

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:52 p.m.

Town Hall – Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Norene Ward, Steve Sloan, Roger Brooks and John Zappia

Absent: Bill Putnam, Frank Sola and Tim Moody

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

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

II. Public Comment – None

III. Charlie Sparrow – The Sparrow’s Nest – Norene welcomed Charlie to the meeting and asked him to give a presentation related to the handout he had prepared for the meeting, with a discussion with the Board afterward. He began the meeting by expressing his appreciation for everything that the membership had done and stated that there had been about 100 members supporting the Viking Grill. Charlie reviewed the handout he had prepared for the meeting, including a review of the events of the previous year, details of what he felt were the benefits of having the Sparrow’s Nest at the Viking Grill and he also addressed the daily operational issues, problems and concerns which he wanted to address for upcoming year. He expressed particular concern with the kids involved in the Golf and Tennis Camp and their behaviors on rainy days. He also stressed to the Board that he would like all complaints regarding the Viking Grill be brought directly to him, not to the Town or the Board. Charlie also stated that he would like to see more members of the Val Halla Golf Association supporting the Viking Grill and mentioned that he wanted to “fix” any cleanliness issues going forward. He stated that he felt that the success of the Viking Grill depended primarily on the golf community itself and stated that he felt that the weather had definitely been a contributing factor in the success of the Viking Grill.

Norene opened up the floor to the Board for discussion of the information contained in Charlie’s report. Steve stated that he felt that significant improvements had been made from where he started out at the beginning of the season, but that he felt there were still cleanliness issues to be addressed. Steve also indicated that he was an advocate for advertising to bring people in for dinner on Friday and Saturday nights and stressed that the Board would like to help him to succeed. Norene stated that in the past the service and quality food went downhill, which is why the Friday/Saturday evening concept had failed previously. John indicated that he would like to see Charlie serve more Texas style food and Bill Stiles recommended that a sign be made to indicate Charlie was the

proprietor and also who is in charge each day. Charlie stated that they will be putting up an “Order Here” sign to help eliminate confusion about where to order food and drinks. Norene stated that she felt the two main issues of concern were good food and good service and encouraged Charlie to interact with patrons more to really get a feel for how satisfied they were with their experience at the Grill. She also stated that she felt that Charlie should double-check to make sure that his employees did what they were asked to do and suggested that some pamphlets be made and distributed at Town Hall and the Library advertising specials at the Viking Grill to help bring in more business. Norene suggested that a sign be put on the computer indicating that the MSGA or VHGA is the responsible party if there are any issues with the computer.

Alex stated that Bill Putnam had sent him an e-mail with the concerns he would like addressed. Bill felt that the fact that Charlie’s presence out on the Course has been “noticed” and he should be aware of it as many folks felt he should be more available at the Grill. He also stated that the menu is too weak to support bringing in too many people and many times the items on the menu were not available and were sold out. Bill Putnam indicated that he strongly felt that things will have to be much better next summer than they were this past summer. Bill Shane stated that the entire cleanliness piece is a major concern that needs to be addressed and reiterated that the Town will not go back in the restaurant business. He strongly encouraged Charlie to get feedback from his customers in order to improve their experience in the Viking Grill. Bill Shane also strongly suggested that Charlie give some consideration to utilizing some advertising to bring in additional business. Everyone agreed that Kevin had been a tremendous asset for Charlie and the operation of the Viking Grill had improved since his arrival.

Bill Shane stated that they were going to move forward in creating a junior area for kids for next season and emphasized that it will not turn into a “hang-out” for kids and indicated that the food and service at every function he had attended, which had been hosted by Charlie, was very good, including the Employee Appreciation Day for town staff.

Bill stated that he felt that some of Charlie’s losses could be attributed to poor staffing. Norene also stated that every meal she had at the banquet center was excellent, as well as the service from the staff. Charlie indicated that he will be operating with a smaller menu next season and will be raising the prices slightly in order to cover increased expenses and that he looks forward to returning next year.

IV. Val Halla Golf Association –Mark Sundermann stated that he had been somewhat concerned about Charlie’s comments regarding the financial side of things and indicated that the Association had not felt that they were short-changing him in any way. He stated that the Association needs to know the cost of any of their events up front so that they can budget accordingly and reiterated Steve’s comments indicating that the Association wanted him to succeed as well. Mark also addressed Charlie’s comments regarding the percentage of members that frequented the Grill and stated that he felt that a good percentage were supporting it. Mark also addressed the issue of the

computer cabinet and stated that the Association will be replacing the computer cabinet before next season and that the Association had voted to help with the renovation costs for an area downstairs for the kids.

Mark stated that the Golf Association had a good year, despite June, and expressed appreciation for the work both Brian and Toby's staff did and stated how much he liked receiving the e-mail superintendent's report and how helpful the information contained in those reports was. He reported to the Board that Rick Doane will be stepping down as Chairman of the Green's Committee and, at this point, no one has been appointed to replace him. Mark stated that at their annual meeting the Association had voted to give Val Halla \$300 for yardage markers for the sprinkler heads or other yardage markers and \$500 to renovate the junior program room downstairs. He also reported that they had had the biggest Member/Guest events ever and stated that they had tried to funnel all the extra monies through the Sparrow's Nest and the Pro Shop, whenever possible. He also stated that he expected they would be increasing their membership in the upcoming season.

V. Green's Committee Report – In Rick Doane's absence, there was no Green's Committee Report.

VI. Approval of October 14, 2009 Minutes – Norene Ward asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the October 14, 2009 minutes in their packets. Seeing that there were no corrections, additions or deletions, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Steve Sloan and seconded by John Zappia.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

VII. Review of Revenue Reports – Alex stated that October had been an interesting month, although a bit disappointing and stated that Golf Memberships were a little less than the prior year. He is attributing this to the fact that it appears that a lot of folks are taking advantage of the 50/50 split which means more monies will come in during the Spring. Brian stated that he anticipates about \$55,000 more to come in as receivables and Alex stated that it seems as though more and more folks are waiting until Spring to sign up. Alex also stated, however, that he felt the figures indicated that things were on track.

Alex also brought the Board's attention to the Greens/Outings number which is running about the same as last year and he expressed some concern about that fact. He reported that carts did better, but he did ask the Board to be thinking over the winter months about how to capture more revenues. Alex told the Board that the October expenses for this year compared to those of last year are very similar and also reminded the Board that things will be even quieter over the next few months as compared to last year when the banquet center was still in operation.

VIII. New Business:

a. **Business Reports:**

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian reported that he had been approached by the MSGA to ~~hold~~ ~~to~~ host many events for the upcoming season and also reported that they will be moving the weekend event from mid September to the end of May. He stated that he felt it would be a good revenue source and also reported that they had been asked to host the Tri-State event. Alex stated that he felt that not all tournaments are good tournaments for Val Halla, and just regular days of play actually bring in more revenue than tournaments, depending on the weather conditions. Brian stated that the tournaments bring in events in poor weather and are good revenue generators in that regard as people have already made a commitment to play. Brian reminded the Board that it had rained every weekend in October and stated that he wanted it noted for the record their thanks to the Golf Association for their support for the past season.

Brian reported that 16 cart memberships had been sold for the season and the average number of rounds using a cart was 40, which indicated that everyone had got their money's worth. He also stated that he and Toby would like to encourage more discussion in the Spring around teeing areas (shortening and lengthening the golf course) and sprinkler head markings.

2. Toby Young - Course

Toby reported that they are in the process of winterizing the course and that the tees and greens were sprayed with snow mold spray and dormant fertilizer. He also reported that Storey Bros had finished the 9th, 2nd, 5th hole and are almost done with the 4th hole. He stated that their plan is to do all of the gravel work and then go back and do the reclaim all at once. Toby reported that if time permits, they will dredge the pond.

Toby reiterated that he and Brian would like to discuss over the winter the possibility of lengthening and shortening a few holes. He gave a brief synopsis of what holes he would like to be discussed with this purpose in mind and stated that he will prepare some additional information to have ready for discussion at the next meeting. Toby also reported that he anticipates that the rock wall will be completed by next Spring.

Lastly, Toby reported that again this year, the snowmobile trail is an item of concern and brought the Board's attention to the maps he had prepared with Bill Shane, which show where the trail currently goes and where the proposed trail would go. Steve asked if Twin Brooks was an option and Toby indicated that it was not. Steve and Norene suggested that Toby contact the Snowmobile Club to see if they were interested in supplying the materials to mark the trails and Toby indicated that he will do so. Steve complimented Toby on the condition of the course.

b. Other New Business – None

IX. Old Business – None

X. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, December 9, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in the Council Chambers.

There was a motion made by Steve Sloan and seconded by John Zappia to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary