

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, August 18, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Junior Room – Val Halla

Meeting Minutes

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

Absent: John Zappia

Others Present: Mark Sunderman, Val Halla Golf Association, Brian Bickford, Golf Pro, Toby Young, Golf Course Superintendent, Bill Shane, Town Manager, Bill Stiles, Council Liaison and Jeff Porter, Council Liaison.

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

II. Approval of July 14, 2010 Minutes – Steve Sloan asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the July 14, 2010 minutes in their packets. Seeing that there were no corrections, additions or deletions, a motion to accept the minutes as amended was made by Norene Ward and seconded by Tim Moody.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. Val Halla Golf Association – Mark Sundermann stated how much he appreciated Toby's reports and how well they educated people on what is going on. He also commented on what great shape the course is in and indicated that the Association will probably subsidize the Member/Guest event this year. Toby stated that he had spent \$500 on ball washers and trash cans and needed to be reimbursed for those monies.

IV. Green's Committee Report – Due to the absence of Steve Quigley, Green's Committee, there was no Green's Committee Report this month. Bill Stiles stated that he felt that Mr. Quigley should attend the meetings to discuss issues with the Board as he does respond directly to Toby regarding ongoing issues. Steve complimented Toby again on the great job he was doing in maintaining the course. Steve also reported that Brian and Toby will be setting up the course for the Club championship and Member/Guest events.

Public Comment – None

V. Charlie Sparrow – The Sparrow's Nest at the Viking Grill – Steve indicated that the Board had wanted to bring Charlie in to see how he's doing, see how he thinks things are going and to also let him know how the Board felt things were going. Steve reiterated that the Board wants to see Charlie do well and be successful.

Norene stated that she was very pleased with how things appear to be going when she's here. She did ask Charlie how he felt about having a vending machine available for coffee in the mornings and Charlie stated that he did not have the funds available to offer this service. Norene asked if he would have any objections if there was some type of coffee available, with proceeds going to benefit the Junior Room and Charlie indicated that he would have no objection to that. Charlie stated further that he would have to purchase the vending machine and then have to maintain it and reiterated that he does not have the funds available to do that. He also stated that even on weekends, he does not do that much business in coffee sales.

Bill Putnam stated that he really wasn't aware of whether or not there were coffee/beverages available on weekend mornings and indicated that if he didn't know, perhaps other folks don't know as well. Charlie indicated that this year has been a better year and he attributed it to the good weather and stated that even though he was making more money there were also more expenses.

Bill Putnam asked Charlie at this point in his second year of operation, what he felt needed to happen to make things even better. Charlie reminded the Board that he is retired and keeps operating the Viking Grill because he enjoys the work and the interaction with the people. Charlie indicated that he will be using more full-time help and less part-time help for the next year so that he doesn't have to be on site so much of the time. He stated that he had been short-staffed most of the year in an effort to make some money, but that he was not going to do that again next year. Bill Putnam stated that it was in everyone's best interest that his operation was successful and that to make sure that it is a good experience for Charlie.

There was some discussion about slips not being paid and initiated and Charlie indicated that it had happened last year and then again this year and he was trying to crack down on it as it was a loss of revenue.

Bill Stiles asked if there were any posted hours of operation and Charlie indicated that they were looking into having some signs made up for that and also for the restrooms, which would indicate if service was needed to please notify the bartender of that fact. Charlie indicated that if someone lets them know that the bathrooms need attention, they get right on it. Charlie also indicated that he very often is telling patrons that there is a hand dryer available next to the paper towel dispenser and many times they are unaware of that fact.

Tim stated that he felt that Charlie was doing a great job and indicated that the only concern he had was the condition of the restrooms and he agreed that the signs would be a great idea. Charlie indicated that as long as he enjoyed what he was doing, he would still be around and once it's no longer enjoyable for him, he will leave. He reiterated that it was obvious that he is not going to be making what he had anticipated making. He stated that he is still trying to get the public to come in and expand his business as that was where the monies could be made.

Bill Shane reported to the Board that during the last full year that the Town had run the operation, they lost \$80,000. He further stated that by contracting it out last year, the Town had lost \$35,000 and indicated that they are trending toward a \$20,000 loss for this year. Bill stated that it appears that the Town had spent an additional \$5,000 in utility costs this year and

indicated that he was unsure about what the Town Council might decide to do about the continued operation of the Viking Grill. He also indicated that he felt the Board needed to be realistic about the lost revenues, going forward. He cautioned the Board that he didn't feel they should put too much money into the operation.

Charlie stated that they are seeing more and more members coming in to utilize his services and encouraged the Board to let him know anytime they see any of his staff ignoring the customers. Steve mentioned that the Viking Grill had previously used a computerized system as opposed to paper slips and that had seemed to make things flow much more smoothly. Charlie indicated that he had priced out that type of system for \$2,500 and that he could not afford it.

Judy stated that the bathrooms had been in good condition lately and reiterated how important she felt it was to have clean restrooms.

VI. Review of Revenue Reports – In Alex's absence, Bill Shane reported that the course income is over \$11,000 better than last year and indicated that the Board should continue to see those types of numbers going forward. Bill Shane indicated that he was having some difficulties in justifying keeping it open. Steve asked Brian what Riverside does with their facility and Brian indicated that it is open year round, but that there seems to be a different type of crowd that patronizes that facility. There was increased discussion about the possibility of having vending machines available and closing down the Viking Grill during the off-season months.

Norene asked about how expensive it was to maintain Twin Brooks and Bill Shane indicated that it runs about \$115,000 per year for Twin Brook, West Cumberland and the Town Office and stated that it is not an enterprise funds and is supported by taxpayer dollars.

There was discussion by the Board of how many Cumberland residents actually use the facilities at Val Halla. Jeff Porter reminded the Board that Val Halla is looked at as a community resource as opposed to a golf course. Steve stated that he felt it was a four-season recreational area and suggested that it be tied into Twin Brooks and that the trails be groomed for cross-country skiing.

Jeff brought up the possibility of more revenue generation as related to the tennis courts. Steve stated that he felt it was cramped down by the tennis courts and Tim indicated that he felt it was only a minor inconvenience for a very short period of time, but stated that he felt something should be charged for the use of the courts. Bill Stiles indicated that he thought that the lights on the courts had been operated in the past on a coin-operated switch.

VII. New Business:

a. Business Reports:

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian brought the Board's attention to his Val Halla Statistics report which provides a snapshot of how this year compares to last year. He reported

that Greens Fees are up \$14,000 over the prior year, Carts are up \$24,000 and the Range is up \$4,500 indicating an overage of 43,000. He further stated that Member Rounds are flat which shows that those numbers are coming from outside play. He indicated that he was amazed by the growth shown with the numbers.

Bill Putnam stated that he would like more discussion and information about the carts at the next time they are negotiated.

Judy indicated being made aware of some difficulties in trying to get a tee time after tournaments and Brian indicated that the difficulty appeared to be in managing the tee sheets and the walk-ins.

Brian reported to the Board that the Golf Gopher program has not been upgraded in six years and really needs something to be done about it.

Brian also reported to the Board that he is running into some difficulties where players do not want to be paired up and this is impacting play. Bill Shane indicated that he felt that Brian needed to be given some more flexibility when starting up the "Red Zone" times again after September 1st.

Brian stated that he had been struggling with the Membership Rates, which was included in the budget. He indicated that even though he was aware of the fact that the economy was still tough, the conditions of the course truly warranted raising the rates. He proposed a Senior category, which freezes the rate at \$699, weekday rate if they join this Fall. This would run from Monday morning through Friday noon. There was some discussion by the Board of extending the timeframe for seniors. Brian stated that if they chose to do that, they would be cutting into the revenue numbers. Brian indicated that this would cover a relatively small group and that it was a more symbolic gesture than a monetary one.

Norene stated that she felt it would be politically correct to offer a Cumberland Resident rate at \$800, since the course is subsidized by taxpayers. She also stated that it should be known by residents that there is this benefit available to them. Brian indicated that he will publish the information and mail it out. Bill Stiles asked if Brian had given any more thought to a family membership and Brian indicated that he is a bit nervous about the numbers and trying to figure out how to implement it as everyone has a different situation.

Norene made a motion that a senior, week day only membership be offered at \$699 and \$749 and it was seconded by Bill Putnam.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. Toby Young - Course

Toby reported that he has been spraying a lot more than he usually has this season and he thanked the Board for their support in allowing him to do what he thinks is best for the course. He also reported how pleased he was with the new product he is currently using.

He also reported on how he had been working to get the ground saturated where it would actually take any rainwater that came and absorb it.

b. Other New Business – None

Old Business – None

VIII. Final Public Comment – None.

IX. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, September 15, 2010, 6:00 p.m. in the Junior Room at Val Halla.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary