

Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 8, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Hodges, Chairperson; Chico Rivers, Vice-Chairperson; Wayne Pettit, Rick Smith and Gloria Tippet.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Richardson and Phil Cranford.

RP&CS STAFF AND OTHERS ATTENDING: Phil Rollins, Director, Recreation and Parks (R&P); Patty Meyers, Golf Course Manager; Jay Morgan, Food, Beverage and Banquet Manager; Jim Farren, Golf Course Superintendent; Jim Schaeffer, Maintenance Staff. In attendance from the Property Owners of Wicomico Shores Association (POWSA) included: Jerry Slagle and Curvin Harbold.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the newly renovated and expanded golf course clubhouse.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Rick Smith motioned, seconded by Wayne Pettit, to approve the minutes of July 9, 2008. Motion carried with all in favor.

NATURAL GRASS AREAS ON THE GOLF COURSE

Mr. Farren stated that he doesn't object to the extra cut of rough on the tenth or fourth fairways. He could cut a 12' swath with the Kabota mower; or he could use a rough cut mower that has a 15' cut, but that would be harder to cut around the trees. Staff started cutting the tall, native grasses today; they are usually cut two times per year at about 6" high. It should stay about 6" in height over the winter.

Vice-Chairman Rivers stated that this is the slowest time of the year and the grass will be short. In the spring when the course gets more play the grass will be taller. He doesn't think there should be any tall grass on the golf course.

Mr. Farren stated that number four is an easy par four. The native grass makes it a true par four, if you take the native grasses out it changes the picture. He stated that most all golf courses have tall grass areas; Breton Bay Golf Course has them also. Chairman Hodges asked members to remember the purpose for the tall grasses was to direct shots away from homes; maybe the first cut of rough would still do that. Vice-Chairman Rivers wanted to see all the natural grasses cut that come into play and do not affect the homes (example: the right on number sixteen).

Rick Smith liked the idea of the first cut of the rough on the left, but would like to keep the right the way it is. Gloria Tippet agreed with the first cut of rough and leaving the natural grasses where they don't come into play. Wayne Pettit supported cutting the natural grasses about 5 or 6" all during the

year.

A compromise was reached to do the first cut on the left side of ten; on the left and right side of four; and revisit the height of the natural grasses in the spring.

Mr. Farren reported that staff is working on several upcoming projects that include the addition of sand to traps and water wicking on two greens.

CLUBHOUSE PROJECT REPORT

Mr. Rollins thanked Board members for attending the Clubhouse ribbon cutting ceremony on September 30th. He reported that there a few “punch list” items that still need to be addressed over the next few weeks. Chairman Hodges referred to a recent article in the County Times newspaper about the new facility and expressed disappointment the article did not mention the Advisory Board.

FOOD AND BANQUET OPERATION

Jay Morgan, Food, Beverage and Banquet Manager, provided a report on the food and beverage operations. The facility has been open since September 12th; at least five more events and two golf outings are scheduled for this year. Most of the staff is in place and training for staff has begun. The restaurant will open to the public on October 22nd. The menu has been drafted and breakfast will not be served at this time; this will be evaluated again in December.

Chairman Hodges stated that he’s hearing golfers would like breakfast served. Mr. Pettit stated that he’s heard the same thing; some of the seniors like to get a homemade breakfast sandwich before playing. Mr. Morgan stated that staff currently offers pre-made breakfast sandwiches; sausage, egg, cheese biscuits etc. Mr. Rollins stated that staff plans to evaluate this in December to see what the demand is for the spring. Staff is not opposed to offering breakfast; they would like to evaluate the feasibility of paying staff to prepare and serve breakfast. Vice-Chairman Rivers stated that it’s important to cater to the golfers. Mr. Rollins agreed, and asked everyone to be patient while this issue is evaluated over the winter months. Ms. Tippett expressed support for Sunday brunch; Mr. Morgan stated that is also something that he’s evaluating.

Chairman Hodges brought up the dining ambiance and the need to keep the bar and golf group separated from the restaurant patrons. He thought there should be a plan in place for where each group dines. Mr. Rollins stated that staff has discussed this and anticipates some challenges. There will also be challenges with getting the word out when the restaurant is closed for banquets and other functions. Mr. Rollins stated that Mr. Morgan should be given the opportunity to work these situations out after the facility opens. To date, Mr. Morgan has hired five cooks, two dishwashers, four bar tenders, four servers and a baker to work various shifts. The facility hours of operation currently are 8:00 am until 7:00 pm; the restaurant hours for lunch and dinner are between 11:00 am and 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Smith asked about advertising for the new facility. Ms. Meyers stated that media releases, signage, website updates and other ads are planned.

Mr. Pettit noted that SMECO held its golf tournament at Breton Bay Golf Course. He asked if they

might want to hold next year's tournament at WSGC. Vice-Chairman Rivers stated that SMECO would like to hold the tournament at WSGC, but considered Breton Bay a better choice this year because they wanted to use their own caterer and were unsure when the WSGC Clubhouse would be ready to open.

REAPPOINTMENTS

The Board appointments of Rick Smith and Gloria Tippett both expire on December 31, 2008. Both Mr. Smith and Ms. Tippett expressed the desire to be reappointed to the WSGC Advisory Board. Ms. Meyers will forward this information on to the Public Information Office who will forward this to the Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners are expected to make appointments to Boards and Committees within the next few months.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Hodges asked if there might be an area in the Clubhouse that regular golfers could use to store their golf bags. Ms. Meyers stated there is no area available for such storage; this was looked at in the planning stage for the new facility, but issues with liability and available space did not allow for that.

Vice-Chairman Rivers stated he received a call from a golfer who expressed some concerns. The caller stated that about 35 to 40 season pass holders might be leaving the course to go to other courses. He noted issues with charging patrons 25¢ for a cup of ice; increased prices on some liquor; increased prices on tea and beer; changing of tee times; and that patrons can no longer play cards in the Clubhouse. Vice-Chairman Rivers told the caller he would pass on the concerns to the Advisory Board. Ms. Meyers stated the change in tee times was made due to loss of daylight in the morning and this was communicated to golfers and was posted for several weeks. Mr. Smith stated that Mr. Rivers should contact the caller and explain that the notice on the change in tee times was posted. Mr. Rivers stated the issue is they don't like the tee times being changed. Ms. Meyers stated this is not a new policy; the schedule changes each year when we lose daylight. Ms. Meyers stated that it's not fair to bump other pass holders to accommodate a group that wants one tee time all year. Also, Vice-Chairman Rivers stated he hasn't seen the rain check policy posted as was agreed to during the last meeting; Ms. Meyers stated that it has been posted since the move into the new facility.

Ms. Tippett stated that she's had several people ask about changing the date of the club championship. Ms. Meyers said that can be looked at; the course could drop the Ryder cup and have the championship in September. Ms. Tippett noted concern was expressed with people lining up at the outside railing during the Ryder Cup and the possible hazard with falling down the steps. Ms. Meyers stated that's something she will look into; however the County's Risk Manager came out and assessed the facility and didn't note that as a potential hazard. Signage and gates were noted as possible suggestions.

Ms. Meyers stated that the FY10 budget process will begin in the next few weeks. She anticipates a modest increase in fees for spring 2010 to cover increases in costs of goods, services and staffing. She will present this information during the January Board meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Hodges brought up the issue of score card ads. The score card ad sales contract expires on December 31, 2008; the tee ad contract expires in 2010. Currently, Burco sells the ads and provides the score cards free of charge to the golf course. Mr. Hodges would like to manage this in-house, allowing the golf course to sell the ads and keep the revenue. Mr. Rollins stated that unless a volunteer steps forward, there is a cost involved in coordinating the program, getting the markers and selling the ads. Mr. Smith asked if “what we’re going to get is worth the effort” and you may not have a volunteer willing to coordinate this every year. Mr. Hodges volunteered to do some additional research on the feasibility of handling printing the scorecards and selling the ads in-house and will report back to the Board within the next month.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2009, at 6:00 p.m.

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

Kathy Bailey, Recorder