

WESTBOROUGH COUNTRY CLUB OPERATING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 19, 2017

Location: Meeting Room, WCC

Convened: 6:00 p.m.

Adjourned: 7:47 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Katie Welch, Don Bouffard, Dave Hall, Paul McGrath, Dexter Blois (via phone).

Other Attendees: Jack Negoshian, Hank Rauch, Jessica Kaiser, Mike Hightower.

Open Forum: There was no one here to address the Committee.

Minutes: Mr. Blois made a motion to approve the amended minutes from November 14, 2017 and Mr. Bouffard seconded. VOTED: 4-0-0.

Budget/Membership: The Committee reviewed current financials. Mr. Bouffard noted that revenue for the first 6 months of 2017 was approximately \$15,000 less than the same period in 2016. He felt the decrease was mostly weather related. The Committee was concerned with covering expenses for FY18. Mr. Bouffard mentioned that he would like to request a transfer from the Enterprise Fund for locker room repairs. There was a discussion about the locker room repairs, along with fixing the rain shelters. Mr. Hall noted that the cost of the locker room repairs was quoted at \$3,500 in the November CCOC minutes. Mr. Blois and Mr. Hall suggested using \$3,500 from the Buildings & Grounds budget toward the locker room repairs. Mr. Blois said that he will submit an article in the warrant for the March Annual Town Meeting asking for a transfer of \$2,500 from the Enterprise Fund for the purpose of fixing the rain shelters instead. Mr. McGrath questioned the format of the financials and asked if figures could be shown for the fiscal year (July 1 – June 30th) rather than as calendar year. After some discussion, Mr. Bouffard offered to coordinate revising the financials.

Regarding membership, Ms. Welch referred to her cover letter to members for the 2018 season. She wanted the Committee to reconsider their vote from the last meeting of a \$100 penalty for late payments received for membership renewals. Ms Welch pointed out how other local courses handle their renewals. Mr. Rauch suggested that the Committee consider an “early bird” rate since members may prefer a discount for paying early rather than being assessed a late fee and Mr. Bouffard agreed. Mr. McGrath noted that it was common courtesy to pay on time and that renewals aren’t due until the end of February, which gives members plenty of time. Ms. Welch suggested instituting an administrative fee for new members and also charging that fee for those submitting their dues late. Mr. Blois and Mr. Bouffard preferred a more positive approach and liked the idea of offering a discount for paying prior to the due date. Mr. Bouffard made a motion to rescind the vote for the \$100 penalty for late payment of 2018 dues that was voted on at November’s CCOC meeting and Mr. Blois seconded. VOTED: 4-0-0. There was continued discussion and the Committee felt that any changes to the rate structure can be looked at for next year. Mr. Hall suggested adding something in the cover letter notifying members that there could be a delay in getting on the course if payment isn’t in on time. The Committee agreed that members paying their renewal late would have to pay greens fees until they are added in to the system and that could take up to two weeks. There was also a conversation about offering a payment plan but the Committee felt the pricing structure didn’t warrant that yet.

Golf Professional: Mr. Negoshian informed the Committee that he deposited \$719 for greens fees in December. He mentioned that he contacted the Massachusetts Golf Association (MGA) regarding getting the course re-rated and it should be done in May. Mr. Blois noted that the rating team will collect data and then we'll need to wait for the turnaround which could take a couple of months for the process to be complete. Mr. Blois asked Mr. Negoshian if he had enough score cards to last until mid-July. Mr. Negoshian is going to double check but he felt he could run out. He pointed out that once the MGA changes Westborough's rating, he will update it online so it shouldn't matter what the scorecards say since what's posted online is correct. There was a discussion about the cost of the scorecards and discounts on ordering certain quantities. Mr. Negoshian wasn't sure of the pricing for the scorecards but felt he'll have a better idea in the spring and can update the Committee at that time.

Mr. Negoshian wanted to discuss cart rentals and fees with the Committee. He mentioned that this past year he brought in less than \$93,000 in cart fees but typically collects around \$100,000 in cart revenue per year. Mr. Negoshian asked the Committee if they would consider raising the cost of the cart fees by \$1.00 and offered to split anything he takes in over \$100,000 with the course. He reviewed his costs such as lease fees and fuel. Mr. Negoshian pointed out that he wouldn't deduct credit card processing fees or gas and would split whatever comes in over \$100,000 evenly. Mr. Bouffard expressed concern with going up on cart fees in the same year we're increasing membership dues. It was noted that carts fee rates haven't increased since 2010. Mr. Bouffard discussed what other clubs charge. Mr. McGrath wanted to clarify that any income the club stood to gain wouldn't be realized until FY19 since cart fees don't usually reach the \$100,000 mark until the fall (typically October). Mr. Bouffard suggested adding this subject to the next CCOC monthly meeting agenda for further discussion. Mr. Blois agreed and said he would like to see where membership renewals come in for the spring before making a decision about carts. There was discussion about projected revenue and leagues leaving and some looking to come in. Mr. Hightower mentioned Millwood Golf Course isn't closing He noted that if rates for carts increased, discounts could be offered during quieter times to lower cart fees. Mr. Hall was concerned with losing membership dollars next year due to increased rates, older clientele, and less new members joining. He felt that if that happens then we could end up with more revenue in greens fees instead. The Committee reviewed greens fee rates for next year and compared those prices with what other local courses charge. Mr. Bouffard and Mr. Blois agreed with adding the topic of increasing cart fees to the next meeting agenda.

Mr. Bouffard reported to the Committee that he has been researching online tee time booking systems. He recommended going with Golf Now since we know how they work and they seem to be the best out there. Mr. Negoshian mentioned that Steve Ellis from Golf Now stopped by to see where we were at in our decision making process. He suggested that Mr. Ellis check back after this month's meeting. Mr. Negoshian pointed out that Golf Now will sync their website with ours, which will give them the capability of looking at when we are slow so specials can be offered. They will also block off busy times and still run their daily deal with the one tee time slot that we offer them. Mr. Negoshian noted that Golf Now will publish the greens fee rate for walking and if folks need a cart then they will pay extra. Mr. Bouffard made a motion to go with Golf Now for a one year contract and Mr. Hall seconded. There was a discussion about how folks can book tee times and the cost. VOTED: 4-0-0. Mr. Negoshian said that he will find out from MSI/GSI Director, Mark Stockman, about getting a computer.

Greens Superintendent: Ms. Welch asked Mr. Hightower if it was acceptable for them to use some of the money in the Buildings & Grounds budget for the rain shelters. Mr. Hightower said that was fine since he doesn't anticipate needing it. He mentioned ice on the greens as a result of snow and then significant rain. Mr. Hightower said that he's optimistic about warmer weather coming and the ice melting, otherwise he'll have to chop the ice. Mr. Hightower pointed out that the fencing is done and the greens have been covered. He said that he and his staff have been working on maintaining the equipment. There was a question about the fairway mower. Mr. Blois clarified that the fairway mower will be ordered once the purchase is approved at Town Meeting. Mr. Blois noted that a 2/3 vote is needed in order to proceed since it is a borrowing for a five year lease which requires town approval. Mr. Hightower mentioned there was an auction recently that he attended that had a lot of nice equipment. He said he will notify the Committee about any upcoming auctions in the future since there are usually steep discounts.

Old Business: Ms. Welch mentioned committee assignments for greens, budget, marketing/operations, and finance. Mr. Blois said he'd work on greens and Katie said she'd help too. Mr. Bouffard, Mr. Hall, and Mr. McGrath agreed to work on the budget. Mr. Bouffard and Ms. Welch will also help out with administration and marketing. Mr. Bouffard mentioned he contacted Deb Penta at Penta Communications about help with marketing and advertising and he has a meeting scheduled with her on January 4th at 11:30 am. He's hoping he can get one of her associates to work with him to increase sales at the Country Club.

Mr. Bouffard reported on the youth golf initiative which is moving along and getting a good response. Mr. Hightower suggested using Gibbons as another site for giving youth lessons in case Freedom Park doesn't work out. The Committee felt there was a lot of long term potential in getting kids golfing.

Mr. McGrath asked Mr. Negoshian if he had heard back from the league at Indian Meadows and whether they are definitely moving over to Westborough. Mr. Negoshian mentioned that the group needs to take a vote and they'll let him know. Mr. Negoshian reminded the Committee that they offered them a Wednesday night time slot after the quota.

New Business: Ms. Welch pointed out the Annual Town Report (ATR) for 2017 that is due mid-January. Mr. Negoshian provided his data for the report. Ms. Welch said that she will coordinate a meeting with Mr. Willwerth and Ms. Kaiser to finalize details for the ATR.

Mr. Hall mentioned changing the name of the club since there could be confusion over the difference between a country club and golf club and the connotations. He felt that "country club" seems more closed to the public, while "golf course" seems more open. Mr. Bouffard pointed out that most municipal courses are labeled as a golf course. Mr. Hall mentioned the sign out front and getting a new one. He'd like to see a bigger sign and better lighting. Mr. Bouffard said that Pillsbury Sign is working on a new design and sign.

Regarding CCOC meetings over the winter months, Mr. Bouffard noted that the Committee usually doesn't meet in January and February. He suggested sticking with the monthly meeting schedule and changing the location to the Town Hall.

Mr. Bouffard inquired about getting a key so he can gain access to the clubhouse in order to bring in workers for the locker room renovations.

Adjournment: Having no further business, Mr. Hall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 p.m. and Mr. Bouffard seconded. It was noted that the next CCOC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 16th at 6 pm. VOTED 4-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved:

Jessica Kaiser, Administrative Assistant

Katie Welch, CCOC Chairman