

Bethlehem Country Club Committee Meeting

May 3, 2016 @ 6:30 PM

Present: Katelyn White, Clare Brown, Pat Bonardi, Gerry Blanchard, Victor Hofmann, Jane Storella, Ned Johnson. Absent: Pete Rivers

Gerry Blanchard read the Warrant Article from the 2015 town report: We, the undersigned, petition the Bethlehem Board of Selectmen to authorize – at no cost the town – the formation of a committee to discuss ways to make the golf course more profitable, which would include considering alternative uses, with the goal of reducing taxes, increasing tourism and encouraging businesses to locate in the town.

- The goal is to come up with some alternatives in 60 days with the possibility that some of the ideas presented could be implemented during this 2016 golf season.

Discussion:

- Pat Bonardi stated that the golf course is a gem as it is a Donald Ross course and we should use that as a tool in promoting the course. There are groups, etc., who travel to play on Donald Ross courses around the country.
- Gerry stated that Larry Fellows has some great ideas on the Restaurant and the golf course.
- Ned Johnson discussed the course sustainability in past years, stating that in 1999 we had 350 members. Wayne Natti was the golf manager at that time. We are now down to around 200-225. Ned commented that the restaurant loses money; therefore the golf course loses money as all operations are all one budget.
- Jane Storella asked about “free” golf and food as this is a comment heard in the community. Gerry stated the elected officials received free golf but must pay cart fees.
- Victor Hofmann discussed the restaurant and different options. Feels the building needs a facelift to make it attractive and there has been a lack of sustainability with the restaurant. Much discussion was had on the restaurant as it seems to be the “money losing” issue. Several ways of helping to increase revenue at the restaurant was discussed and will be in more detail at next meeting. The consensus was that it doesn’t need a big menu, but it does need good food and longer hours for golfers and patrons off the street.
- It was felt that one of the biggest hurdles was the change the perception of the club. Katelyn felt that much of that could be done with social media; i.e., Instagram, etc. Larry is working on this.
- The 300 club and Benefactors were discussed and it was brought up that they do an enormous amount of work at the club using monies raised by the 300 club and the Benefactors tournament. Jane asked that we find out just how much money has actually been put in to the club by these two groups. Gerry will look in to that.
- Advertising was discussed as a big part of marketing the course.
- We do own the golf carts as of this year, so monies taken in from them are “profit”. However, in 3 years, they will have to be traded in for new ones. So this is an ongoing expense.

- Membership options were discussed and this will be broken down in more detail; having non-resident memberships, for people who come up on weekends, corporate memberships, boosting innkeepers participation in the course, etc.
- Fundraising options discussed; Colonial theater – movie, such as Caddy shack, Tin Cup or other.

It was noted that Larry Fellows is painting on the inside of the Country Club and the outside is scheduled to be painted as well. The signage will be moved to a more observable site, closer to the driveway.

The building is an historic building and should be kept up better than it has been. The kitchen equipment has not been well taken care of and the ice machine will need to be replaced.

For the next meeting, the committee was charged with bringing specific ideas regarding the club and restaurant that will benefit the facility as a whole.

The next meeting is on Thursday, May 12th at 6:30 in the town building.

Minutes taken by Clare Brown