

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, August 12, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Town Hall – Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Bill Putnam, Norene Ward, Frank Sola, John Zappia, Roger Brooks and Tim Moody

Absent: Steve Sloan

Others Present: Brian Bickford, Golf Pro, Toby Young, Golf Course Superintendent, Bill Shane, Town Manager, Alex Kimball, Finance Director, Bill Stiles, Council Liaison 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. Val Halla Golf Association – Bill Putnam stated that Mark Sundermann had let him know that he had a scheduling conflict and would be unable to attend.

IV. Green's Committee Report – Mark had asked Bill Putnam to inform the Board that the Green's Committee had not met since the July Board Meeting so there was no nothing to report.

V. Approval of July 8, 2009 Minutes – Bill Putnam asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the July 8, 2009 minutes in their packets. Tim stated that since Rick Doane was not at the last meeting, he recommended that the portion of the minutes mentioning Rick Doane be amended to indicate that Mark Sundermann made the reports. Seeing that there were no other corrections, additions or deletions, the minutes were accepted as amended. A motion was made by John Zappia to approve the minutes as written and seconded by Roger Brooks.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

VI. Review of Revenue Reports – Alex handed out the July revenue reports and did acknowledge that the revenue reports were discouraging although the course is in great shape. He also stated that there is not much going on in the Clubhouse as evidenced by a small net profit, which was not much different from the prior year. Alex stated that the course income is down from the prior year primarily due to cart revenues. He did state, however, that there had been quite a few tournaments this month and the monies for them have not yet come in.

Alex reported that although it appears that there is a decrease in course expenses and reminded the Board that Toby has not purchased any fertilizers or chemicals as yet and those expenses would be forthcoming. He stated that, based on this information, the figures were looking very similar to those of the prior year.

Alex brought the Board's attention to Brian's statistics from Golf Gopher, which indicate changes in behavior, and where changes may need to be made in the future. One of the areas of concern is the sharp decrease over the past couple of years in 18 holes of green's fees. Another area of concern is that of carts, particularly non-member carts. Alex did report that based on his conversation with Brian they thought it may have been possible that this decrease was due to the "cart card" and stated that he felt that it may very well be that people are still playing golf, but looking for ways to decrease their costs.

Bill Putnam stated that he felt the weather had played a significant role in holding down revenues and that perhaps a closer look should be taken for how many "golfable days" there were in July. Tim stated that he could not remember the course actually being closed for as many days last year as it has been this year. Frank stated that the National Weather Service has statistics on their website pertaining to the weather which indicates what the weather conditions were on any given day. Brian reported that when the weather forecast is for sunny weather, the Pro Shop takes a lot of calls, but when the forecast is for rain, the phone doesn't ring. Bill Putnam stated that he was in favor of lowering the price of cart rentals to make them more affordable. Frank stated that he felt if cart paths had been available, it would have been possible to pull in a few more people.

Alex stated that he is concerned about the figures, but that he felt that August will be an even better indicator of how things are going.

VII. New Business:

a. Business Reports:

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian stated that his primary focus was on preparing for the 2010 season and stated that he thought it important to see what the competition is doing as a comparison. He brought the Board's attention to his handout, which included the figures from other area courses and the rates they are charging. He stated that based on these figures, Val Halla offers a much more affordable option for all categories.

Brian stated that he is getting questions about whether or not we offer a weekday rate or a senior weekday rate and recommended

that the current rates be frozen effective 9/1/09 or sooner. He also stated that he felt it had worked well having a half-payment option upon sign-up, which allows for the “Risk Free” option. Bill Shane asked for clarification of “week day” and Brian indicated that it was Monday through Thursday. Bill Shane also asked what age was considered “senior” and Brian responded that it was 65. John indicated that he felt the rate should be set at \$499. Frank indicated that he felt that the senior weekday should be eliminated just offering a senior membership rate. Brian stated that since it has been an ongoing question, and the fact that the competition does offer it, he felt he should bring it before the Board. Alex stated that he felt if Val Halla’s rate is already the lowest around and asked why we should go any lower. Bill Putnam stated that he felt the Risk Free Membership covered all of the issues. Roger stated that consideration should be give to all the improvements that have been made and monies being invested when looking at setting the rates. His concern was that people may wonder how Val Halla can afford to make all of these improvements and still have the lowest rates around. Frank stated that he did not feel that increases should be implemented until the course was full and no more members could be accommodated. Bill Stiles stated that he felt that based on the condition of the course there would be an increase in membership and indicated that we offer the best product for the price. Tim Moody made a motion that the rates remain the same as last year with no new categories effective August 29, 2009. The motion was seconded by Frank Sola.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED 5-1.

Brian reported that there had been a foursome from the Czech Republic and a couple from North Carolina that had come specifically to play at Val Halla after having read the article in Golf Digest. Brian also reported that he had seen a significant increase in players from Riverside coming to Val Halla to play.

Bill Shane requested that Brian update the Board about the results of the MSGA Tournament. Brian reported that there had been 10 girls playing from Val Halla and that the last two were Laura Grant and Meghan Bickford and stated that it was a very good match with good golf being played.

Tim stated that he has noticed that there are significantly more “hits” on the website and wanted to comment on that fact and reiterated that he felt that Brian was doing a great job. He also commented on how informative the website was.

Brian reported that an article had been done on the “Wine ‘N Nine” in the Forecaster and also an article will be done on the Junior Golfers at Val Halla in the upcoming week.

2. **Toby Young - Course**

Bill Shane asked Toby to explain to the Board about the Top 25 Award he received and what he will be doing in September. Toby explained to the Board that the Golf Course Superintendent’s Association picks 25 of the top “up and coming” Golf Course Superintendents from across the country to go to Kansas on an expense paid three-day trip to their headquarters to attend a Leadership Academy. He reported that he was selected based on what he has done at Val Halla and Bill Shane stated how proud he was of Toby and his accomplishments.

Toby reported that his biggest focus recently was in getting ready for the Juniors last week and stated that the next focus would be on the Member/Guest event. He stated that currently there is not much going on at the course, but that they are seeding some areas as needed.

Tim reported that he has received a number of very positive comments about the course. Norene stated that she felt the course was in great shape; however, she expressed concern about the number of divots. Toby indicated that he felt it may be because they’re more people out there as well as the weather conditions. Bill Putnam stated that he felt the course looked great and asked about whether it was possible to get any Community Service labor to help repair the divots. Bill Shane indicated that it was really “more trouble than it was worth” and Toby suggested maybe the Boy Scouts might be a good option. Brian stated that the Greely Golf Team will donate a day to repair divots.

b. Other New Business –

- i.** The issue of Rates for the Upcoming Season was covered previously in the meeting.
- ii.** After some discussion it was decided that this topic will be put on the agenda for the September meeting.

VIII. Old Business – Bill Shane brought the Board’s attention to the cart path map that was enclosed in the packet. He indicated that he felt the paths all worked very well and indicated that he would like the Board’s input and comments as he would like to finalize the plans for the September Board meeting.

After some discussion, it was decided that the Board will go on a site visit to check out the cart paths just prior to the beginning of the next Board meeting in September.

VII. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, September 16, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Viking Grill at the Val Halla Golf & Recreation Center.

Bill Putnam stated that he will be unable to make the next meeting. Noreen indicated that she will be available to chair the next meeting in his absence.

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

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary