

**Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board
Special Meeting of
Thursday, January 19, 2012**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Richardson, Chairperson; Gloria Tippett, Secretary; Bob Collier, Everett “Ebie” Cooper, Gerald Slagle, Don Nolan and Tom Schumacher.

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 6:00 p.m. at the Recreation and Parks main office in Leonardtown.

Chairperson Richardson introduced new Board members Ebie Cooper and Tom Schumacher.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Bob Collier motioned, seconded by Gloria Tippett, to approve the minutes of December 15, 2011; motion carried with all in favor.

Bob Collier motioned, seconded by Don Nolan, to approve the Executive Session minutes of December 15, 2011; motion carried with all in favor.

Bob Collier motioned, seconded by Gloria Tippett, to approve the minutes of October 20, 2011; motion carried with all in favor.

REVIEW OF JANUARY 17, 2012 MEETING WITH BOCC

Mr. Rollins referred to the January 3, 2012 memo to the BOCC which outlined deficit reduction options that were discussed at the December 15, 2011 WSGC Advisory Board meeting. Mr. Rollins and Chairperson Richardson presented these deficit reduction options to the BOCC on Tuesday, January 17, 2012. Mr. Rollins thanked the Board members who attended the January 17th meeting with the BOCC and the Public Forum on January 3rd.

Staff and the Board discussed several deficit reduction measures on December 15th. Recommendations were listed in three categories; the BOCC approved moving forward with the immediate actions only at this time.

Immediate actions

- Begin the process to refinance the Clubhouse loan
- Hire an hourly employee at a lower rate of pay to replace the vacant Pro Shop Manager position

Recommendations for FY13 budget

- Eliminate administrative reimbursement for R&P Director and Administrative staff
- Eliminate administrative reimbursement for other departments

3-5 years out

- Create a new Golf Enterprise Fund personnel category
- Existing FT employees grandfathered, but through attrition, reduce salary range of six positions by 5% - 10.

- Existing FT employees grandfathered; through attrition, reduce county funded health benefits by 25% - 50%.
- Eliminate two of three FT groundskeeper positions – Through attrition; replace two FT positions with hourly employees with no benefits (maintain one FT as mechanic).

No action was taken regarding the request that the county refund the Admissions and Amusements tax funds that were previously collected by the golf course and refunded to the county's general fund. Mr. Schumacher suggested the county pay down the Clubhouse loan if the county won't reimburse the Enterprise Fund the Admissions and Amusements tax. All this will be discussed during the upcoming budget deliberations; the county plans to look at all Enterprise Funds.

The budget schedule is:

- BOCC to approve recommended budget for public hearing – March 27
- Budget public hearing – May 1
- Final budget approved – May 29

Privatization of the golf and/or food and beverage operation is also an option that the BOCC will consider. However, a motion was made on January 17th to privatize the food and beverage operation but that motion failed.

Mr. Schumacher asked about the budget assumptions at the time the Clubhouse was renovated. He said if the assumptions reflected a "break even" budget for the first few years and then the unexpected OPEB costs were factored in, then the current situation might not seem that bad; at least there would be an understanding of how this happened.

Other items considered but were determined not to be feasible:

- Eliminate contracted janitorial service and have hourly staff hours increased to clean facility.
- Assess a debit/credit card usage fee and/or install ATM machine – would be a deterrent to business and counterproductive.
- Closing the restaurant for the winter- cost analysis determined it was more costly to close than remain open due to staffing costs and loss of revenue.

OTHER BUSINESS

Restaurant Operations

Mr. Slagle requested a discussion on restaurant operations. He noted that there are at least 400 homes in the Wicomico Shores development and felt "there's untapped potential" as far as the restaurant business goes; he said "we can do better" than we are doing now. He suggested trying to find out why the homeowners aren't patronizing the restaurant more often. Mr. Richardson noted that Mr. Slagle was on the WS Homeowners Association in the past. Mr. Slagle's recommendations were:

- Brunches – should be held regularly; should have longer hours; and should be better advertised
- Seasonal hours of operation are confusing
- Mr. Slagle noted that years ago Friday night dinners were well attended
- He suggested a "happy hour"
- He thought the restaurant "is being run as a convenience to management/staff and not the patrons."
- He requested the phone number to the restaurant be placed on the ninth tee box; Ms. Meyers stated staff will do that.

- A citizen that attended suggested fundraisers to pay for things needed at the Course; she noted that volunteers conduct donut sales, plays/performances and other fundraisers at the Northern Senior Center. Volunteers would need to be solicited to handle fundraisers.
- Pizza night was recommended; a patron offered to donate a pizza oven.

Mr. Slagle recommended nine and dine type nights. He also noted that advertising needs to be enhanced. Perhaps people would volunteer to help with this. Gloria Tippettt noted that her golfing group held nine and dines for a while.

Ms. Meyers stated hours are usually reduced in the winter months to save money since golf play is down. However, this has been an unusually warm winter, so hours were not shortened as much as they would normally have been.

Mr. Nolan asked if patrons could go online and book tee times; Ms. Meyers stated that option is not available at this time; patrons can call ahead and book tee times.

Mr. Nolan asked about tee sponsorships and noted some on the course need to be updated. Mr. Meyers stated that Burco sells advertising every three years and the golf course gets a commission. Scorecards and ads are done each year. Ms. Meyers will check into the status of the tee markers; old accounts can be taken off.

Mr. Slagle asked why season pass holders are not called members; it was stated a membership implies the facility is a private club. Mr. Rollins stated that if the course was privatized the preferred tee times would probably go away. Maintaining a happy medium is a challenge for scheduling tee times with season pass holders and the general public. Mr. Nolan stated that golfers with preferred tee times should not walk; others thought early tee timers generally play fast.

Other Cost Saving Measures

Ms. Tippettt expressed concern with the credit card usage fees; can another bank provide a better rate? Another concern is the cost of propane; sometimes a phone call can get the cost reduced. Ms. Meyers stated that the Course uses the county contracts for credit cards and propane. However, staff will check into those items. She asked if the thermostat was programmable to adjust when the facility is closed; Ms. Meyers state that Building Services has the thermostat set to County standards and is locked; however, she will check with Building Services to see if they are programmed. The cost of pencils was brought up; Ms. Meyers stated the last batch of pencils was donated by Burco.

Thanksgiving Food Drive Thank You

Mr. Rollins stated that staff received a thank you letter from the Mary Lou Gough Food Pantry at Our Lady of the Wayside Church for the donations received from the annual Thanksgiving Day Food Drive. Golf Course staff members traditionally donate their time to open the course on Thanksgiving Day and waive greens and cart fees for patrons who contribute various non-perishable food and household items for charity. A copy of the letter was forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners.

Financial Report

Mr. Rollins referred to the financial report provided to the Board. The first page is the summary page going back ten years. Through December 2011, the restaurant is down \$506; the golf operation is down \$74,000; however, it is typical to be down during this time of the year with increased golf play expected in the upcoming warmer months. Rounds of golf are about 17,000 to date and about the same as this time

last year. Month to month detail was provided in comparison to the last three years. The hope is weather will be favorable, and business will be better than last year. The Board commented that December's numbers were up; Ms. Meyers noted that December was much warmer than usual.

The first quarter of FY12 was down about \$27,000 over last year for the same period; however, the course was closed for nine days due to a tropical storm and hurricane. The second quarter was up over the same time last year primarily due to warmer than usual weather. The financial picture is basically even through December, except for the OPEB costs.

Mr. Slagel asked for the updated copy of the by-laws. Mr. Rollins stated that staff can provide that; the document is also on the county's website. The bylaws were last updated June 2011.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT MEETING

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be held on Thursday, April 19, 2012 at 6:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse. A special meeting was subsequently called for January 23, 2012 to go over the FY13 budget.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:00 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder (from tape recording)