

Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board

Thursday, April 9, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Hodges, Chairperson; Chico Rivers, Vice-Chairperson; Wayne Pettit, Bob Richardson, Phil Cranford, Rick Smith and Gloria Tippett.

STAFF/OTHERS ATTENDING: Patty Meyers, Golf Course Manager, Recreation, Parks and Community Services. Others attending included Jay Morgan, the newly hired Food, Beverage and Banquet Supervisor, and Jerry Slagle, golfer.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board was called to order at 6:05 p.m. in the temporary golf operations trailer at the Golf Course.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chico Rivers motioned, seconded by Rick Smith, to approve the minutes of January 9, 2008 with one correction. Motion carried with all in favor.

Chico Rivers motioned, seconded by Rick Smith, to approve the minutes of the special meeting of February 21, 2008 as written. Motion carried with all in favor.

INTRODUCTION OF FOOD, BEVERAGE AND BANQUET SUPERVISOR

Patty Meyers introduced Jay Morgan, the new Food, Beverage and Banquet Supervisor, to the Board. Mr. Morgan stated that he's been in the food service business for almost thirty years and has managed dining facilities for the past twelve years. He retired from the Coast Guard after 21 years. He worked at the C&D Café in Solomon's as a chef for the past three years. Mr. Morgan lives in St. Mary's County and is married with four children.

BANQUET ROOM, BAR AND RESTAURANT NAME

Ms. Meyers stated that she talked to several Board members and with Recreation, Parks and Community Services staff members regarding suggested names for the new Banquet Room, Bar and Restaurant name. The consensus was to use the word Riverview in the name. Morgan stated that sometimes placing the word grill in a title makes it more informal. Names recommended included The Riverview at Wicomico, The Riverview Restaurant or the Riverview Café or Banquet Hall. Ms. Meyers stated variations of the name Riverview could be used depending on the type of function that's being promoted. Staff is working on the new logo and new marketing signs.

Phil Cranford motioned, seconded by Rick Smith, to support the recommendation to use “The Riverview” and variations of the name for the Banquet Room, Bar and Restaurant for signage and marketing efforts. Motion carried with all in favor.

CLUBHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE

Ms. Meyers provided an update on the Clubhouse project progress. She stated the project continues to move forward on schedule and within budget. Staff anticipates the renovated facility will open in late spring or early summer 2008. Ms. Meyers reported that there's less than three weeks until "close in" and the process will speed up after that. After two Metcom water pressure tests, it was determined that a pressure pump would be needed to support the facility's fire suppression system; also the water line was enlarged and rerouted as needed. The kitchen equipment has been ordered. Rick Smith asked if the balance of the contingency is not used, could it be used for other things like change orders and carpet and furniture upgrades; Ms. Meyers stated that it could. Chairman Hodges asked if money could be saved if the trailer is not needed for the entire time originally anticipated. The contract for rental is for one year and month to month thereafter. Ms. Meyers stated it's feasible that could save some money.

GOLF CARTS

Chairman Hodges referred to last month's discussion on gas versus electric golf carts. He expressed surprise to learn at that meeting that the facility was not converting to electric carts with the move into the renovated Clubhouse. Chairman Hodges also referred to an e-mail message from Director Phil Rollins with explanation on the additional costs associated with converting to electric golf carts. Chairman Hodges interpreted the e-mail to say the entire project would cost approximately \$150,000; \$50,000 of that would be done as part of the Clubhouse renovation and includes infrastructure for the future conversion to include electrical service upgrades for panels and breakers. The \$100,000 additional price tag for installing the explosion proof lighting, fans, plugs, receptacles, hydrogen detectors, etc. was cost prohibitive at this time; these items could be installed later when conversion to electric carts is done. Ms. Meyers stated that conversion to electric carts was included in the early concept plans for the Clubhouse, but when the project went to value engineering costs had to be trimmed and that was one of the items deferred.

Chairman Hodges stated he recently talked to an Easy Cart® representative. He estimated that the Course could sell its used carts for \$2,000 each, netting \$134,000, minus the approximately \$27,000 (\$400 each) the County still owes on the old fleet. Then the net could be used towards the upgrades needed for the electric carts. Then the Course could finance or lease a fleet of new carts for \$4,000 each. Ms. Meyers stated that the Course might look at purchasing 70 carts next time; that would be a total of \$280,000 to finance over five years. The last time, the County financed about \$220,000 for five years, resulting in a \$37,000 annual payment for the carts. The new payment for the higher amount

might be \$45,000 or \$50,000 per year. This is another option, but the Course would be paying more in interest.

The present fleet was financed for five years; the plan was to try and use them for another year after that at no cost to save money. Ms. Meyers expects the course to use the present carts for at least two more years before they are traded in for a new fleet. Wayne Pettit recommended setting aside money for a few years so that when the new fleet is purchased the County wouldn't owe as much. Chairman Hodges stated the Board should conduct a study on whether a new fleet should be purchased now or later and consider gas or electric carts. Mr. Rivers stated the study should center on whether to purchase gas or electric carts. He also wanted to know how the Commissioners feel about the conversion to electric carts. Meyers stated while she supports the conversion from gas to electric carts in the future, she is hesitant on adding any other financial burdens to the Golf Course at this time.

Chairman Hodges stated that his research determined that the average maintenance on a gas cart is \$279 per cart, per year. Maintenance for electric carts is about \$130 per cart, per year. The warranty on a battery is four years. Ms. Meyers stated that it would cost about \$700 per cart to replace batteries. He also stated there are advantages with leasing versus purchasing. Chairman Hodges asked if a separate golf cart storage facility versus storage inside the Clubhouse was studied; Ms. Meyers stated it was considered during the early planning stages for the renovated Clubhouse. It was suggested the Course shop around for the best trade in price; Ms. Meyers stated that the old fleet would need to be disposed of per County policy.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Rivers read aloud a letter expressing some concerns from citizens.

Concerns included:

- Greens - The "speed" of green surfaces
- Traps - Rocks present in bunkers
- Fairway cuts – Multiple cuts on some holes
- Hazard and O.B. markers – Numerous locations where stakes are missing
- Lack of blue tee locations during winter play

Mr. Rivers thought the letter was well written and was presented in a cordial manner. Chairman Hodges stated that he recently spoke to Jim Farren about the conditions of the Bermuda grass; Mr. Farren stated that last year's drought conditions may have impacted the grass. Ms. Meyers stated that since Mr. Farren isn't here, she will have to speak to him and have him respond to the concerns via e-mail or during the next Board meeting.

Mr. Slagle asked if the budget is sufficient to allow seasonal staff to work on these concerns. Ms. Meyers stated that the operating budget is tied to the fees collected; it's always a balance between affordability and quality of the Course.

Mr. Rivers stated that the goal is to be comparable to other nearby courses. Mr. Slagle stated that he thought the revenues from the Golf Course were going to subsidize other Recreation and Parks' programs. Ms. Meyers stated that is not the case; the Golf Course has its own separate enterprise fund.

Mr. Slagle asked if hours have been established for the bar and grill. Ms. Meyers stated that is being worked on now. Mr. Morgan stated that the grill will definitely be open for lunch; other hours will be expanded and evaluated as the operation progresses.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be a special meeting, held on Wednesday, June 11, 2008, at 6:00 p.m.; location to be set later.

The meeting concluded at approximately 7:30 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder