continued from page 29

arrived, primarily because user fees were too low to sustain operations. After implementing new fee structures, Woodward cut the deficit in half. He says the deficit will drop even more once the facility installs a new irrigation system along with other upgrades spelled out in the business plan.

Although Mission Bay Golf Course and Practice Center breaks even, Woodward had to take the boards off the clubhouse windows as one of his first tasks of taking it over. When he visited the facility while interviewing for the job in 2005, he said “golfers were everywhere, but the building had boards over the windows. I wasn’t sure what was going on.”

You wouldn’t think a business plan and renovation schedule would be a hard sell to residents who watched their golf facilities dwindle into disrepair, but Woodward eventually won them over. That’s little surprise for those who know him. A self-described type-A personality, Woodward has thrived in the community enterprise throughout his professional life.

His previous job involved a 31-year stint for the city of Mesa, Ariz. He eventually grew to manage two golf courses, parks and a cemetery. He was a fixture in that community, and in just three years his status evolved in San Diego from golf pariah to savior. The Open will generate about $100 million for the city in addition to worldwide attention.

But his plight hasn’t been easy. Besides death threats and disgruntled local golfers, Woodward has prepared for the national championship amid the South Course’s 60,000 annual rounds, dozens of renovation projects and years of neglect that had to be amended (the North Course welcomes more than 90,000 rounds each year).

“It takes three to five years to get ready for a championship of this caliber, and we were probably 15 years behind the eight ball because of deferred maintenance and general neglect of the golf course and the facility as a whole,” he says. “I told my boss I wouldn’t have given him $25 for the experience when I got here. It was in that poor of shape.”

These were no small projects, either. Although the South Course had a major renovation in 2001 by of Rees Jones, heavy play and poor maintenance created some serious agronomic issues.

First, Woodward had to deal with the traffic, so he created a continuous cart path around the South Course. Neither the United States Golf Association nor the PGA Tour, which runs the annual Buick Invitational in February on the North and South Courses, wanted to take primary responsibility for the