

WICOMICO SHORES GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

**June 9, 2005
Meeting Minutes**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Merrill "Chico" Rivers, Chairperson, Jim Hodges, Vice-Chairperson, Wayne Pettit, Richard Smith, Robert Richardson and Gloria Tippet.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Phil Cranford.

OTHERS ATTENDING: Phil Rollins, Director, St. Mary's County Department of Recreation, Parks and Community Services (RP&CS), Pat Meyers, Golf Course Manager and Jim Farran, Golf Course Superintendent. Carol Gallagher, the County's Procurement Manager, and several citizens also attended the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

The Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. at the Wicomico Shores Golf Course Clubhouse.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Jim Hodges asked several questions regarding the March 9, 2005 minutes before approval. He asked if Director Phil Rollins was able to contact the Finance Department to determine the fund balance of the Golf Course account. Mr. Rollins stated that Finance representatives indicated that the FY05 fund balance is between \$550,000 and \$600,000; he asked members to keep in mind that the annual County audit has not been done for FY05 (the fiscal year doesn't end until June 30, 2005) and that the true figure can't be provided until after the audit has been completed (which takes several months).

Mr. Hodges referred to page two, paragraph three, of the March 9, 2005 minutes with regard to the new heat pump. He asked if cost of the new heat pump would be charged to the Clubhouse project. Mr. Rollins clarified that that expense was paid for out of the FY05 Golf Course operating budget and would not be charged to the Clubhouse project.

Mr. Hodges referred to page two, paragraph four of the minutes. He asked if the signs had been placed on the Course asking patrons to respect private property. Golf Course Manager Pat Meyers stated that has been done; the signs were installed on hole number one and posted in the pro shop. Members indicated that the sign in the pro shop should be placed in a more conspicuous place and signs should be posted on holes six and seven. Subsequently, signs were placed on six, seven, and on eleven, twelve and thirteen.

Mr. Hodges also asked about the status of employing a full time marshal. Ms. Meyers stated that currently the Golf Course Division doesn't have a full time position budgeted for a marshal.

Jim Hodges motioned, seconded by Rick Smith, to approve the minutes of March 9, 2005; motion carried with all in favor.

HOUSING CONFLICTS ON THE GOLF COURSE

Several homeowners were present for the Board discussion on conflicts on the golf course. The homeowners included Don Thompson, who lives on the fifteenth hole, who complained about damaged vinyl and broken windows; he was also hit in the calf by an errant shot. He said kids are playing in the streets because they can't play in their backyards. He's almost hit them in the street with his car. He doesn't feel it matters who was here first; if one of the kids get hurt, there will be a major problem. He has an estimate for a 100' x 25' ft. high protective net for \$8,265. He stated that Pat Meyers and Jim Farran have been very cooperative, but the problem is getting worse and he feels something needs to be done.

Kim who lives on the sixteenth hole stated that her child can't play outside because of fear of getting hit by a ball. Her husband was injured by a golf ball while cutting grass and required stitches in his head. She said that Golf Course staff has been courteous, but hasn't been able to help much. She doesn't think the signs will do much good.

Another gentleman stated that his grandchildren haven't been able to play outside because of errant shots. He does expect some of this because of living on the course, but these shots are becoming hazardous.

One homeowner suggested realignment of the cart paths to help alleviate the problem.

Chairman Rivers asked Jim Farran, Golf Course Superintendent, for his opinion. Mr. Farran stated that he doesn't have an easy answer to fix the problem. He offered to research what other courses have done to help alleviate the problems associated with errant shots.

Chairman Rivers stated that this issue has been before the Advisory Board several times and people are still getting hurt. He stated that "if the Board has to go before the County Commissioners, then we're going to take care of this problem."

Mr. Hodges stated that "we all know it's not the responsibility of the Golf Course; it's the golfer who is at fault. With that said, we should do anything we can to help the situation." He stated, "we have been talking about hiring a marshal and putting up signs and it's time to move on those things." Chairman Rivers stated that it doesn't matter whose fault it is, it's a matter of compassion. He made a promise to those present that a committee would be formed, the holes will be looked at and action would be taken.

Ms. Meyers stated that she met with Sue Veith, Environmental Planner with the Department of Land Use and Growth Management, regarding planting and buffering that can be done through the Critical Area Reforestation Program. The Golf Course is now on the program list to receive plantings to help buffer homes from the course. This is not a short term fix, but will help address the problem in the long run.

GOLF COURSE CHANGE/SWITCH OF NINE HOLES

Chairperson Rivers stated that he has received countless complaints about the recent "switching of the nine holes." He felt the change should have been brought before the Advisory Board. He thought the switch was going to be a temporary change, but now understands it's permanent. Mr. Hodges also said he has received complaints about the switch. He said it's part of the Advisory Board's mandate to advise the BOCC on policy. Director Rollins stated that he believed the change was an operational decision and not a policy issue. Rollins stated that he regretted not bringing this change to the Advisory Board for informational purposes and input, but he didn't think it was a matter of policy, but rather a management issue.

Wayne Petit said he understood the change was temporary and the reason for the change was that patrons playing in the afternoon on holes one through nine were getting more play than patrons playing on holes ten through eighteen.

Ms. Meyers stated the reasons for the change went back several years. Originally, the Clubhouse was slated for construction during this time and the temporary trailer would be sitting on the hillside. It was recommended that the holes be switched to monitor the first tee. One of the biggest reasons for the switch was to give the greens a rest on the front side (these older greens typically take a beating in the summer due to increased rounds played on them). Also, staff can better access the back nine in the winter months.

Mr. Hodges stated that a full-time marshal could play a big role and monitor the course, monitor errant shots, check tickets, curtail trespassing, etc.

Mr. Smith stated that he has not received any complaints on the switch from the people he plays golf with. He said personally, it really got boring playing the same holes all the time (when not playing a full eighteen holes). He views the change as an operational decision.

Bob Richardson stated that the switch has already improved the condition of hole number eight.

Jim Hodges motioned, seconded by Gloria Tippett, to “change the golf course back the way it was.” Motion carried 4-2.

Chairman Rivers stated that if the course isn't changed back within a two week period, that includes moving the tee markers and printing new scorecards, then the Advisory Board will bring this matter before the County Commissioners for a decision. Again, Mr. Rollins indicated that he felt the switch was a management decision and that the two week time period was unrealistic.

TEE MARKERS

Chairman Rivers asked if the senior tee markers can be designated with a separate color, possibly gold. Mr. Pettit said there needs to be more consistency in the layout of the tee markers. The “blues, whites, golds and the reds should be separated.” Mr. Farran stated that sometimes the markers are moved for tournaments; he will research and move the markers as needed.

SNACK BAR

Chairman Rivers stated that he has received requests for the snack bar to be opened earlier than 6:00 a.m. for those that have weekend 6:00 a.m. tee times. Ms. Meyers stated that staff reports to work at 5:30 a.m. to prepare the snack bar and make the coffee for the 6:00 opening time. In order for the snack bar to open at 5:30 a.m., staff would need to report to work by 5:00 a.m. Meyers will check into opening the snack bar earlier to accommodate those wishing to purchase coffee earlier (with the understanding that it takes approximately 30 minutes to brew the coffee and prep for the day ahead).

GOLF CART RENTAL RATES

Mr. Hodges stated that he has received complaints regarding the fees for cart rentals. The individual nine hole rate for cart rental is \$9; the eighteen hole rates is \$13. Ms. Meyers stated that the eighteen hole rate gives the purchaser a discount. The current rates were examined during the FY06 budget process; the budget process for FY07 will begin this fall and that would be the time to address rates and fees. Mr. Hodges indicated he would like to see the nine hole cart rental rate decreased now. Chairman Rivers stated this Golf Course is noted for lower rates and perhaps the nine hole cart fee should be reduced.

BEVERAGE CART

Mr. Pettit proposed that during the summer months, on weekends and holidays, that a beverage cart be provided for patrons on the course. He suggested a volunteer could do this. Ms. Meyers will research the matter and also consider wage and labor rules, liability issues, etc.

PORTABLE TOILETS

Gloria Tippett asked if the portable toilets had been cleaned. Ms. Myers stated that they have been cleaned. The County is experiencing some difficulty with this contractor at most RP&CS sites using portable toilets.

CLUBHOUSE PROJECT

Chairman Rivers conveyed the Board's disappointment that no bids were received for the Clubhouse project by the deadline of April 1, 2005. Mr. Rollins reported that seven firms had previously picked up the solicitation package indicating considerable contractor interest in the job. Several of the contractors who had picked up plans were contacted to find out why they hadn't submitted a proposal. Reasons for non-submittal ranged from they were too busy; too much work involved up-front in developing a proposal; timing of the solicitation; too many unknowns with a

renovation project; etc. Staff has been considering options to move the project forward including: 1) re-bidding the solicitation for renovation later this year; 2) do schematic design (30% design) for a new building within the footprint of the existing building and then do a solicitation for design/build of a new facility; and 3) rebid the plans for the new Clubhouse previously designed. Also, a municipal build to suit/lease back option where the County contracts with a firm that finances and builds the facility and then leases it back to the county has been discussed by County staff. At the end of the lease term the County would own the facility.

The BOCC would like a recommendation from the Advisory Board in the near future on the options outlined above. The Board discussed sending out a letter of interest to determine contractor level of interest.

Mr. Pettit asked if the firm under County contract for carpentry services could handle the project. Carol Gallagher stated that the issues with that are: 1) the contracted firm is busy working on the Charlotte Hall Welcome Center at present; and 2) the general contractor would still have to provide a performance bond since it's a large job. Firms under County contract usually handle smaller jobs under \$500,000. Chairman Rivers had a conversation with a representative from Facchina, Inc. and he indicated the firm would be willing to meet with County staff and discuss the project.

Chairman Rivers asked Board members to e-mail him with any other ideas or options they may have for the project. He will send out an e-mail message regarding scheduling a special meeting in the near future to develop a recommendation for the project to be presented to the BOCC.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Mr. Hodges asked for the latest financial information available for the Golf Course. Mr. Rollins stated that staff will e-mail the latest financial report to the Board.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

A special meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be scheduled in July 2005 to discuss the Clubhouse project and other matters.

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

Kathy Bailey, Recorder