

**Val Halla Board of Trustees**

**Wednesday, December 16, 2009 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:55 p.m.**

**Val Halla Golf & Banquet Center**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Bill Putnam, Steve Sloan, Frank Sola, Tim Moody and John Zappia

**Absent:** Norene Ward and Roger Brooks

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

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

**II. Public Comment** – Bert Kimball, Boys Varsity Coach at Greely, spoke regarding a proposal that a fifth tennis court be put in at Val Halla and stated that the funding for this project would be done with private donations over the course of five years. He further explained the reasons for this request being that many times when a visiting team comes to play it takes much longer for the matches to finish up causing the players to leave late, which can be a difficulty for students who already have a long day. Bert stated that he had already spoken with Bill Landis, the Recreation Director and Bill Shane about this proposal as well as the owner of Maine Tennis and Track in Gray who estimated the cost for this project to be approximately \$60,000. He stated that both he and Bill Landis believe the project could be completed for around \$45,000 with the Town doing some of the prep/site work. Bert indicated that the courts are in generally good condition with the exception of court #3 where some animals burrowed under the surface. He also indicated that they would like to add this new court to improve upon competitive play at the varsity level and are proposing that this new court be put on the right in the existing area of the tennis courts.

Bill Shane brought up a map on the computer screen which detailed exactly where the proposed new court would be placed and discussion ensued with the Board asking questions and Bert answering them. Bert stated that they had selected that spot as they believed that it would not interfere with golf and that there would be plenty of parking spaces available. He also indicated that spot would have the necessary north/south layout and that it made no sense to put the courts up at the high school as there was already a nice town facility that could be used. Bert also stated that it would be cheaper to put the court where proposed as that area was already 80 – 90% clear.

Bill Shane expressed concerns about the drainage issues, the grade and the need for a retaining wall. He also reviewed any other potential places for the court and recommended that the proposal be formally put on the agenda and then put before the

Town Council for their approval/disapproval.

Tim asked about how much additional clearing may need to be done and also if there would be any danger of a golf ball hitting someone in the viewing area. Toby stated that his concern was all the underground power lines that supply his maintenance building. Bill Stiles asked if there would ever be a possibility of using more of that space for additional parking. Bill Shane stated that it would require a site plan review by the Planning Board and indicated that he will get some drawings out with the next Board packet in preparation for further discussion at the next meeting. Bert indicated that he would like to have the go-ahead from the Town Council before attempting to do any fundraising. He reiterated that one thing that was very attractive about keeping the courts at Val Halla was the availability of restroom facilities, food and adequate parking.

**III. Val Halla Golf Association** –In Mark Sundermann’s absence, there was no Val Halla Golf Association report.

**IV. Green’s Committee Report** – In Rick Doane’s absence, there was no Green’s Committee Report.

**V. Approval of November 18, 2009 Minutes** – Bill Putnam asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the November 18, 2009 minutes in their packets. Steve Sloan brought the Board’s attention to Page 4, Brian Bickford’s report, first sentence, first paragraph and it was corrected to read as follows. “Brian reported that he had been approached by the MSGA 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.” Seeing that there were no further corrections, additions or deletions, a motion to accept the minutes as amended was made by Steve Sloan and seconded by John Zappia.

**VOTE: MOTION PASSED 4-1 ABSTAINED**

**Review of Revenue Reports** – Alex stated that November is never a good month due to the fact that expenses are still coming in from the end of the season. He indicated that the November figures indicate that there is a loss, but that it is less than the previous year and brought the Board’s attention to Repair & Maintenance of the Clubhouse line, which reflects the cost of repair and repainting of the porch outside the Sparrow’s Nest. He stated that the Course Income this year as compared to last year is up overall by \$5,000 and stated that he had hoped the figures would come in better than they actually had, but indicated that overall we were doing better in this fiscal year than last year and that we were up by about \$60,000 over the previous year. Alex stated that the revenue monies are weaker than had been hoped for this year and indicated that Brian had been working on compiling some additional statistics which would help to explain where some of the problem areas were.

Alex reiterated that Brian had brought two items for discussion at the meeting for which he needed authorization. The first item is Greens/Carts increases and he asked the Board to come up with some ideas for additional revenues during the period of 4/15

through 6/15. After some discussion, the Board agreed that whatever ideas he can come up with to increase revenues would be welcome. The Board also felt that due to the fact there have been no greens/carts increases in two years perhaps it was time to institute an increase. Brian stated that he had been operating with no outside events other than the MSGA on the weekends prior to 1:00 p.m. without Board approval and he would like to continue that policy going forward. The general consensus of the Board was to allow the Golf Pro to develop off revenue times to increase revenues. Brian stated that he was giving some consideration to offering some “family oriented” options and that he would try to come up with some more suggestions for the next meeting.

## **VI. New Business:**

### **a. Business Reports:**

#### **I. Department Reports:**

##### **1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop**

Brian told the Board that he had prepared two handouts which detail information on both revenue projections through 6/3/2010. The actual figures from July 1<sup>st</sup> through October 30<sup>th</sup> were reported as revenues at \$263,273. In order to capture a figure for projected revenues, Brian reported that he had used the actual figures from November 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009 and totaled them to get the projected revenues for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, which came in at \$479,728. He then compared the actual budgeted figures to the projected figures which indicate a projected loss of \$72,372.

Brian stated that he felt the weather could be a factor as well as utilization of the golf course, which is where the second handout provides some interesting information. He stated that he felt that Greens Fees and Carts go hand in hand and based on his projections indicate that figure to be down by about \$63,000 as compared to the budget which comes in at a miss of \$72,372.

Brian brought the Board’s attention to the second sheet which details the possible impacts of weather, cart paths, price increases, rate specials, tee time marketing and outings.

Brian reviewed the second handout with the color coded sheets which break down the periods of April 15, 2009 through June 15, 2009, June 16, 2009 through September 15, 2009, and September 16, 2009 through October 31, 2009 by day of the week and time frame which provides a much more in-depth review of where the weak areas are and where additional efforts may need to be made

in order to bring in more revenues.

Brian stated that they have moved the weekend MSGA event from mid-September to May which should impact the financial statements for 2010 positively by about \$3,600 and they have also added a mixed event to fill that space. He also mentioned the possibility of adding some shoulder month membership rates to generate additional revenues. Brian's handout brought about a great deal of discussion by the Board of various possible options and ideas to increase revenues going forward.

Frank brought up the issue of keeping the course open longer in an effort to bring in more revenues regardless of the weather. Bill Shane stated that he felt he would be more inclined to close right after Labor Day. Steve stated that he would like Toby to give the Board an estimated cost to keeping the course open longer, weather permitting. Bill Shane suggested they consider the possibility of a weekday membership, April 15<sup>th</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup> membership and doing the same thing after Labor Day. He reiterated that he did not want to ruin the golf course in an attempt to get a couple more tournaments in and stated that it takes a lot of work to get the course winterized. Steve indicated that he felt that the Falmouth course will do everything possible to bring in additional revenues and that Val Halla will have to stay competitive to stay in the game. Bill Putnam stated that he felt that the money expended in repairing course damage has to be taken into consideration before making any decision to extend the season. Alex stated that he is in favor of offering a springtime membership. Bill Stiles stated that he feels that there has to be value in a membership. Tim stated that if all of the area courses remain open late in the season, there will be too many choices for players and no one will make any money because all the monies will be spread too thin amongst all the courses.

There was some discussion about cross-over benefits and Brian indicated that he would like to start the cross-over later and end earlier.

## **2. Toby Young - Course**

Toby reported that in order to open the course again after closure all the ropes would have to be taken down and a decision would have to be made about whether or not carts could be used and if rope stakes would have to be taken down and put back up as course conditions permit. He indicated that his major concern would be the issue of frost.

Toby stated that the snowmobile association dropped off some signs and a check to reimburse us for supplies. He reported that the cart path project was stopped due to weather and will be completed in the spring. Bill Shane stated that he would like the path to be kept open so that the project can be completed this winter while the ground is frozen.

Steve asked if the snowmobiles were staying on the trail and Toby indicated that they are not, but they are not going in areas where he doesn't want them to go.

- b. Other New Business** – Bill Shane reiterated that he felt the proposal regarding the new tennis court needs to be looked at much more closely by the Board as there are quite a few things that need to be taken into consideration prior to making any decision

Bill Shane also told the Board that Maurice Fisher has committed to raising \$5,000 toward renovating the room downstairs for use by the juniors and other kids as needed.

Bill Stiles stated that his concerns were a lack of parking and feeling that the courts should be closer to the school and to those services that were provided. Alex stated that he felt an awful lot of money and resources were being expended in order to gain such a small amount of benefit.

Bill Shane told the Board that he would get the drawings to Cindy and she will send them out with the packet for the next meeting.

Bill Stiles reported that the Town Council has re-nominated Norene Ward and nominated Rick Scott to fill Roger Brook's position on the Board. Bill Putnam stated that Roger had asked him to pass on to everyone how much he had enjoyed his time serving on the Board. Bill Putnam stated that he would like to formally thank Roger for the time he served on the Board. He also stated that he would like someone else to serve as chair for the upcoming year and it was decided that it will be added as an agenda item for next month's meeting.

Steve reported that there has been a remarkable improvement at the Sparrow's Nest over the last month and that they are now offering Sunday brunches. He indicated that things look really good and stated that Charlie is trying very hard to make things work.

Bill Putnam thanked Brian, Toby and their staff for a successful year.

## **VII. Old Business** – None

**VIII. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, January 13, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall in the Council Chambers.**

There was a motion made by Steve Sloan and seconded by Frank Sola to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

**VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett  
Recording Secretary