

**Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 10, 2011**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; Gerald Slagel, Robert Collier, Patrick Dugan, Donald Nolan, Wayne Pettit and Gloria Tippett

R&P STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT: Phil Rollins, Director; Pat Meyers, Golf Course Manager; and Jim Farran, Golf Course Superintendent.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Wicomico Shores Golf Course (WSGC) Advisory Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Vice-Chairperson (Acting Chairperson) Bob Richardson welcomed new Board members Jerry Slagle and Bob Collier.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of July 8, 2010 will be approved during the next meeting (there was no quorum at the October 14, 2010 meeting).

FINANCIAL REPORT

Mr. Rollins provided a WSGC financial report that included FY10 (from July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010) and FY11 (July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011) to date information.

Approximate FY10 total revenues	\$1.3 million
Approximate FY10 total operating expenses	\$1.5 million
Approximate Deficit	\$216,000
Approx. net loss for FY10 covered by fund balance	\$213,500

The golf course enterprise fund balance covered most of the loss. The golf operation is run through the golf enterprise fund and does not receive general fund tax support. The County has owned and successfully operated the WSGC since the early 1990's. The operation has made a profit each year until FY10 and now FY11. This is due to the state of the economy, renovated clubhouse payments, and OPEB (future retiree health benefits). The enterprise fund is now about \$6,000 in the red. Mr. Rollins reiterated the current fiscal state is due to a combination of things. Rounds of golf are down, cart rental is down, and the restaurant business is off. The recession has impacted golf play all over the country.

He provided a separate handout that showed FY09, FY10 and FY11 to date years for the Riverview Restaurant. It showed a \$79,000 loss the first year of FY09; a \$56,000 loss for FY10; and this year to date shows a \$4,800 loss. The first year loss was due to significant start up costs; the second year things were getting better after changes in hours of operation, menu, and staffing. Staff is confident that FY11 will be a better year due to several management changes that have been made. Over the past twenty years, the golf course and restaurant have been fully self-supporting and have made a profit. Weather conditions for this coming spring and summer will impact golf and restaurant revenues.

Mr. Nolan asked about the mark-up in the golf pro shop. Ms. Meyers stated the items vary in

price; generally they are offered at suggested retail price. Last year the shop profited about \$25,000.

FY2012 OPERATING BUDGET

Ms. Meyers provided a hand out on the FY12 budget request. Expenditures have been curtailed to essential items for operation and reduced by about \$260,000. Some examples included deferring items such and replacement of a greens mower and other smaller purchases.

Staff is proposing an increase in fees for FY12. This includes at \$100 increase for a seven day unlimited season pass; a \$50 increase on the five day pass, a \$70 increase on the seven day limited pass; \$1 increase on greens fees; cart fees and all other fees would remain the same. These fees are still less or in line with other area courses. White Plains is a little cheaper (Wicomico is a larger operation than White Plans). Breton Bay has plans for a fee increase in the future.

Patrick Dugan asked if staff has used the e-mail mailing list. Ms. Meyers stated that staff working on that and has recently created a Facebook page. He suggested having a jar for patrons to place their e-mail addresses in. The e-mail list can be used each month to provide updates and information to the golfing public. He felt that this would be a great way to advertise.

Mr. Nolan thought it would be a revenue generator to have a rider fee for people who don't want to play but still want to ride along on the cart. Mr. Slagle asked if there was a liability issue with that; Patty will check with the County Attorney on this. Mr. Richardson thought that might apply to older children and teens. Staff will look into ways this could be implemented; this may be something that's done on a trial basis.

Mr. Slagle recommended putting numbers on the carts; Ms. Meyers stated that will be done.

Don Nolan moved, seconded by Patrick Dugan, to approve the WSGC draft FY12 operating budget and rates as presented by staff. Motion carried 7-0.

UPDATE ON RIVERVIEW RESTAURANT

Ms. Meyers reported that to date for this calendar year there are sixteen (16) functions booked with paid deposits; there are about four (4) tentative. This includes eleven (11) full room weddings (after 5:00 pm in peak season); a few weddings using the half room; and three (3) other functions using the half room. Staff feels these bookings represent a positive trend for the future.

REPORT FROM GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Jim Farren provided a report on the course greens and grounds. Spring aerification will be done in March; no sand will be used this year in an effort to save money; that may or may not work for future years. This can create problems for grass cutting equipment. Top dressing of greens is also underway.

Golf Course maintenance staff has been busy servicing equipment in preparation for the upcoming season and the winter maintenance on golf cart fleet has been completed. He noted that staff will have to watch the condition of equipment if new purchases are deferred. The cost of chemicals is always a challenge; Mr. Farren will try some spraying scheduling changes to see

what levels might be acceptable for the golfers and to save money. The biggest labor cost of late has been for weed trimming; the course may need to utilize Detention Center workers for some upcoming maintenance tasks.

Mr. Richardson asked about the new rakes; Mr. Farren stated that all new rakes have been purchased.

The Board thanked Mr. Farren and the grounds staff for their hard work and great condition of the golf course.

REVISED BYLAWS

Mr. Rollins referred to the draft copy of the WSGC Advisory Board revised by laws which were e-mailed to members. The bylaws are being revised as the County is in the process of standardizing all Board and Committee bylaws. The purpose of the standardized form is to serve as the uniform basis for bylaws of all standing advisory or administrative boards, commissions and committees appointed by the BOCC.

Wayne Pettit asked how many terms a member can serve; Mr. Rollins stated that generally is two terms for most boards. Items specific to each board are no longer listed in the bylaws, but can be found in the governing ordinance.

LIQUOR LICENSE RENEWAL

Mr. Rollins reported that he, Mr. Richardson and Ms. Meyers appeared before the BOCC on Tuesday, February 8, 2011 to request approval of the annual liquor license renewal for the WSGC. The BOCC approved the renewal; however, three of the Commissioners expressed interest in looking at alternatives for the operation and what other municipal courses are doing.

There has been discussion in the past about privatizing the restaurant operation and getting the County out of the business of selling alcohol. The WSGC Advisory Board and the BOCC considered this alternative last year. After discussing the issue with the Alcohol Beverage Board, it was staff's understanding that by doing so the golf operation would also have to be privatized to continue allowing beer on the golf course. That's because State law prohibits having two alcohol licenses on the same premises. It is customary to have a beer on the golf course or in the clubhouse after a round of golf. In examining this issue last year, the WSGC Advisory Board strongly supported sustaining County management of the golf course operation.

Staff recently met with the Alcohol Beverage Board staff again and was told that, while it's correct that the law prohibits having two alcohol licenses on the same premises, approval may be granted to take drinks onto the course since the license is for on and off sales. She said patrons could take drinks out in unopened containers and then open the drinks out on the golf course as permitted by R&P (like a park picnic pavilion consumption permit). That could create some challenges with oversight.

There are two options at this time: 1) to contract with someone to operate the restaurant/banquet facility; or, 2) to privatize the entire operation (food and golf). The previous BOCC didn't want to contract out the golf operation and was also concerned about losing control of the restaurant by privatizing. There was concern about the impact on the neighborhood that could occur if the operation focused more on the bar and the hours of operation were expanded. As a result, the Board opted not to explore privatization.

Mr. Nolan expressed concern that if a contractor decided mid-stream they weren't making a profit and closed, then the golf operation would be adversely affected. Mr. Slagle stated that the employees are doing a great job maintaining the course.

The WSGC will host a public meeting on the golf course operation on March 10, 2011 at the clubhouse. Staff is has been directed to report back to the BOCC on this issue in the next few weeks.

FEES FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT SPONSORED EVENTS

Ms. Meyers stated that several times during the year she receives requests to waive the regular room rental fee for County Government sponsored events and meetings. This includes events such as the Sheriff's Department awards dinner, Ethics Commission training and Museum Board volunteer appreciation night. Staff is proposing that for County Government functions that purchase food from the Riverview that the room rental fee be waived or charged at 50% if an outside caterer is used. All golf outings are managed this way.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Patrick Dugan and Gloria Tippettt volunteered to serve as the nominating committee for the upcoming election of officers.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Richardson asked about making lower cost hamburgers available for tournaments.

Mr. Slagle stated that he's heard from seniors (five day pass holders) and they feel they can't participate in the club championship because they have to pay the full price. He said they would participate if the could have the green fees waived and just pay the cart fees. Staff will take this under consideration.

Mr. Dugan asked what kind of youth programs are available. Ms. Meyers stated that the course holds a Junior Golf program each summer for one week. Mr. Dugan suggested a half-day summer camp to include tennis, possibly with assistance from the St. Mary's County Tennis Association. This would get more kids and their parents to the golf course.

Gloria Tippettt stated that some patrons expressed interest in closing the Riverview partition half way to provide some additional separation for food patrons from the golfers and bar patrons. Mr. Pettit agreed that would cut down on noise at times. Ms. Meyers stated she would try that.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT MEETING

The WSGC Advisory Board will hold a special meeting on Thursday, March, 10, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse. The next regular meeting of the WSGC Advisory Board will be held on Thursday, April 14, 2011 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

Kathy Bailey, Recorder