Some of the hazards are wonderful country roads that have been built along the river and Sound and are made of vast quantities of sand, four times as much as are necessary, with a variety of cacti along the sides. If this was not enough, sand dunes have been built, ditches have been dug and partly filled with sand and there are artificial bunkers.”

In her book, *The Fenwick Story*, Marion Hepburn Grant recounted a description of the early course:

“Initially the so-called fairways were mowed only twice a season, and scrubby wild blackberry bushes were allowed to proliferate as natural hazards.”

The condition of Fenwick has improved substantially since those days, but there are some traits that have been here since the course opened and are the defining characteristics of the course such as the berms on the second, fourth and sixth holes, small greens, wide hole corridors and firm fairways and greens.

With its seaside location, long vistas, firm fairway and lack of an irrigation system, Fenwick is without a doubt a links-like golf course, an American relative of the famous links designs of the British Isles.

Trees and bunkers were few on the course until the 1960s. Then, over the ensuing 30-plus years, nearly every hole had a sand hazard added and a number of trees planted. In some cases, such as the third and the ninth, the old berms and sand-filled tire tracks were removed and/or filled in.

## Overview

Time, nature and man have made many gradual changes over the last hundred years. Most holes share a common need for certain general types of repair and attention that should be performed so as to maintain and preserve the historic and links-style nature of this course.

- **The expansion of putting surfaces:** For years, the Fenwick greens have been shrinking. This is a common occurrence when triplex mowers are used. The collars need to be pushed back out, increasing the size of the greens and recapturing their original dimensions. Because the putting surfaces are so small, it is imperative for turf health that the green tops be as large as possible, which will help to reduce wear and compaction.

- **Bunker Renovation:** Over the years, the bunkers, most of which were added to the course after the late 1960s, have lost their original shape and, in some cases, intended effect. All the bunkers that should be retained need to be rebuilt over time. Because of the sandy soil of Fenwick, drainage will not need to be installed, but the visual qualities, playability and consistency of the sand hazards can be improved. In some cases, the recommendation is that the size, shape and location be altered. Those will be discussed on a hole-by-hole basis.

- **Trees:** Trees compete with turf for sunlight, water and nutrients. Undernourished turf is susceptible to disease and, as a result, requires more time and effort from the maintenance staff, as well as inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides, which are expensive.

Historically, the Fenwick Golf Course had very few trees. Photographs from 1965 show there were no trees between the first and ninth holes, the fourth and fifth holes, or seventh and eighth holes. Rough served to define holes and hole corridors, as it should on a links-style golf course, where long vistas are an integral facet.

According to the Mission Statement: “Where trees serve no purpose or are not considered a ‘specimen tree’ they can be removed if it will mean improved turf quality and playability of the golf course. If tree planting is required, care must be taken to species and locations so that neither roots nor shade harm the turf of the golf course.”

Tree issues will be discussed on a hole-by-hole basis.

- **Fairway and approach mowing:** Just as with greens, fairways can migrate away from their original location, with two results. First, the entrance to greens can narrow over time and take away from the bump-and-run game. Second, as the area between fairway and bunkers increases, the rough serves to “defend” the bunker, as wayward shots stop in the long grass as opposed to finding sand. Fairways and approaches need to be contoured back to their intended positions.

It is crucial that the approaches be maintained firm condition so that the ground can be used. With small, firm greens, fairness and links-style play both require that golfers be able to bounce their approach shots onto the green if they choose or need to do so.

- **Red Tees**

The Fenwick Golf Course is considered a short layout when comparing the blue and white tee yardages to similar tees on other golf courses. However, from the Red Tees, Fenwick plays 2,378 yards and is comparable to the forward tees of Madison Country Club (2,415 and 2,740 yards) and the Red Course at Hartford Golf Club (2,502 and 2,556 yards).

One of the goals of good golf course design and of this Master Plan is to eliminate situations that make the layout too difficult for players who are best suited to the Red Tees. The goal, with these alterations, is to increase playability and enjoyment for them.

For example, the right fairway bunker on the ninth hole (a 453 yard hole from the Red Tees) is currently approximately 135 yards from the Red Tees. A golfer who does not have the ability to carry much further than 135 yards will require at least four more perfectly struck shots to reach the nine green, but in reality, five or six more shots on a par-5 hole. For this caliber of player, the ninth presents enough of a challenge. Making them play a fairway bunker shot because of a mishit drive is just making an already difficult hole even more difficult.

If there comes a time when a player who normally uses the Red Tees finds that length to be too easy, a move back to the White Tees, which at 2,607 yards is 239 yards longer, is encouraged.

## **Hole-by-Hole Analysis with Suggested Modifications**

### **Hole no. 1 (Old 4<sup>th</sup>): (formerly “Church”) “Keeney” 355/365/433 yards**

Hole 1: Over time, what is now the starting hole and the longest par-4 on the course has seen its share of alterations, yet it remains very close to the original design.

Harper’s Official Golf Guide of 1901 lists the distance as 395 yards. A newspaper account of the 1901 Fenwick Open, has the hole playing at 406 yards. The original green was much smaller than the existing one, essentially comprising the flat, right hand portion of today’s putting surface.

In the early days of the Fenwick Golf Course, two roads ran perpendicular to the line of the play on the first and ninth holes; the remnants of those roads remain visible today.

In the 1970s, the green site was moved from its current location, approximately 30 yards towards the tee. That green had a short life and, not long afterwards, a green was rebuilt on the previous location, and expanded to include the left side of the current putting surface.

Starting in the 1970s two long, straight unnatural looking rows of trees were planted to separate the first and ninth holes. Over time some of the trees died and removal of others has given both holes a more open feel that harkens back to the original layout, creating more of a links-style golf course.

Removal of the remaining trees will give players on the first hole a more open feel on the left and encourage them to play down that side and away from chapel and the rough on the right, making pace of play quicker to start the round. Safety considerations may call for one or two (non-larch, specimen) trees to protect players on the first hole from errant drives on the ninth hole.

Beginning in the 1980s, trees were planted on the west side of the St. Mary’s by the Sea Chapel, ostensibly to protect the structure from errant shots. Those trees have created a parkland feel to the first hole eliminating a unique and beautiful view of a historic building that dates back to the 1880s.

As the trees grow, the canopies and roots spread and dominate, robbing the turf of sun, water and nutrients. The grass in that area is suffering. As a result, golfers are required to hit approach shots from approximately 100 yards off very thin turf.

In about 1979 two bunkers were added on the right side of the fairway some 200 yards off the tee. They were removed in 1998. There is no need to reinstate them.

The first green, almost more than any other at Fenwick, sits comfortably upon the natural topography. It has the feeling that it was not built, but “discovered” when someone lowered the height of cut at the end of the fairway.

The green, though, can be improved.

The putting surface should be expanded in all direction to recapture the original dimension, which will increase the size of the putting surface and, in turn, provide more cupping areas, and reduce wear.

Because the green surface is so shallow and the corners so tight, the left side, has been turfed with rough to prevent the inevitable damage created by triplex mowers.

With walking mowers, that area should be restored to collar with the rough eliminated.

Over time, the greenside bunker has expanded due to normal play and maintenance. It needs to be renovated.

The bunker should be reshaped to mimic the arc of the green and not extend beyond where the putting surface meets the fairway, as it does now. The bunker has also widened over time. It needs to be narrowed during the recontouring.

The fairway along the left side should be mowed closer to the bunker so that shots do not get hung up in the rough and stop before they enter the sand.

## **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 1<sup>st</sup> Hole**

- Expand green to original dimensions
- Reduce the size of and reshape greenside bunker
- Remove unneeded trees along left side of the fairway all the way to the green
- . Re-contour fairway mowing pattern

## **Hole No. 2 (Old 5<sup>th</sup>): “Brainard” 190/200 yards, 147/155 yards**

Much change has occurred to what is now the longest par-3 on the golf course, with the current green built in the late 1970s.

The original green complex is clearly visible and can be spotted without trouble some 40 yards short of the existing green. It was guarded on the left by the existing fairway bunker and on the front and right by the punchbowl” feature. Two former tees can easily be seen, one on the far left corner of the property near the intersection of Fenwick and Agawam avenues, and the other under a tree and up against the hedgerow 15 yards to the right and forward of the current back tee.

In the 1990s, a wonderful teeing ground for those playing the white markers to the current hole was built, creating a testing tee shot of 140 yards. It should be retained.

Bunkering needs to be reworked on this hole, not just for aesthetic reasons, but to improve safety. Many shots from the back tee end up in the yards of the homes on Agawam Avenue. This is due to a number of factors.

The blue tee points the golfer right of the green almost at the Lynde Point Lighthouse. Subconsciously, this will cause players, depending if they are right or left handed, to pull or push the shot towards the intended target. An overcorrection results in golf balls across the street.

To alter what the player sees from the back tee requires the reworking of all bunkers on the hole

The left fairway bunker should be reshaped so that it still sits comfortably on the land but is more visible. This can be done by lowering or eliminating the

front lip and ever so slightly raising the far side and pushing sand up the slope. Any modifications to this bunker should be minor, keeping in mind that this is the only remaining bunker from the original layout of the course.

At the green, the right bunker needs to be reduced by almost half. The new bunker should be positioned more towards the middle of the putting surface. It need not be overly penal but should be deep enough so that a modicum of skill is required to escape. The reduced visual presence of the sand will make golfers more comfortable with the possibility of missing to that side.

Keeping the area between the bunker and the lateral hazard on the right as rough will mean those players who do end up well to the right of the green are still faced with a testing up-and-down.

The sand bunker behind the green should be converted to a grass bunker. Because of the design and the prevailing wind, the sand is constantly being blown out of the bunker, requiring workers to replace it a number of times during the course of the year. This green presents penalty enough without the need of this sand hazard,

The left bunker should also be reduced slightly and moved closer to the green. The mounding between the bunker and the green should be removed. The mound is made up of sand that accumulated over the years. The bunker should also be rotated counterclockwise slightly so as to make it more visible from the back tee and encourage golfers to play away from the left side.

The goal is not to place the bunker in front of the entire green and prevent golfers from using the natural left-to-right contour of the approach to run shots onto the putting surface. The goal is for players to see the sand and want to hit away from it and, ultimately, the houses.

Like all other greens in Fenwick, the putting surface needs to be expanded to its original dimensions.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 2<sup>nd</sup> Hole**

- Reduce and relocate right greenside bunker
- Reshape fairway bunker to make more visible
- Expand green to original dimensions

- Shrink and lower left greenside bunker; move closer to green
- Convert back sand bunker to grass bunker

### **Hole No. 3 (Old 6<sup>th</sup>): “Davis” 140/150 yards**

The original design of this hole was significantly different than today’s version. The tee was located somewhere in the vicinity of today’s second green and the original green was to the right of the present location. In the 1901 edition of Harper’s Official Golf Guide, the distance was listed as 180 yards.

The length was most likely shortened as houses were built on either side of the hole. When the green complex was moved to the current location, there were no bunkers around it. There was, located just north of Neponset Avenue, a berm similar to the one on the sixth hole, and this may have obscured the putting surface from the tee. There was also a bunker short and well right of the green, apparently left over from the original green complex.

In the late 1960s, bunkers were added to the left and right of the putting surface. The one on the left was always large, but has expanded in the ensuing 40-plus years. By the late 1980s, the one on the right was reduced to a much smaller version and was not visible from the tee. It was removed in the 1990s when the mounds on that side were added.

Standing on the existing third tee, a player’s eye ought to be drawn to the green, to the cove beyond and to the far shore. This is the only tee shot on the course where the backdrop of the hole is water. Instead of focusing on the scenery, the player’s eye is immediately attracted to the white sand of large left bunker, which appears to be bigger than the green. Instead of taking in the beauty of the location, focus shifts to the sand hazard.

Originally, the third green would have appeared to be almost floating since the back edge melded into the distant shore. That is what players should notice. This effect can easily be recreated.

The bunker on the left should be reduced slightly in size and lowered, as if it were gently pushed into the ground. The edge of the bunker furthest from the tee should not be as prominent.

The smaller bunker would still serve the purpose of snagging wayward shots but would not be so intrusive visually.

The mound between the bunker and the putting surface that was created by decades of sand from bunker shots should be eliminated so as to recapture the original green area.

The mounds on the right, which were added in the 1990s, appear artificial and interfere with the integrity of the design of the course and the hole. They should be removed. The tiny bunker that was hidden on the right of the green should be restored. It was one of the signature hazards of Fenwick, the kind golfers talked about well after the round.

A good portion of green has been lost to encroaching collar and rough. The back and front portions have shrunk substantially over the last 20 years. These areas should be recaptured. This will enable the reinstating former hole locations.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 3<sup>rd</sup> Hole**

- Reduce, redesign and lower left greenside bunker
- Remove mound between left bunker and putting surface
- Remove right greenside mounds
- Reinstate small right greenside bunker
- Expand putting surface to original dimension

### **No. 4 (Old 7<sup>th</sup>): “Cove” 322/359/443 yards**

In the early years of Fenwick, the fourth hole may have had the most difficult approach shot on the course. As late as 1968, the green for the hole was just past the existing berm, with Sequassen Avenue as an intimidation factor just to the right. Also adding difficulty to the play was the fact the front portion of the berm was a sand bunker, much the way the berm on the sixth hole was until the 1980s.

In its earliest incarnation, today’s fourth hole was measured 300 yards, with the current forward tee the original teeing ground.

The green was moved to its current location in 1969. The two bunkers to the left of the green were built then, as well. In 1970, on a whim, an employee of the course maintenance staff added the right front greenside bunker. He was dismissed for his efforts; however, the bunker remains.

Also up until 1970, the berm ran across nearly the entire width of the fairway. About two-thirds of it was removed that year.

In the 1960s, a bunker was added in the left rough, 170 yards off the tee. In the 1970s, another bunker was positioned in the left rough, directly across from the berm, about 60 yards short of the middle of the green. They were both removed in the 1990s.

In the 1970s, the blue tee was added, creating a wonderful risk-and-reward scenario, the best on the course. It is the only time in Fenwick where a golfer is forced to hit over water.

The more a player successfully bites off on the tee ball from the water tee, the shorter and easier is the second shot. With favorable weather and turf conditions as well as a pair of well-struck shots, the green can be reached in two.

The approach shot to the fourth green has been altered significantly in the last 40 years.

Golfers had the option of negotiating the fourth hole on the right, left, or center as they made their way from tee to green for most of its existence. But for nearly the last 30 years, the right and left options have been all but eliminated.

For instance, originally, golfers could play the hole down the right side. Yes, a mishit to the right on any shot could end up out of bounds or in a hazard and those who did skirt trouble along the right were faced with a blind approach to the green; however, before the right greenside bunker was added in the 1970s, that path to the green presented an inviting route on which to approach the green, a true risk-reward scenario. A well-played shot would land short of the green and kick onto the putting surface. When the bunker was added on the right, that bump-and-run option was taken away.

Beginning in the 1970s, and extending into the 1980s, trees were planted down the left side of the hole. As more were put in and they increased in size, the left hand route was eliminated.

Originally golfers could play left side off the tee and have view of the green, but with the knowledge that a miss to the left on the approach would find one of the two greenside bunkers.

Now, with the encroaching trees, the two left bunkers rarely come into play. Making matters worse, the turf under the trees is sparse, at best, and non-existent in many spots. The ground is compacted and hard with protruding roots, creating difficult lies.

The approach to the green, in part because of the trees, is the narrowest on the golf course, just 10 yards wide, much too slim an area for the average golfer considering the hole can play as a 359-yard par-4 into the wind.

The original width and openness need to be restored. To do that, the two groups of trees on the left side of the fairway nearest to the green should be removed. This will bring the left greenside bunkers back into play as golfers make use of the left side option.

The right front bunker should be eliminated. This will restore the bump-and-run option for the right side. The reinstated grass area should be mowed to collar height, not kept at rough height, as a way to entice golfers to play that line.

To counter the widening of the approach and lessening of the difficulty, the right rough just past the berm should be allowed to grow up and be maintained as a naturalized or fescue area of wispy long grass. This will take a toll on those looking to take the right hand route, but who failed. The penalty for landing in the unirrigated area will not be excessive.

The two left greenside bunkers need to be reworked and moved closer to the green.

With the trees removed, the fairway needs to be widened and mowed closer to the new bunkering so that shots find the sand rather than stopping in the rough.

The green should be returned to its original dimensions, legitimate cupping areas have been lost in the last 25 years. In the future, creating a green that is less severe and fits more with the historic design links style and the heritage of Fenwick is an option.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 4<sup>th</sup> hole**

- Remove right front greenside bunker, convert area to collar-height turf
- Move two left greenside bunkers closer to the putting surface, reshape and deepen both
- Remove trees on left side of fairway approaching the green, including those near the two greenside bunkers
- Expand green to original dimensions

### **No. 5 (Old 8<sup>th</sup>): “Hotel” 307/340/350 yards**

At first look, the fifth can appear to be a rather simple hole, a straight away par-4 of mid length. Along with the sixth and the eighth, the fifth plays approximately the same yardage as it did when the golf course opened. On the original course map (pre-1900) the distance for today’s fifth was listed at 365 yards.

However, because of the out of bounds left off the tee (originally the house and yard were in play), and then the out of bounds to the right of the green, there is plenty of trouble.

However, the strategy, for playing the fifth is minimal. That can be rectified with modifications to existing bunkers that will create a strategic hole.

Two hundred yards off the white/blue tee on the right side of the fairway is a small fairway bunker that was added in the late 1970s. It is aligned diagonally to the line of the play.

The first step to adding strategy to this hole is to enlarge that bunker so it extends from the right rough line 10 more yards into the fairway, using the existing bunker angle as a guideline. The bunker should be raised so that it is visible from the tee and should also be deepened slightly with a larger lip on the green side of the hazard to make a recovery shot more difficult than required now, but not so deep that the green cannot be reached from the sand.

The second alteration will be to create a better greenside bunker, left and short of the putting surface, replacing the existing crescent-shaped sand hazard. The new bunker will be deep enough so that golfers cannot putt out of it, but not so deep that only the best players can extricate themselves. It will be subtle so as to fit with the relatively flat topography.

With these alterations implemented, golfers who challenge the right fairway hazard off the tee, either by carrying it or playing near to it, will have a clear opening to the green.

Those who hit away from the bunker will defer the challenge to the second shot. If the golfers who choose that route wish to hit their second shots on the green, they will be required to carry the greenside bunker. Those who don't want to carry the sand can play away from the hazard but will not be able to reach the putting surface in two. They will still, though, have the chance to make an up-and-down for par without having played over a bunker on the tee or approach shots.

The mounding to the right of the green that was added in the 1990s should be removed. With the out-of-bounds stakes so close on the right, there is already enough of a penalty for missing to that side. Also, because of the design of the mounds, they are difficult to mow. The resulting combination of the tall grass and the shape of the mounds create awkward and often difficult lies that are too punitive for a shot that barely missed this tiny green.

Here too, it is imperative that the putting surface that has been lost needs to be regained. Because of the small dimensions of the green, enlarging it to its historic size will recapture hole locations and reduce wear.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 5<sup>th</sup> Hole**

- Enlarge existing right fairway bunker
- Eliminate existing bunker short and left of the green
- Create a greenside bunker near the left front corner of the putting surface
- Eliminate right greenside mounds
- Expand green to original dimensions

## **No. 6 (Old 9<sup>th</sup>): “Bunker” 135/138/153 yards**

If the legend is true that the sixth was the first of the Fenwick greens and was first played in 1894, then it is the oldest continuously used green in Connecticut, well over 100 years old and built at a time when Fenwick Hall was a summer destination and golf was a new and growing sport in the U.S.

Originally, the putting surface was only the top tier of today’s green. In 1997, to alleviate wear and tear on what was then the smallest green, the height of cut on the approach was dropped and the lower section of the green was created.

The berm that obscures the green is one of the few that remains from the earliest days of the layout and adds a wonderful quirkiness by creating a semi-blind short par-3.

Sometime prior to 1952, bunkers, it appears, were added on both sides of the original green. In fact, there may have been four bunkers at one point.

The primary problem with the two existing bunkers is that they are located too far away from the putting surface, snaring only the worst of shots.

A new bunker on the left should be placed nearer the putting surface. It should have an off-centered grass tongue that extends down into the sand from the greenside edge.

On the right, the one bunker should be divided into two and both placed closer to the green. The two new bunkers will not be duplicates of each other, but differ slightly in size and shape.

The green surface needs to be expanded.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design**

- Create left greenside bunker, make smaller and closer to the putting surface than existing bunker
- Convert right greenside bunker to a pair of small bunkers, move them closer to green
- Expand putting surface

**No. 7 (Old 1<sup>st</sup>): (formerly “Old First”) “Bulkeley” 249/323/335 yards**

This hole, almost more than any other in Fenwick has undergone substantial revisions since it was first created as a straightaway par-4 of 240 yards.

The original green was located north of the existing right fairway bunker, almost flush up against Nibang Avenue. Remnants of the original green can still be seen.

There were no bunkers on the hole in 1934, but by 1965 there was one on the left side of the fairway and one each short right and to the left of the green.

In the 1960s, the green was moved to where it is now and at the same time the tee was moved to south to create the dogleg. In 1970, there were five bunkers on the hole, a left fairway bunker closer to the tee than the existing one, another in the right rough at the dogleg, where the current one is situated, as well as two bunkers left of the green and one on the right. There was no bunker off the back of the putting surface. That one was most likely added in the 1990s.

As of 2014, the most glaring problem with this hole is the tree some 30 yards short and to the left of the green. It is in such a poor location that it ruins not one, but two features of the hole.

This tree was not part of the original design of the hole when it was a straight par four or when the hole was converted to a dogleg. Because of its location, the tree has a significant impact on how the seventh is played and is counter to the links-style golf called for by the design of the course.

Any player whose drive ends up in the left fairway bunker is faced with little or no chance to reach the green, since the tree is exactly in line with the putting surface. It is blatantly unfair to expect the average golfer to play a sand shot of approximately 75 yards over a tree.

This basic design faux pas is commonly known as a “double hazard,” with the golfer being penalized twice for hitting one wayward shot.

While the tree creates problems now, it is only going to cause more in the future as it grows and the branches spread. Within a matter of a few years,

players who are not long off the tee will find that even though their tee shots are in the fairway, the tree is blocking their route to the green.

Invariably, as the tree grows and its roots expand, water and nutrients will be drawn away from the nearby fairway, creating turf problems. In fact, the roots of that tree have already made their way to the green in their quest to seek water, because the green is irrigated and the fairway is not. The roots continue to invade as the tree grows and, as a result, the condition of the putting surface will deteriorate and suffer as the tree draws more water and more nutrients from the green. Removing the tree adheres to one of the goals of the master plan, to improve turf quality.

In much the same way, the bunker behind the green takes away visually from the approach shot. The entire bunker should be lowered by at least a foot and converted to a grass bunker, constructed wide enough to be fair.

The left greenside bunker needs to be reshaped and tucked more tightly into the green complex. The existing mound on the green, caused by the build up of sand from bunker shots, needs to be eliminated.

The putting surface must be expanded to its original dimensions. Some wonderful hole locations have been lost in the last 25 years.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 7<sup>th</sup> Hole**

- Remove tree in left rough, just short of the green
- Reshape left greenside bunker, reducing size
- Lower sand bunker at back of green and convert to a grass bunker ensuring it is not too narrow or concave
- Expand green surface to original dimensions

### **No. 8 (Old 2<sup>nd</sup>): “Riversea” 265/280/290 yards**

The eighth hole has one of the best-known and controversial hazards in Fenwick. “Jaws,” has its fans and detractors. In many ways, it has become a hazard that advanced and beginner golfers alike “love to hate.” It is not consistent with links-style design, but its unique appeal makes it a feature that should be retained.

Because this bunker has come to define the hole, the following discussion is meant to provide a plan for changing this feature when and if the Park Commission were to decide to do so.

As it exists now, Jaws removes for all but the longest player the option of driving the green. And even for a long hitter, Jaws makes actually getting the ball on the putting surface – which is the goal of the heroic play – almost impossible.

The logical choice here is to create a bunkering scheme that entices the longer player to attempt to reach the green, while also creating strategy that affects the shorter player. Very early in its history this is precisely the kind of bunkering that guarded this green.

In 1934, the front bunker was situated approximately 15 to 20 yards in front of the putting surface. This challenged the longer players to flirt with the hazard if they intended to drive the green. The players laying back also had to deal with the bunker, if the hole was located in the front half of the putting surface. In order to get a shot to stop in that area, the approach had to land just beyond the bunker and bounce onto the green. This is how the hole was bunkered, at least as far back as 1934.

This style of bunkering would be more consistent with links style than the present bunker and creates options for a variety of players.

The foregoing discussion is more of an academic design discussion, as this Strategic Master Plan calls for keeping Jaws, with some minor modifications.

The greenside mound on top of Jaws should be significantly reduced so that the green is more visible from the tee. Flattening that area will also give shots that land there a better chance of staying on the putting surface.

The trees on the right side that protect the ninth tee also act as penalty for tee shots that stray right. Another method to encourage the longer hitters to stay away from the ninth tee, which is almost the exact same distance from the eighth tee as the eighth green, is to open up the left side. Removing one or more of the trees near the left fairway bunker will give the feeling that the left is more open than the right side.

As on the other nine holes, the green surface needs to be expanded.

## **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 8<sup>th</sup> Hole**

- Lower the mound in front of jaws so that the green is more visible from the tee
- Remove trees on left side of hole and extend mowed rough line back to create left side option.
- Expand green surface to original dimension

## **No. 9 (Old 3<sup>rd</sup>): “Westward Ho” 453/505/545 yards**

Fenwick ends with a quirkiness that befits it. Rarely does a course end with its longest hole, as Fenwick does. (This hole was originally the third and the sixth was the final hole. That too, was an unusual arrangement, with the course ending on a par-3.)

Over the years there have been alterations to the ninth. It was listed at 520 on the original course map, with no bunkers or trees.

By 1965, there were still no trees but six bunkers had been added, four in the fairway and two greenside, all of the penal style. Two of those remain, the right fairway bunker approximately 180 yards off the tee, and the left greenside bunker. The current green was built in 1970 on almost the exact location of the one it replaced.

The concept behind the right fairway bunker is a sound one, serving to break up the flat green line of the fairway while making the golfer realize that right rough is not a safe bailout area. Where once its distance off the tee was appropriate to equipment and the distance the golf ball travelled, the bunker now needs to be moved farther along the fairway. It should be placed at 215 yards off the middle of the middle teeing ground and built so as to be visible by the players but not clash with the topography.

The down slope is a subtly deceiving feature. For those long enough to get the golf ball to the downturn with some pace, having it travel all way to the bottom is a possibility and from the flat lie at the bottom of the hill, reaching the green in two can be easy.

For the golfer who attempts but fails to reach the bottom so that the drive comes to rest on the slanting fairway, the result is a downhill lie so severe that it can prevent reaching the putting surface with a second shot. Being back some 20 yards on the on the upper plateau is often preferred.

The tree in the right rough, approximately 95 yards from the middle of the green, acts as a hazard. It was correct to remove the fairway bunkers along that side. This was a double hazard situation where the golfer who found sand and who wanted to go for the green with a recovery shot, had to hit over a tree.

The left greenside bunker should be reshaped. It has expanded over the years and become so large it appears to dwarf the entire green complex.

The bunker should have a low profile and be cut into the side of the green, with a grass face, not sand as it is now.

The putting surface of this green complex also needs to be expanded to its original dimensions. Some very tricky and challenging hole locations have been lost due to encroaching rough and fringe, particularly in the back corners.

Unfortunately, because of the lowness of the second half of the ninth hole and the high water table, it is the wettest fairway and approach on the golf course. A survey of the approach to the green should be done to determine if drainage can improve the firmness of that area, and other options should be considered for raising the fairway at the bottom of the hill over time.

### **Plan for Proper Care, Maintenance and Design, 9<sup>th</sup> Hole**

- Relocate right fairway bunker approximately 35 yards further down the fairway and shape so that it is visible from the tee while still working with the land
- Remodel left greenside bunker reducing size
- Restore putting surface to original dimensions

## Hole-by-Hole Synopsis

### No. 1

- Expand green to original dimensions
- Reduce the size of and reshape greenside bunker
- Remove unneeded trees along left side of the fairway all the way to the green
- Re-contour fairway mowing pattern

### No. 2

- Reduce and relocate right greenside bunker
- Reshape fairway bunker to make more visible
- Expand green to original dimensions
- Shrink and lower left bunker; move closer to green
- Convert back sand bunker to grass bunker

### No. 3

- Reduce, redesign and lower left greenside bunker
- Remove mound between left bunker and putting surface
- Remove right greenside mounds
- Reinstate small right greenside bunker
- Expand putting surface to original dimension

### No. 4

- Remove right front greenside bunker, convert area to collar-height turf
- Move two left greenside bunkers closer to the putting surface, reshape and deepen both
- Remove trees on left side of fairway approaching the green, including those near the two greenside bunkers
- Expand green to original dimensions

### No. 5

- Enlarge existing right fairway bunker
- Eliminate existing bunker short and left of the green
- Create a greenside bunker near the left front corner of the putting surface
- Eliminate right greenside mounds
- Expand green to original dimensions

**No. 6**

- Create left greenside bunker, smaller, and closer to the putting surface than existing bunker
- Convert right greenside bunker to a pair of small bunkers, move them closer to green
- Expand the putting surface

**No. 7**

- Remove tree in left rough, just short of the green
- Reshape left greenside bunker, reducing size
- Lower sand bunker at back of green and convert to a grass bunker ensuring it is not too narrow or concave
- Expand green surface to original dimensions

**No. 8:**

- Lower the mound in front of jaws so that the green is more visible from the tee
- Remove trees on left side of hole and extend mowed rough line back to create left side option.
- Expand green surface to original dimension

**No. 9**

- Relocate right fairway bunker approximately 35 yards further down the fairway and shape so that it is visible from the tee while still working with the land
- Remodel left greenside bunker reducing size
- Restore putting surface to original dimensions

## SUMMARY

There are several major areas of focus for this Strategic Master Plan: bunkers, trees and fescue, tees, maintenance and proper agronomy to maintain firm fairways and approaches.

**Bunkers.** Bunkers need to be reshaped and reduced in size at the greens on the first, third, seventh, eighth and ninth holes as well as fairway bunkers on the second and eighth holes.

Bunkers need to be eliminated on second (rear greenside), fourth (right front), and seventh (rear greenside).

Bunkers need to be relocated and reshaped on the second (left and right greenside), fourth (two left greenside), fifth (right fairway and left front greenside), sixth (right and left greenside), ninth (fairway).

In addition, mounds next to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> greens will be eliminated.

**Trees and fescue.** According to the “Fenwick Golf Course Statement of Purpose” adopted by the Board of Warden and Burgesses, “Where trees serve no purpose or are not considered a ‘specimen tree’ they can be removed if it will mean improved turf quality and playability of the golf course. If tree planting is required, care must be taken to species and locations so that neither roots nor shade harm the turf of the golf course.”

The most immediate need to improve the playability of the golf course is to eliminate the two clusters of trees that are approximately 40-70 yards short left of the 4<sup>th</sup> green and to eliminate the large maple that blocks the left side of the 7<sup>th</sup> green.

Going forward, as trees on the course die or are removed, they will be replaced with areas of fescue as long as it does not interfere with normal play.

As these areas are permitted to grow, it is also imperative that the grass be more of the “wispy” type that is visually attractive but allows the ball to be

found and played with some difficulty but not more than a “half-shot” penalty.

**Tees.** It is understood that on every golf course every tee, over time, will shift and become un-level and/or bumpy. There is little that can be done to prevent this occurrence. As a result, the tops of tees must be leveled on a regular basis. Most of the tees at Fenwick have gone too long without work and need to be improved. In some cases, the maintenance staff can do this. In others, it might be wise to employ a golf course construction company to perform the task.

**Equipment and maintenance.** In order for Fenwick to be maintained as a links-style golf course and for the historic design characteristics to be recaptured and retained, the golf course superintendent must be outfitted with the necessary equipment. That includes walking greens mowers in conjunction with triplex greens mowers.

Walking mowers need less area to turn than triplex mowers, and as a result, areas of greens that have become collar or rough can be returned to putting surface.

**Proper Agronomic Conditions.** Any strategic plan must keep in mind that the proper condition of the greens and approaches is firm. It should also be understood that the superintendent is charged with maintaining fairways that are unirrigated, which inherently brings with it many challenges. To that end, the superintendent should be allowed instructed to maintain fairways and approaches in firm condition and to hire agronomic consultants if he/she deems that necessary in order properly maintain Fenwick as a links-like golf course.

Throughout the implementation of this Strategic Plan, the involvement and participation of the Superintendent is crucial.