State agency takes over Pease AFB course

The 18-hole, Alexander Findlay-designed layout opened in early April as a daily-fee facility after 35 years as a strictly military course, according to Skip Jones, chairman of the seven-member Pease Development Authority.

"The course is in better shape than when we took it over," said Jones, whose agency has had two mechanics attending to the machinery and a crew renovating the clubhouse since it signed a lease for the course in January.

The development authority, which is seeking new uses for the former Air Force facility, plans to operate the course for many years, Jones said.

"Having another public course fills a need in the area," Jones said.

"And we're hoping it will generate some revenue. We're looking for 20,000 to 25,000 rounds this year. I'd be ecstatic with 30,000."

Long-time Portsmouth Country Club head pro Tony Loch is the general manager and former Portsmouth CC superintendent Bob LaRoche the superintendent.

"We have the best superintendent in New England," Loch said. "Bob is planning to enlarge some of the greens, edge the traps and put in new sand, contour the fairways and build two or three new tees."

Expanding the course to 36 holes has also been discussed.

"The area needs two more public courses," Loch said. "This is one of them. Hopefully we'll build the other 18, too."