

**Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 8, 2010**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Hodges, Chairperson; Phil Cranford, Patrick Dugan and Wayne Pettit.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robert Richardson, Don Nolan and Gloria Tippet.

R&P STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director, and Pat Meyers, Golf Course Manager.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board was called to order at 6:10 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Phil Cranford moved, seconded by Patrick Dugan, to approve the minutes of April 8, 2010. Motion carried 4-0.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Rollins provided a copy of the WSGC annual comparison of FY04 – FY09 and actuals for FY10 (July 1, 2009 through May 30, 2010). Actual rounds of golf for FY10 were 32,985. Staff does not have all the data in for June 2010; all numbers are preliminary until the County audit is completed in January or February of next year. It was noted that rounds of golf are down and can likely be attributed to the economy and the weather conditions. Cart rentals are down somewhat also; more people are walking the course instead of using carts.

Mr. Cranford asked when the mortgage payments when into effect; payments began in FY08 (July 1, 2007). Staff predicts the golf course will operate at a deficit for FY10, but should retain a fund balance. Until the County audit is completed, the final fund balance can't be determined. Mr. Rollins noted the County had to pay the salary for the Food and Beverage manager for the entire year, even though he left in February. That's due to leave pay out and unemployment benefits. Mr. Rollins also reminded the Board that the course is now paying for employee future retirement benefits (OPEB); that's something that before FY08 the course did not have pay for.

Mr. Pettit asked if Wicomico Shores' rates are competitive to other courses in the area. Ms. Myers stated yes, we are very competitive. White Plains might be a little less on daily rates, but that doesn't include specials or promotional offerings.

OLD BUSINESS

Event Planning

Mr. Nolan, Mr. Dugan and Ms. Meyers had previously volunteered to serve on an event planning/marketing Committee to promote the restaurant and banquet facility. A Committee meeting was held after the last WSGC Board meeting and the main focus of the meeting was to identify "who we are and what we have to offer." It was first suggested that it might be worthwhile to hire a planner on a commission basis. However, it was then suggested it would be better to hold an annual reception for event planners so they could see the facility first hand. That idea is still being explored and the discussion will be continued during the next meeting.

The group discussed holding the reception in the fall. Ms. Meyers is to visit the Paul Hall Center to tour their facility. The first priority is to serve the golfers and then maximize the revenue generated from the banquet facility. One consideration would be not to offer full room receptions during the peak golf season.

Mr. Paul Callanan expressed support for the annual reception for events planners.

Mr. Rollins provided copies of an article titled " Dishing it Out – Maintaining a Food and Beverage Operation Doesn't Have to Eat Away at Your Profits" from Golf Business magazine. The article provided some worthwhile information and suggestions for food and beverage operations at public golf courses.

TOURNAMENTS

Ms. Meyers reported that in calendar year 2009 there were 14 tournaments held with over 100 golfers; in 2010 there were 15 with over 100 golfers. In 2009 there were 21 smaller tournaments; to date for 2010 there have been 14 smaller tournaments, with 5 others expressing interest. Thirteen of the tournaments scheduled for 2010 are having WSGC provide the food; 5 brought in caterers; 11 provided their own food.

For 2010 one event used the entire banquet room for \$1,000; there are 4 pending. The fee for renting half the room is \$600; however, if the party is very small a reduced per head price is charged. The reduced fee was developed in order to attract more parties.

A guest asked if the County could have more functions such as business meetings and Christmas parties at the Riverview. Mr. Rollins stated that the County Employees Association doesn't hold a holiday party every year and the location is up to the Employees Association. The County doesn't usually hold large business meetings. Ms. Meyers noted that the Mother's Day brunch went very well and other promotions have traditionally gone well.

Chairman Hodges was interested in what could be done in the way of promotion and marketing to bring in more rentals. Staff has moved forward with several marketing initiatives since the last Board meeting. The Course's golf trac software now enables staff to send mass emails to a list of patrons that would include upcoming specials and other information. The Homeowners Association has been very helpful in letting the Course use their main information board. Ads have been placed in the newspaper, wedding guide and R&P program guides. The Chopticon athletic boosters have also included information in their promotion materials. Kim Cullins of the Museum Division also came out and took photos that have been used for marketing and the website.

PRICE CHANGES FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Chairman Hodges asked if some of the food and beverage prices had changed. Ms. Meyers noted the beer prices decreased slightly. Mr. Pettit asked if the course is competitive with these prices; Ms. Meyers stated these are very competitive prices. Some top shelf alcohol is being phased out to avoid carrying too many brands.

Jerry Slagle stated the he's on the Board of Christmas in April and they would like to hold their tournaments at Wicomico; however, some prices are prohibitive. WSGC does allow tournaments to bring in soda and water for tournaments but they have to pay an \$8 fee per case to offset the lost revenue for the course.

Mr. Slagle stated that he represents non-profit and wants to find the best value he can for this worthy cause. Mr. Rollins stated he understands that and most of the tournaments held at WSGC are fundraisers for worthy causes. Staff has to be consistent with all the tournaments and has to try and bring in revenue for the golf course.

Phil Cranford checked with Breton Bay and the cost of a case of beer is \$27; soda \$14, water \$14; there is no handling fee. White Plains does the one day liquor license and allows tournaments to bring in their own beverages. They charge \$1.50 per soda or water (\$36 per case) or \$3 per beer (\$72 case).

Ms. Meyers added that Swann Point and Potomac Ridge both offer the option of the tournament holder getting a one day liquor license to provide their own beer. Swann Point has a \$3 service charge per person whether you bring your own or whether you buy from them, probably to offset profits lost by providing your own. Potomac Ridge also has a \$3 per person service charge; beverages sold per package deal are \$9.78 for soft drinks only per person; 17.30 beer and soda per person. For a 100 person tournament for water/soda/beer that would be \$1,730 total.

Discussion was held on how many tournaments should be held a year while still maintaining a balance with pass holders and other golfers. Many factors come into play here and staff is constantly trying to balance this and keep everyone happy. Some tournaments are growing larger and some are getting smaller due to difficulty finding sponsorships in this economy.

Chairman Hodges noted that the Board can make recommendations on prices anytime they feel it's needed. Mr. Rollins stated that during the budget process is best time to recommend changes to fees and charges.

WATER STATION

Mr. Hodges asked if the water station at the 14th tee had been addressed. Ms. Meyers stated that a water cooler was placed at the 14th hole after the last meeting. Mr. Slagle stated that Jim Farren the Course Superintendent is aware of the request. Ms. Meyers confirmed that she discussed this with Mr. Farren and will discuss this again with him in the near future.

Mr. Hodges also recommended a water station between the nines would be good. Mr. Dugan stated that as a golfer that would be good; however, from a business standpoint it might be better to have people come inside and buy a drink.

RAKES

Mr. Richardson had previously asked that Ms. Meyers check into the quality of rakes available. Ms. Meyers stated the more expensive rakes are fiberglass and tend to splinter. Mr. Farren has gone to solid rakes with covers.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be held on Thursday, October 14, 2010 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at approximately 7:45 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder