

CWA Local 1081

Fax

TO: Al Fusco
FROM: David Weiner
DATE: August 26, 2009
RE: OPRA Request Re. Golf Clubs' Superintendent Hiring
Pages, Including Cover Sheet: 5

COMMENT: As per the content of the attached letter of today written Essex County Executive DiVincenzo. Thank you.

Communications



NEW JERSEY, LOCAL 1081



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August 26, 2009

Hon. Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive
Hall of Records, Room 405
465 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Newark, NJ, 07102

**Re: OPRA Request
Golf Clubs' Superintendent Hiring**

Dear Mr. DiVincenzo:

Attached, please find a copy of the Open Public Records Request (OPRA) request CWA Local 1081 has submitted this day to the County of Essex for a copy of all documents within the Administration's possession regarding Timothy Crist whom you have hired as the first Essex County golf course superintendent at an annual salary of \$105,000. Said documents should include the delineation of the funding source for Mr. Crist's salary as was reported within the attached article published within today's edition of *The Star Ledger*, entitled "The county gets serious about golfing".

CWA Local 1081 and our Union's members, needless to say, are not nearly as enthusiastic as you were when you were quoted within the article regarding the first ever hiring of an Essex County golf course superintendent at an annual salary of \$105,000.

Perhaps our decided dearth of delight with your most recent excessive expenditure upon the County's recreational facilities is due to the fact that you have wantonly withheld similar interest in improving the livelihoods of the County's rank and file employees by denying them fair remuneration for their significantly successful efforts to provide the preeminent services possible the residents of the County of Essex enjoy.

Or, perhaps our absence of ardor for your Administration's most recent excess expended upon such comparatively petty pursuits is due as well to the fact that many thousands of County residents are unemployed while the Administration's welfare-to-work and WIA (Workforce Investment Act) programs suffer a scandalously scant nineteen percent training placement rate even as the Division of Welfare's caseload has increased by thirty

percent over the past twenty months as our agency's staffing has increased a mere five percent during that same time span.

In order for your Administration to truly succeed in achieving its clichéd catchphrase of "Putting Essex County First", it must learn to "walk and chew gum at the same time" and get serious about more critical County concerns that its golf courses, parks and zoo. In addition to letting the golfers know you're "committed to keeping the public courses in good shape"; why not let the County's employees and the men, women and children they serve know you are equally committed to keeping their livelihoods, and lives, "in good shape" as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Weiner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David H. Weiner, President
CWA Local 1081

The county gets serious about golfing

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

Nic Corbett

FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

The manager of some of the top private golf clubs in New Jersey will now be in charge of maintaining Essex County's three public courses, which are undergoing a \$7 million upgrade.

Essex County Executive Joe DiVincenzo announced the hiring of Timothy Christ at a news conference yesterday at Hendricks Field Golf Course in Belleville, where renovation was just completed. Christ will become Essex County's first golf course superintendent, at a salary of \$105,000.

I want someone who's now going to look ahead and take our courses to the next level to really make them the best," DiVincenzo said. "We want to be just as good as some of the private courses."

Christ, of Lanoka Harbor in Ocean County, has 15 years of experience in the golf industry, most recently as golf course superintendent at Mansion Ridge Golf Club in Monroe, N.Y. He managed Metedeconk National Golf Club in Jackson and the Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Bedminster. He also worked at Pine Valley Golf Club in South Jersey and Merion Golf Club in Ardmore, Pa., which have been ranked among the top 10 courses of the country.

Hendricks is the second of Essex County's public golf courses to receive a facelift. In planning the restoration, consultants reviewed the original design elements of the course created by architect Charles Banks in 1928, county officials said. Banks also designed the Essex County Country Club and the Rock Spring Club, both in West Orange.

At Hendricks, the drainage was upgraded to prevent flooding, especially at the 18th hole, an automated irrigation system was installed on the fairways, trees were pruned, pathways were repaved and bunkers and tees were rebuilt.

Similar improvements were completed at the Francis Byrne course in West Orange in May, and the renovation at Weequahic in Newark is expected to be completed by Nov. 1.

Frank Burke, a West Caldwell resident who has golfed at Hendricks Field for a decade, was impressed by the improvements, which he thinks will make Essex County courses more competitive compared to other counties.

"They straightened out the fairway, redid the greens," he said. "They added a couple sand traps to make it a little more challenging."

The funding for the projects came from the county's capital improvement budget, but DiVincenzo said it will be repaid through a gradual hike in user fees. The cost for residents to use the Hendricks Field and Weequahic courses on weekdays increased from \$19 to \$20 this year. The Francis Byrne course's fee increased from \$18 to \$23. The rates will rise again next year to \$22 at Hendricks, \$21 at Weequahic and \$25 at Francis Byrne.

Revenue from the fees has increased by \$150,000 from the same period last year, DiVincenzo said. The courses raise about \$4 million a year in fees and golf ID cards.

By hiring Christ, DiVincenzo said, he's letting the golfers know he's committed to keeping the public courses in good shape.

"I went and got the very best guy," DiVincenzo said. "I wanted to show them that their investment is going to be well worth it."

Christ was recommended by Turko Golf Inc., the Suffern, N.Y., company that was awarded a \$6.8 million contract to renovate the golf courses. Out of the applicants the county interviewed, "he's the one who stood out," DiVincenzo said.

The engineering firm of Hatch Mott MacDonald in Millburn received a \$400,000 contract to design the improvements.

Nic Corbett is a reporter with the New Jersey Local News Service. She may be reached at (908) 243-6216 or ncorbett@njlns.com