

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, April 8, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Town Hall – Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Bill Putnam, Norene Ward, John Zappia, Roger Brooks, Steve Sloan and Tim Moody

Absent: Frank Sola

Others Present: Brian Bickford, Golf Pro, Toby Young, Golf Course Superintendent, Bill Shane, Town Manager, Bill Stiles and Cynthia Stennett.

- I. Welcome & Introduction of Guests** – Bill Putnam called the meeting to order at 6:00 and welcomed and thanked everyone for coming.
- II. Public Comment** – None
- III. Approval of March 11, 2009 Minutes** – Bill Putnam asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the March 11, 2009 minutes in their packets. Norene requested the minutes be amended to clarify her point. Page 4, paragraph 4, change to read: “Norene brought up the issue of resident vs. non-resident rates and stated that she had given some thought to offering Cumberland residents a “**percentage discount**” on memberships and greens fees. A motion was made by Steve Sloan to approve the amended minutes and seconded by Bill Putnam.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY

Review of Revenue Reports – Bill Shane presented the revenue reports in Alex’s absence and brought the Board’s attention to the fact that for the month of February of this year we are showing a profit of \$17,624 as compared to the same time last year when a loss was reported of \$22,201. He further stated that we are currently down 12 ½% on revenues from where we should be although last July was a total washout which directly impacted those numbers. Bill stated that he was anticipating a projected loss of approximately \$100,000 for this year. He stated that \$250,000 worth of expenses had been cut as well as the sale of the banquet center and changing over the Viking Grill to Charlie Sparrow. He stated that the six figures losses were very difficult to absorb as well as the role weather had played in the situation.

Bill also stated that the memberships are down but that he felt they would increase during the next month. He stated that he was hopeful the tide would turn during the months of April, May and June but that Alex was projecting a loss of \$80,000 - \$90,000 by the end of June. Roger asked how much of that loss had occurred in July of last year and Bill stated that July is usually always one of the most profitable months, providing

almost a quarter of the year's revenues and last year's bad weather had significantly impacted the bottom line.

Bill also reported that everyone had done a great job in keeping expenses down and at a minimum. He indicated that the reasonable rates being charged at Val Halla would, hopefully, help bring in more business especially when compared at other golf courses. He stated that he felt that the expenses associated with heating and air conditioning costs at the banquet center would really show a cost savings going forward.

Bill Stiles stated that with the new irrigation system and the addition of the MSGA that he felt things looked very favorable. Brian stated that there had been a problem with people not being able to play because of the number of extremely rainy days last year.

There was discussion about what else could possibly be done to bring in more revenues to try to combat the ongoing financial issues. Bill Putnam stated that he hoped if the weather is decent this season, and with the changes made, that some improvements will be seen. Bill Stiles stated that he felt the emphasis should be placed on the course being a benefit to the Town and perhaps a discount for residents may be the key.

IV. New Business:

a. Business Reports:

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian brought the Board's attention to his handout, which had been included in the packet.

He informed the Board that Open House is coming up on the weekend from 10:00 – 2:00 and that he had been advertising on WJAB, WEEI and WGAN in the greater Portland area. The signs have been put up throughout town announcing the Open House and there has been a great deal of traffic on the website as well. Brian stated that he anticipates between 200 – 300 people to attend the Open House and that the Sparrow's Nest will be having food available for the event.

Brian reported that there will be a New Member Orientation a week after the Open House. It is totally voluntary for people who want to learn a little more about Val Halla and he indicated that according to new data there are 44 new members.

Brian informed the Board that he is going to split the Assistant Pro position between Brad Leighton and Paul Adler and the reason for that is that the Golf Clinics are almost full and the course hasn't

even opened up yet. He indicated that these individuals would have more hours outside, less in the Pro Shop and that there is no additional cost to Val Halla, but that it would allow him to offer more clinics.

Brian reviewed the data on memberships as detailed in his handout and indicated that the area of concern to him was the fact that memberships are down by 120. He did state, however, that the Junior/College memberships typically come in during May and June and he brought the Board's attention to the list of people who haven't signed up as yet, but have indicated that they probably will do so. He also stated that if any of these individuals do not sign up during the Open House, he will make some calls to try to get their memberships. Bill Shane stated that he wanted Brian to be sure to mention the guaranteed membership option when speaking with these individuals.

Brian reported that Tyler Technologies had allowed him to sit in their lunchroom during lunch recently and he had signed up six new members.

Brian explained a new program being offered by the Titleist Performance Institute where they have recruited a number of physical therapists in the area to do an assessment of each individual's golf muscles and flexibility. After the evaluation each golfer is then given a handicap based on their physical attributes. Based on that information golfers are given exercises to help isolate the area which causes them to not maximize their performance. Bob Wakefield, a licensed physical therapist, is offering all members a free assessment. Norene asked where this would be taking place and Brian explained that he was trying to making arrangements to use the banquet center.

Brian explained the information on Greens Fees and Carts and the comparison rates for other golf courses. There was some discussion by the Board of how Val Halla's rates compared with those of other courses.

Brian stated that he wanted to discuss the possibility of implementing a yearly cart fee of \$525 which allows for unlimited use of a cart. Bill Stiles stated those monies could help to offset a poor season insofar as revenue generation was concerned. Bill Shane stated that he felt the fee should be \$400. Brian clarified that you must be a member in good standing to qualify for the option. Steve made a motion to institute a seasonal cart pass in

the amount of \$400 for the 2009 season for members only. The motion was seconded by Tim Moody.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY

Brian discussed the Lung Cart rate and indicated that perhaps that rate should be increase by about \$5. Brian brought the Board's attention to the top of the second page which reflects percentage of greens discount as compared to the resident/non-resident rates which is falls between \$4 - \$5. The consensus was to leave the rates as they currently are.

Brian suggested to the Board that they implement a 5-Hole Fee and after some discussion a motion was made by Tim to implement a 5-Hole Fee on weekdays before 3:00 p.m. and weekends after 3:00 p.m. for \$10 with a cart rental of \$5 and the motion was seconded by Steve Sloan.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY

Brian stated that he had met with the Ladies League and that they would like to open the Ladies League up to non-members.

Brian reported that he was recommending to the Board that they install golf mats with a 60' concrete pad on the driving range and that he felt by doing so it would add to the life of the driving range tee, be perfect for clinics, improve safety, extend the season, simulate the golf shot and give a consistent impact and feel to the golfer. He stated that the cost would be \$320 for each mat and that he would set up a rotating schedule to either use the mat or the grass.

Bill Shane indicated that he felt this would increase the use of the driving range and improve the usability of the course. Toby stated that it is the one area on the course that is the most difficult to keep green because of the amount of use it gets. Steve asked how soon the pad could be poured and how soon the mats could be delivered. Toby and Brian indicated that the delivery for both items was approximately one week. Norene asked if the pad could be painted green and Bill Shane indicated that could be done. Steve made a motion that a pad be poured and 8, 18 X 36 golf mats be purchased for the driving range and the motion was seconded by Tim.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED – UNANIMOUSLY

Bill Shane indicated that they would gladly accept any donations from the Val Halla Golf Association to be applied toward the pad or mats. Steve indicated he would present it for consideration.

2. Toby Young - Course

Toby reported that there was very little snow left and they have tried to drag out any remaining snow so that it could melt. He also reported that they are picking up debris from the winter season in preparation for opening. Bill Shane asked Toby to keep track of what is picked up as he felt reimbursement monies may be available from FEMA as part of the December ice storm. Bill also asked Toby to take pictures and keep track of equipment used and staff hours.

Toby reported that all of the tarred cart paths will be swept next week and reiterated that he is pleased with the condition of the greens at this point. He also reported that the new 14th green has recovered the best and is one of the best looking greens on the course.

He stated that he anticipates putting out course supplies next week and will be setting up the putting green in time for Open House.

Toby indicated that the week of April 20th through the 24th that Irrigation Systems of Maine will firing up the jockey pump and staff from George Ley will also be present to adjust the heads and blow out the lines in preparation for the upcoming season. Rainbird representatives will also be here to make sure that the electrical system is in good working order.

Aeration will taken place on May 4th through the 6th.

Toby also reported that he has completed entering the data into the computer system and reported that immediately after he had entered all the information into the system it crashed. He stated that fortunately all data was recovered because of the back-up system they had in place. He emphasized how happy he was that they had gone with Rainbird based on this situation and praised them for the assistance they were able to provide which resolved this situation so speedily.

Bill Shane asked about the condition of the second hole and the silt taken from the pond and Toby indicated that it still needs a lot of work, particularly around the pond and will need quite a bit of loam.

Tim asked if the course would be dry enough to open and Toby indicated that it would be. Norene asked if the temporary flags were still out and Toby indicated that they were but that they would be taken out shortly.

2. Val Halla Golf Association – Mark Sunderman

There was no report from the Val Halla Gold Association in Mark Sunderman's absence.

3. Greens Committee Report – Rick Doane

There was no report from the Green's Committee in Rick Doane's absence.

c. Other New Business – None

V. Old Business - None

VI. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in the Council Chambers.

There was a motion made by Steve Sloan and seconded by John Zappia to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

VII. Executive Session – The Board adjourned its regular meeting and went into Executive Session for a Discussion of the Employment Contract and Evaluation of Golf Professional.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary