

**Val Halla Board of Trustees**

**Wednesday, June 9, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.**

**MSGA Meeting Room – Val Halla**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Steve Sloan, Judy Ingraham, Rick Scott, Norene Ward and Tim Moody

**Absent:** Bill Putnam and John Zappia

**Others Present:** Brian Bickford, Golf Pro, Toby Young, Golf Course Superintendent, Alex Kimball, Finance Director, 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 attending.

**II. Public Comment** – None

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

**IV. Green’s Committee Report** – In the absence of any members of the Greens Committee, there was no Green’s Committee Report this month.

**V. Approval of May 12, 2010 Minutes** – Steve Sloan asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the May 12, 2010 minutes in their packets. Seeing that there were no corrections, additions or deletions, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Norene Ward and seconded by Judy Ingraham.

**VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**VI. Review of Revenue Reports** – Alex reported that May had been a “mixed bag”. He brought the Board’s attention to the line item for Building Maintenance on the Club House and explained that increase was due to the work done on the deck and Brian explained that there had been some issues involving replacement of a window underneath the deck.

Alex also explained that Course Income indicates that the overall numbers are on a level but that the cart, greens fees and range numbers are up significantly, which indicates that the course is a lot busier. He also indicated that there is a significant decrease in golf memberships and because of that fact, compared to the same time a year ago, we are down by about \$16,000. Alex stated that, unfortunately, that number undoes all the gains made in actual use of the course and course play and that membership numbers are not matching up to the greens usage numbers.

Brian stated that one thing that is a little tricky is that it is hard to know where the final membership number is going to come out because of the October renewal push. He stated that

although we have 84 new members, revenues are down, which means that we can't know until June who will be returning members. He brought the Board's attention to his handout, listing all of those individuals who did not re-join from 2009, which indicates 141 did not rejoin. Brian explained that 62 adults on that list have not re-joined and the remainder were Juniors that had not re-joined. He explained that he felt that was where a lot of the membership revenue had gone and indicated that there were a host of reasons why folks did not re-join.

Alex indicated that it was an interesting scenario where memberships were down and course usage and revenues are up, which indicates that there are probably more non-members playing at Val Halla than ever before. He further stated that he felt that the Board should re-visit the issue of increasing the fees for non-members greens fees in an effort to fill the revenue hole. The general consensus of the Board is that this is a trend, which is being seen at many golf courses across the country. Brian indicated that folks are shopping around for the "rate of day" to determine where they will play that day and he stated that he felt that some of the best marketing that could be done was advertising the condition of the golf course. Alex stated that he anticipated that over the next few months the membership numbers will drop to almost nothing and the greens fees and carts will generate the most revenues. He did indicate, however, that the unknown question was whether or not that would act as an offset and he concluded by stating that it was a significant change from last year and indicated that it would remain to be seen whether it would be a good thing or a bad thing.

Tim asked if the offset was from last July through September because we would be starting a new FY as of July 1<sup>st</sup>. He also stated that because of that fact that the numbers for next year should indicate a much better year and Alex agreed. There was discussion amongst the Board which indicated that they felt that the numbers should continue to improve over the summer months.

Alex reviewed the course expenses as compared them with last year's figures to indicate he had no concerns in that area and stated that he felt that any discrepancies were simply due to the fact that Toby did not process many bills in May of last year.

Alex brought the Board's attention to the net profit figure for this year and stated that it was actually worse than last year and cautioned the Board about the \$94,000 hole and stated that will be a very similar number for June, probably around a \$90,000 deficit.

Norene commented that she had recently brought a guest to play at Val Halla and stated how impressed he was with the course and stated that he had asked about the costs of a membership. She commented on whether or not it made sense to offer a two-three month membership and Brian indicated that he had recently had a similar request and sold another membership for \$699.

## **VII. New Business:**

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

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

## **1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop**

Brian reported to the Board that he has a Comment/Suggestion box on the website and stated that one of the comments he had received indicated that this person did not like the special deals, “Red Zone Specials” and pro-rated memberships, because they felt as though it cheapened their membership. He indicated that he thought people were not aware of the fact that the “Red Zone Specials” were going to start to end as there would no longer be any need for “Red Zones”.

Tim expressed some concern about offering a mid-summer membership and how it would affect the members that had already paid full price. He also brought up the issue of how crowded the course has become and how difficult it is to get tee times.

Alex stated that the best reason he could think of for Brian to stop running “Red Zone Specials” is because he doesn’t need to any more.

Judy stated that she felt our memberships were a great deal and by offering the “Red Zone Specials” it allowed for keeping everyone’s membership costs at a reasonable price.

Brian reviewed the statistics with the Board which indicate numbers are up for golf carts by 77%, 37% for greens fees and 77% for the driving range. He did state, however, that memberships and member rounds are down by 5%, which reiterates what Alex stated. Brian stated that June’s revenue from last year was \$33,000 and he indicated that he had already had some pretty good days this month and Alex indicated that he felt we were “halfway home right now”. Alex explained that they take those revenues and add in any accounts receivables, which makes the June numbers look better.

Brian indicated that people are picking and choosing which programs they sign up for as is evident from registrations at both Val Halla and the Recreation Department. He indicated that the junior programs are almost 100% full. Brian also indicated that people are waiting until the last minute to sign up for programs with the Wine ‘n Nine program being the exception. He indicated that the volumes for the programs are still really strong.

Brian stated that he would like to discuss outings for next year and he would like to offer incentives to groups for outings on days other than Fridays and asked for feedback from the Board. He indicated that he would like to limit outings for those folks that are “good stewards of the golf course”.

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

Toby reported that his main concern was the lack of etiquette on the course and asked to get some feedback from the Board. He stated that he would like to see a policy regarding damage on the golf course and course etiquette and asked how they would like him to handle those folks who are not appropriate on the golf course. Steve stated that the Board is behind him 100% with zero tolerance for those individuals damaging the course. Judy asked about a sign to inform players about those rules and Toby indicated that there already is a sign, but that it is old and hidden behind bushes. He suggested that the sign be moved to a new location and that a new sign be made.

Brian stated that he likes the establishment of a committee because it doesn't make one person the "heavy", but that any decisions come from the committee. Steve indicated that he felt that the policy should be posted on the Board, offending parties should be asked to leave and to appear before the Committee which may cause them to lose their status as a member in "good standing".

Judy stated that she felt that these behaviors were vandalism and asked about fines being instituted. Brian stated that he would like to know if it is kids causing the problem and, if so, he would also like to know their names so that he can address it. Brian informed the Board that he had suspended four kids from Falmouth last year after he had been hit by a golf ball.

The recommendation from the Board was that the policy be reviewed and refined and that the finished product be posted on the Board and the website and a new sign be installed. Norene suggested that an informal questioning of the party be done by Brian and Toby and then, if necessary, forwarded onto the Committee for resolution.

Norene commented on the e-mail ~~be~~ sent out from Bill Shane which recommended that an e-mail be sent to the members reminding members to be aware of anyone damaging the course and reiterate what good condition the course is in. Tim stated that any communication to the members should be direct and to the point. Bill Stiles stated that he has offered the use of his motion detector/infrared sensitive camera to be used to detect any vandalism on the course.

There was quite a bit of discussion about #17 and everyone stated that #17 was incredible and in great shape. Judy asked if the ladies tee could be raised by one foot and indicated that it would speed play tremendously. Toby suggested that they extend the middle tee 10' wider front to back after a recommendation by Tim and he indicated that he would take a look at it. Steve commented that the course was in great shape. Toby indicated

that he is having some issues with growing grass under the pine trees as the soil is so acidic.

Steve commented on the number of tees in the tee boxes and there was some discussion about the number of turkeys and coyotes on the course.

Toby informed the Board how pleased he is with some of the new fertilizers he's been using on the course.

- b. Other New Business** – Judy asked about when the deck was repaired and questioned whether it was recently and Toby indicated it was done before the Open House. She reported to the Board that she has recently noticed a couple of boards having lifted and she had seen people tripping over them and requested that they be repaired. She indicated that they are located to the left of the door.

Steve asked if the doors are remaining open at the Viking Grill and Brian indicated that the door is not being used to lock the Viking Grill at this time. Steve stated that there appeared to be some issues in that there were some groups that had recently tried to get in to get coffee and that they were surprised and upset that they were not able to get in and get any refreshments. Brian indicated that it has been an issue and there was some discussion about Charlie's hours of operation. Brian indicated that they do not have the station for the Association set up yet, but indicated that there was a desk available in the Junior Room that needs paint and countertop, which can be used for that purpose.

Brian indicated that Bill Stiles had a letter from a member, which he would like to open for discussion with the Board. Bill Stiles brought a copy of an e-mail from a member who was very concerned with the service she received at the Viking Grill. He also indicated that he had sent a copy to Charlie Sparrow and that Charlie had indicated to him that he had addressed the issues contained within the e-mail with his staff. Bill Stiles stated that this individual had been dissatisfied with the service, the lack of product and the fact that she was not handled courteously. He indicated that he did not know if this was an isolated incident and asked if any of the Board had heard of any other incidents. Bill Stiles further stated that Charlie has indicated to him that he's doing the best he has ever done here with food sales, beverage sales and returning customers.

Judy stated that she felt there were some consistency issues and that there were not enough bartenders. Norene commented also that she felt that there were some times when there were not enough bartenders and stated that people do get frustrated waiting in long lines. She also stated that she felt his performance reflects on Val Halla and indicated that people don't understand that the Viking Grill is a private business leasing from Val Halla.

Steve reiterated that people don't realize that his operation is not part of Val

Halla. Judy also brought up the ongoing cleanliness issues. Bill Stiles stated that he felt that if people are having issues with Charlie and the way his business is being operated, they should go directly to him. Norene stated, to his credit, that she had seen Charlie walking around asking folks how the food is. There was some concern by the Board about the “owner not being in the store”.

Steve suggested that he be invited to the next meeting in order to address some of these issues. Alex stated that he felt the Board should be communicating with him regarding issues needing to be addressed and reminded the Board that they are instrumental in recommending that either he return or not return for the following year. He cautioned the Board to pay close attention to all of these issues in preparation for making a decision of whether or not he should return.

Norene asked if the issue of the locked door can be addressed at that time and Steve indicated that it could be. Tim stated that Charlie has the right to protect his assets, particularly if the computer is out in the hallway, as he owns all of those assets and has the right to secure them as he sees fit as he leases that space. Tim also stated that he sees the hours of operation as a bigger concern and suggested that maybe he should be asked to open earlier.

It was decided that Charlie will be invited to attending next month’s meeting to address some of those concerns and issues.

**Old Business – None**

**VIII. Final Public Comment – None.**

**IX. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, July 14, 2010, 6:00 p.m. in the Junior Room at Val Halla.**

There was a motion made by Tim Moody and seconded by Judy Ingraham to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett  
Recording Secretary