

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, July 8, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

Town Hall – Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Bill Putnam, Norene Ward, Frank Sola, John Zappia, Roger Brooks, Tim Moody and Steve Sloan

Others Present: Brian Bickford, Golf Pro, Bill Shane, Town Manager, Alex Kimball, Finance Director, Bill Stiles, Council Liaison and Cynthia Stennett.

I. Welcome & Introduction of Guests –Bill Putnam called the meeting to order at 6:00 and welcomed and thanked everyone for coming.

II. Public Comment – None

III. Approval of July 8, 2009 Minutes – Bill Putnam asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the July 8, 2009 minutes in their packets. Seeing that there were no corrections, additions or deletions, the minutes were accepted as written. A motion was made by Norene Ward to approve the minutes as written and seconded by Steve Sloan.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

IV. Review of Revenue Reports – Alex handed out the June revenue reports and apologized for them not being included in the packet, but stated that it was just to close to the end of the fiscal year to have them ready. He stated that the numbers are at about 95%. Alex reported that June was not a great month, but had turned out to be better than expected.

He compared last year's Clubhouse figures to those of this year where last year showed a small profit. He brought the Board's attention to the YTD Golf Memberships where the figures ended just less than \$233,000 as compared to the budgeted figure of \$245,075. He further stated that they did decrease the budget down to \$235,000, which shows that we are very close to the budgeted figure for next year.

Alex stated that there was a decline of about \$5,000 in Greens Fees from the prior month, a small decline in the Outings Fees and a large decline in all the Cart Revenues of about \$10,000 which is \$11,000 less in revenues as compared to June. Alex reminded the Board that revenues did start to decline last year at the end of June when the rainy weather started to hit and that given all of the above, it was surprising that \$36,332 in revenues had been generated during the month of June. Alex stated that the Cart Payments line indicates a large final payment for the year.

Alex brought the Board's attention to the Course & Pro Income and Expense comparisons to those of last year and indicated that we are a little bit over in expenses on the course and pro side, but quite a bit under in revenues. He stated that he felt this was the source of the difficulties with the income numbers declining over the prior year which is directly attributable to having three out of four months of rainy weather. Based on these numbers, Alex indicated that we will finish the year out approximately \$15,000 worse than the prior year. He stated that the numbers for the total expenses, as compared to the prior year, have dropped by approximately \$40,000. Alex also stated that he would have more fine-tuned numbers for the next meeting once he has closed out the year end figures.

V. New Business:

a. Business Reports:

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian brought the Board's attention to his handout, which included the figures running through the first week of July, specifically to the highlighted yellow areas. The first three areas are the numbers insofar as volume is concerned which indicates that the numbers were up through the month of May, but with the month of June they are down about 15% as compared to last year. He reported that member rounds are down 7%, total rounds are down 9% and total Carts were down 41%.

Brian stated that what had looked like a good start to the year in April and May had been washed away by the weather. He further stated that because of the fact of having a FY end in June and last year's weather, three months (June and July of this year and August of last year) had been lost. He also stated that they had even had to close the Driving Range because of the weather.

Brian reported that all of the neighboring courses are experiencing the same types of difficulties due to the poor weather and that all things considered, Val Halla is in great shape and he believes that once the sun does come out, the players will come. He also reported that the greens had been sprayed last week with fungicide and fertilizer.

Brian told the Board that Governor Baldacci had played at Val Halla last week and had really liked the golf course. The Governor had stated that it was the best greens he had played in the State of Maine. Brian stated that he had sent him a thank you note to thank him for coming to Val Halla.

Brian reported that Val Halla had been awarded the “Best Municipal Golf Course in Maine” by Golf Digest. He added that he felt it was nice recognition by a national magazine. Brian commented that it had been a tough month for staff and membership in keeping up morale.

There was some discussion about the e-mail updates and information on the website that Brian maintains and how helpful they are to the membership.

Brian reported that several other courses are instituting early season rate cutting because of the weather and the economic climate and added that he felt it was an act of desperation as the season starts to dwindle. He reported that there are about 23 more outings between now and September and indicated that he was concerned about the revenue generation between now and then.

Bill Putnam asked about whether or not Russ Murley was providing weather information. Bill Stiles stated that he works with Toddy Brook and even calls with storm updates. Bill Shane stated that the Town buys his winter service but added that it might be less expensive to purchase it all year long. Bill Shane indicated he would have Chris Bolduc get more information.

Brian stated that it was approaching the time of year where they post their rates for the upcoming season. He told the Board that they had budgeted for no increases in the membership rates for the upcoming year and asked if it would be worth considering offering folks an incentive to join earlier. Bill Shane stated that he felt doing something around the week of August 22nd, which is a week earlier than is usually done, might allow for some additional memberships to be picked up. Both Bill Shane and Bill Stiles indicated they would like this added as an agenda item for the next meeting and asked the Board to plan on coming to the meeting with some ideas and suggestions.

Brian gave an overview of the upcoming outings and stated that the following weekend would really kick off the summer events and reiterated that we really need some good weather.

Steve asked about tournaments sponsored by an outside agency where Val Halla members are players, and asked if they should have to pay greens fees? There was some discussion by the Board regarding this issue. Brian made a recommendation that Greens Fees for members be waived for charitable causes. Alex asked

about how much of a revenue loss would be realized if this was instituted. He stated that the course was fighting to break even at this point and it was very affordable to the members. He also stated that the tournaments are income generators. Bill Shane reported that the budget had already been set for the year and, if implemented, it could be a significant revenue loss.

Steve stated how much he appreciated the hard work being done by the staff at Val Halla.

2. Toby Young - Course

In Toby's absence, Brian answered questions pertaining to damage on the course due to the weather. Brian indicated that the staff is working to keep folks off of any sensitive areas and things are doing pretty well. He stated that they are working diligently on delivering mowing instructions and making sure that no ruts are being made while mowing is being done.

Bill Putnam stated that he felt they had done a great job in determining when to use carts and when not to.

2. Val Halla Golf Association – Mark Sunderman

Mark informed the Board that they are focused on getting the best participation that they can for the Member/Guest event and are looking to get 40% participation or a total of 72 teams and stated that they are currently working with Brian and Charlie Sparrow on pricing.

He reported that they are changing the format this year and eliminating Friday, which is based on a survey of all the members.

Mark stated that he felt that the Member/Guest is a great marketing tool which allows guests to really see what Val Halla has to offer an opportunity to convert some of the guests into members.

3. Greens Committee Report – Rick Doane

Mark Sundermann handed out minutes of the July 6, 2009 Greens Committee meeting and commented that Bill Shane, Bill Putnam and Bill Stiles had attended the last meeting. He informed the Board that he made a commitment at that meeting to attend the monthly Val Halla Board meetings going forward and if he is unable to attend, a Greens Committee representative will attend in his place. He also stated that a formal communication of the Greens Committee activities will be available to the Board of Trustees at that time and reiterated that the Greens Committee is strictly an advisory committee to the Board.

Bill Putnam stated that he has attended two Greens Committee meetings and had a good opportunity to talk with the Committee members which led to a good discussion. He reiterated that he felt that communication is the key and stated that he did not feel that it was the Board's role to set a "to do" list of things that need to be addressed.

Bill Shane informed the Board that he has spoken with Toby about providing a weekly superintendent's report, which will be out each Thursday, detailing what was done that week and what is on the agenda for the next week. These reports will be sent out via e-mail.

It was reiterated that if the Greens Committee has an issue, it should be brought directly to the Board; not to staff. Bill Shane stated that his concern was what the expectation is of the staff.

Norene asked about placing the Greens Committee agenda item farther up on the agenda. Bill Shane stated that he would like to add it as Item III on the agenda going forward.

c. Other New Business – Bill Shane stated that they had a great discussion at the Greens Committee pertaining to the cart paths and brought the Board's attention to the map for the proposed cart paths which initiated discussion by the Board of the various options available. Bill Stiles mentioned that the proposed construction date is in October so a decision has to be made by that time. Bill Shane stated that he will have a plan to present at the September meeting with the final options.

Steve commented on the lack of housekeeping on the deck of the Viking Grill at a recent event he had attended. Bill Putnam was in agreement with Steve's comments and the cleanliness/housekeeping concerns. Steve asked if Charlie Sparrow was responsible for seeing that things were clean and Bill Shane indicated that he was and he indicated that he would speak with Charlie about those issues.

Bill Shane stated that he would like to add amending the bylaws as an agenda item for the next meeting.

VI. Old Business - None

VII. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, August 12, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in the Council Chambers.

There was a motion made by John Zappia and seconded by Frank Sola to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary