

WICOMICO SHORES GOLF COURSE ADVISORY BOARD

**August 3, 2005
Meeting Minutes**

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

STAFF AND 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.

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

Rick Smith motioned, seconded by Jim Hodges, to approve the minutes of June 9, 2005. Motioned carried 7-0.

LADIES T-BOX ON NUMBER EIGHT

Gloria Tippet stated that the Ladies t-box has been moved on number 8 and replaced with a Senior's t-box. She asked why this was done. Jim Farren stated this was done to alleviate spacing problems with the four sets of markers there. He will move it back and monitor the wear and tear for the rest of the summer.

T-BOX SIGN ON NUMBER EIGHTEEN

Rick Smith made a suggestion if there could be some sort of directional signage (red arrow) directing walkers; Mr. Farren said they could try it, but feels those on carts will drive across the t-box.

GOLF COURSE STAFF REPORT

Pat Meyers, Golf Course Manager, provided a staff report on items discussed during the last meeting.

- Gold tee markers have been placed on the holes. Jim Hodges noted the Seniors are happy with this change.
- Ms. Meyers has not heard any additional comments on opening the snack bar earlier for the first tee time. The Course opens at 7:00 a.m. on weekdays with the first tee time at 7:12 a.m.; on weekends the Course opens at 6:00 a.m. with the first tee time at 6:15 a.m.
- The beverage cart began operation during the July 4th weekend. The Course is averaging about \$195 per day; it's too early to tell if it's making a profit.
- A third ranger has been added on the weekends for later in the afternoons.
- Additional signs have been installed regarding respecting private property on five holes.
- A ladies group would like to hold a mixed invitational this fall to benefit the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Currently, the policy contract for outings says an outing scheduled on a weekend can have a maximum of 44 players. Ms. Meyers would like to be able to expand the number from 44 to about 60.

Mr. Pettit motioned, seconded by Bob Richardson, to amend the normal outing contract policy to allow this charitable outing to host more than 44 players if necessary. Motion carried 7-0.

- Mr. Farren stated that staff has stopped watering the tees and the fairways to conserve water. Staff plans to do some dredging in one of the ponds to allow the water to flow near the pump house to allow additional water for irrigation.
- A type of disease has been noticed on the greens and consists of circular brown patches of grass. Staff is working to get that under control.

HOUSING CONFLICTS ON THE GOLF COURSE

Several homeowners were present for the Board discussion on conflicts on the golf course. Ms. Meyers stated that part of a long term solution would be to plant trees to buffer the properties. Staff is not trying to block views of the homeowners. The idea is to block shots before balls reach the property. She has been in contact with Sue Veith, of the County's Department of Land Use and Growth Management and with Linda Carlson, a representative of Maryland's TreeMendous Program, to discuss plantings and purchasing some mature trees at low cost for buffering. Staff plans on moving some of the tee boxes to redirect the angle of the shots. Mr. Farren stated that some of the homeowners don't want additional trees planted near their homes.

Mr. Don Thompson, who lives on the fifteenth hole, says he doesn't think planting trees will do any good and some of his neighbors don't want the plantings. He stated the trees would have to be at least 25 feet high to do any good.

A gentleman said he thinks the only way to resolve the problem on the sixteenth fairway would be to angle the tees so the shots would go in the other direction. He said his daughter can't play in the yard for fear of being hit.

Chairman Rivers noted that "no matter what you do, you're never going to stop golf balls from being hit, but you can do things to try and minimize it to a point." There are other people on other holes that are also experiencing problems. Mr. Hodges stated that it's probably the worst on hole number fifteen.

Chairman Rivers asked if, as part of the Clubhouse project, the County Commissioners would put some funds into resolving housing conflicts. Mr. Rollins stated that he's not sure and can't speak for the County Commissioners. While the Commissioners are certainly sympathetic to the situation, he's not sure they would want to set a precedent for funding resolutions to conflicts.

Chairman Rivers thinks the fastest and less costly measure to alleviate the problems would be to move the tees. Another homeowner stated that he thinks the tee on fifteen needs to be moved up. He also noted that on several occasions he has noticed disrespect from young and older golfers alike when they come onto his property to retrieve balls. He stated that homeowners can't read the cart numbers on the golf carts. He stated that over the last year or so the situation has gotten worse. Weekends seem to be the worse for errant shots. Mr. Farren stated that the rounds of golf have been about the same over the years.

Mike Heimer, of St. Mary's Golf Center, stated this is a very serious issue and is fairly common place with older golf courses. He thinks you can reduce the number of errant shots by examining the situation professionally. He said you're not going to stop every golf ball and golfers aren't always necessarily polite. Mr. Heimer said that "once there's a problem, there's a liability." Mr. Hodges stated that the County Attorney has advised that errant shots are the responsibility of the golfer. Mr. Heimer stated that was not true.

One of the homeowners stated the he spoke to a lawyer and he said that he thinks the golf course has a responsibility to the public. Another person stated that insurance companies consider errant shots the responsibility of the golfer.

One of the homeowners said that he thinks the solution is pretty cut and dry. One tee box needs to be moved back, one needs to be realigned and the numbers need to be larger on the golf

carts. Another homeowner asked about the cost of moving a tee box; she expressed interest in contributing to the cost to move the project along.

Mr. Hodges stated that the Board has welcomed homeowners to the last few meetings and are trying to develop recommendations and suggestions to help alleviate the situation. He thinks "we're now at the point where this issue is going to take some study and financial resources."

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Mr. Hodges referred to the Year-to-Date Rounds of Golf, Revenue and Expense Comparison sheet that was previously e-mailed to Board members. He asked why rounds of golf were down in FY04. Ms. Meyers stated that weather was the number one reason; the first half of FY05 was extremely wet and rainy. From July 2004 through December 2004 the course was down 2,000 rounds due to weather. He commented that there have been less rounds played in FY05 than in the last five years. Rick Smith stated that along with the weather, other factors could be that people are playing at other courses and golfers may have financial constraints.

Mr. Hodges stated he received clarification from Mr. Rollins beforehand that most of the figures in the July 2004-June 2005 projected column can be considered actuals, except for the season passes and interest/depreciation (they aren't called actuals until after the annual audit).

Mr. Hodges asked where the cart payment was listed in the budget; Ms. Meyers stated that is included in the administration line item. He asked what was included in the interest/depreciation line. Ms. Meyers stated that the Finance Department designates a depreciation figure for the assets of the Golf Course. The interest income is interest earned on the fund balance of the golf course.

Mr. Hodges expressed concern that the Golf Course can't afford the mortgage for the Clubhouse project. In June, the fund balance was estimated at approximately \$600,000. Mr. Hodges stated that the revenue would probably only cover the mortgage payment and not other expenses for the Golf Course. Mr. Rollins stated that capital expenses are included in the budget.

Chairman Rivers stated that we need to look at "what kind of numbers can be supported and what type of project we should be going after." Mr. Hodges stated that "we need to do something in the renovation line because that's all we can afford." Mr. Hodges stated "we need to keep the project down \$1.2 million because that's all we can afford. Mr. Cranford stated that rough calculations for borrowing \$1million for 25 years show a monthly payment of \$6,752. He thinks the income is there for the debt service. He stated that "this discussion has been going on since 2001 and here it is August 2005; he feels the project needs to move forward."

CLUBHOUSE PROJECT

Chairman Rivers stated that he has strong reservations about putting out a new solicitation for the project. He thinks a letter of interest would save time. He stated that he has strong reservations about having an architect redesign the project. He suggested a mandatory walk through for bidders.

Mr. Pettit thinks the County has fulfilled its Procurement obligation with the previous solicitation. Mr. Rollins stated that he understood from Carol Gallagher, Procurement Manager, that a letter of interest would need to be sent out first. Chairman Rivers stated that he doesn't think the letter of interest should be advertised in the Enterprise. Mr. Rollins stated that the advertisement would specify the requirements for sending in a letter of interest.

Mr. Hodges stated that he doesn't think there's a need to revisit the original renovation recommendation of option 1 or 2. If the Board still wants to support a renovation project, they need to decide which option they wish to recommend.

Mr. Rollins stated that he had some preliminary discussions with Commissioner McKay on the project. He stated that if renovation was the recommendation that comes forward from the Board, then he would support hiring an architect to design and engineer the work to be done.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

A special meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be held on August 17, 2005 at the Golf Course Maintenance Building to discuss the Clubhouse project

The meeting concluded at approximately 8:00 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder