

Val Halla Board of Trustees

Wednesday, April 14, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. to 6:57 p.m.

Town Hall – Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

Present: Steve Sloan, Tim Moody, Judy Ingraham, John Zappia, Bill Putnam and Norene Ward

Absent: Rick Scott

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 March 10, 2010 Minutes – Bill Putnam asked if everyone had an opportunity to review the March 10, 2010 minutes in their packets. Steve asked that a change be made under item number “II. Approval of February 10, 2010 Minutes” to indicate that Steve Sloan’s name be added and Bill Putnam’s name be removed in the first sentence. There was also another change on page 4, under “Item 2. Toby Young – Course”, fourth paragraph, last sentence, be amended to read, “12th hole” instead of “3rd hole”. Seeing that there were no other corrections, additions or deletions, a motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Tim Moody and seconded by Judy Ingraham. Bill Putnam and Norene Ward abstained due to their absence at the last meeting.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED 4/2

VI. Review of Revenue Reports – Alex reported that this March ended up about the same as March of the prior year, although he did state that overall golf memberships were down from the prior year. He reported that both he and Brian felt that may be attributable to the difficulties in getting the second half monies from folks opting for the split membership payment. Brian further explained that there had been a problem in collecting the personal information on the registration forms for those opting for the Fall Membership option, which had delayed the billing process. He also stated that there had been between 50 – 60 people which were in the situation of not having the correct billing information. This oversight had caused some difficulties in collecting the monies owed until they saw them at Val Halla or

called them to help gather up the corrected personal information. Brian indicated that he felt there had been between \$17,000 to \$18,000 in monies not collected because of this situation. Alex stated, if that factor was taken into consideration, membership revenues were running about even. Alex did state, however, that a lot of money has since come in and that Brian has done a great job in gathering up the revenue monies owed. When asked, Alex stated that the Open House was running about even with that of a year ago and he told the Board that the Spring numbers will be interesting especially when compared to those of last year, which was a good Spring insofar as revenues were concerned. Alex reminded the Board that the “turn around” started about a year ago and stated that he felt there was a very good chance that we would make our budget numbers for this year.

Alex reported that Toby’s Course Expenses were running about even to last year and he brought the Board’s attention to the Full-Time wages line and compared this year’s figures to those of last year explaining that there had been three payroll runs in March of this year. He indicated that when looking at the whole picture, March of this year is running about even to March of last year.

Alex brought the Board’s attention to the graph that was enclosed in the packet and stated that Val Halla is running “on pace” and is doing significantly better than last year and the last three years, but indicated that it is still going to lose quite a bit of money. Alex complimented Brian and Toby for doing a great job in running the operation and stated that he was very pleased with the numbers, given the fact that we’re still in a bad economy. He stated that these numbers were the best ones he had seen in the last five or six years and stated that the numbers indicate that they are doing much better during the Spring membership drives.

Bill Putnam asked if Brian would provide the information relative to the number of rounds played compared to the revenue numbers as it would help everyone to understand what’s happening on the course.

Alex stated that he had received a cash sheet from Brian which indicated big membership numbers with greens fees and cart rentals. Upon investigating further, he discovered that it was \$100 for greens fees and \$500 for cart rentals, which he felt would have been nothing a year ago and was a significant change directly related to the addition of the cart paths.

Steve asked about heating expenses and whether or not we heated the entire facility and Alex reported that we do not and explained that they had estimated the numbers for this year, but will have more definite information going forward.

VII. New Business:

a. Business Reports:

I. Department Reports:

1. Brian Bickford – Pro Shop

Brian reported that at this point there are 326 paid members, 67 of which

are new members. He also reported that we are 51 members away from the budget set for the year and stated that he had looked at the minutes from last year at the same time and they indicated that there had been 44 new members last year and that we are currently 23 new members ahead of last year, with 256 returning members from last year.

He reported that there had been 2-3 people joining from Bath as they had gone out of business and reiterated that the cart paths have made a huge difference and that people are very excited about having them at Val Halla.

Brian reported that Maurice Fisher has chaired the fundraising for the Junior Room with construction starting about three days before the Open House. He reported that to date \$2,000 has been raised, with two contributions of \$500 each. Brian also stated that they have set up a separate account and that there will be letters of recognition going out to all those who contributed as well as a plaque in the basement listing contributors upon completion. He stated that the goal is to raise \$10,000.

Brian reported that he had recently found out that the Town has a grant writer and that they will be applying for grant monies from the USGA with matching funds for growing junior programs similar to ours.

Bill Stiles asked if the "Cart Path Only" limits people to only the front nine and Brian reported that they had been able to work around that with some guidance from Toby on some of the tricky holes in the back.

Norene asked what Brian had in mind for the Junior Room and how it was going to be run. Brian stated that it will be a teaching room, locked and supervised. He stated that they would not be infringing upon The Viking Grill and would allow them to present programs and information without distractions. He also stated that it will allow the Juniors to be able to enter and exit out on to the putting green. Brian also reported to the Board that once the room is finished, it would be a great spot for the Board to hold its meetings.

Steve Sloan asked Brian about his thoughts pertaining to the Open House and Brian stated that between 225 and 245 people had attended. He indicated that he had been hoping for a greater attendance, and that things slowed down significantly during the last hour. He stated that a lot of questions were asked about the Spring Membership and that they did pick up quite a few new memberships and some were from other neighboring golf courses. Tim asked if mostly members had attended and asked if Brian had felt that it was dollars well spent and Brian indicated that there were a lot of new people there and that he felt it had been dollars well spent. He stated that there had been a lot of interest in the "Wine 'N

Nine” programs.

Tim stated that he had signed up quite a few folks for “Twilight” and Steve reported that they had almost reached their goal and that he may have to go to 11 teams. Bill Stiles asked if anyone felt that the fact that the golf course had been open before the Open House had any bearing on attendance and Brian indicated that he thought it may have had an impact.

Steve stated that he was glad to be back in the Pro Shop and indicated that based on what he has seen to date, he feels we will have a great year.

2. Toby Young - Course

Toby reported on the status of the irrigation system and stated that they put in the suction line last Friday and closed the dam and let the pond fill over the weekend. He also reported that they had tried the pumps on Monday and Toby reported that they are working great, much better than the old ones.

Toby did report that there were a fair amount of breaks in the lines, but even at that they are nothing to what they had with the old system and he attributed those breaks to the recent winter and the frost in the ground. Toby gave a brief demonstration of a “swing joint” and explained that the purpose of the design was for it to move with the frost. He further explained that any breaks that had occurred with the old system would have caused them to have to dig up over 80’ of pipe to correct the problem. Toby further reported that they had found 14 damaged and have already fixed 8 of them at the swing joints. Toby reported that George Ley had repaired quite a few of them last year as part of their warranty, which was about \$500 in value.

Toby stated that they will be applying Proxy Pre-Mold spray on the greens this year, which they did not do last year due to the weather and explained the application process which can lead to a very uneven putting surface due to the growth of the grass. The application last for about three weeks and keeps the plants from growing. Toby stated that once the spray is applied they cannot mow for three to four days and that they cannot apply fertilizer for three weeks after that. He also explained that after that period has passed they will be applying fertilizer before beginning the aerating process.

Toby reported that there had been a record rainfall in March with 11+ inches falling in Portland and 13+ inches at Val Halla. He also reported that the rock wall has been completed at new 17 and stated that they will be planting flowers behind it and grassing the back hill after the irrigation is done.

Toby also reported that they have found a lot of old drainage lines in some of the very wet areas and that they would be working on those areas to determine if pipe has collapsed and needs to be replaced or if it is due to the very heavy clay soils clogging the pores on the outside of the pipe. He indicated that what they seem to be finding is that the soil is clogging up the holes which is causing them to have to dig additional holes for the installation of drain boxes.

Bill Putnam asked if it would be possible for Toby to put all of this information in the newsletter so that it would be available to anyone who would like additional information. Bill Putnam also asked if Toby could publish a “to do” list to aid in keeping the membership informed. Toby indicated that he would e-mail the Board a list of upcoming projects to aid them when they are asked questions by the membership. Bill Stiles suggested that it be put in the newsletter. Toby stated that he prefers to send the information directly on to the Board rather than put it in the newsletter.

Norene asked if the cart paths were paved and seeded along the edge and Toby indicated that it had been done about four times, but that they had an ongoing problem with rainy weather right after the seeding had taken place.

Tim stated some concerns about the first hole and Toby indicated that they will be using a rolling aerator to try to keep it loose throughout the year and then will re-seed. Tim stated that “the course is in great shape and the greens are fabulous.”

Bill Putnam asked about the new #9 and commented on how wet the area is and asked if Toby felt it would dry out and Toby indicated that he believed that it would.

Steve complimented Toby stating that he had done a great job on the course.

b. Other New Business – None

VIII.Old Business – Brian informed the Board of the ongoing issue of dogs at Val Halla and stated that during the previous weekend he had seen a couple who was using the tennis courts lock their dog in one of the other courts while they were playing tennis. He stated that he had gone down and asked them why they had brought their dog onto the courts and told them about the “No Dogs” rule. There was discussion by the Board of the fact that people have discovered the cart paths and are using them throughout the year for other uses than as a cart path. Toby indicated that he doesn’t have a problem with people using the paths before the course is open, but that it becomes a safety issue once the course is open and reiterated that people should not be

using the course or cart paths unless they are playing golf. Toby stated that he will get some “No Dogs” signs to be used on the course and tennis courts as needed.

Judy asked about who was responsible to clean the restrooms and commented about the fact that they were not in very good condition during the recent Open House and was told that it falls under Charlie Sparrow’s authority. Steve stated that this has been an ongoing cleanliness issue.

IX. Adjournment, next meeting, Wednesday, May 12, 2010, 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Town Hall.

There was a motion made by John Zappia and seconded by Norene Ward to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m.

VOTE: MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia A. Stennett
Recording Secretary