

Sunflower Hill Golf Course Advisory Board

Minutes from the meeting held Tuesday January 12, 2021

Zoom meeting

The meeting was called to order by Roger Miller, Chairman

Members present: Al Ramirez, JD Downs, George Hurtado, Jeff Manning, Dan Duncan, Matt Palcher, Jake Miller, Bob Runnebaum, Mark Mohler, Kevin Jones, David McLain

Members absent: Dennis McWilliams

Staff present: Jeff Johnson, Jonathan Bennett

David McLain made a motion to approve minutes from the March 2020 meeting. A second was made by Jeff Manning.

Jonathan Bennett began the meeting stating that 2020 had some challenges with labor issues. Jonathan stated that his crew was man short for most of the season because of budget constraints. George Davis, a seasonal employee was only able to work 500 hours as opposed to his normal 1000 hours per year. The furlough process also limited the number of days that the full time employees could work during the busiest time of the season. The 3 full time employees were limited to 5 weeks at 24 hours per week. And there was no part time help available during the summer months as well.

Jonathan informed the board that the bunker renovation project began at the beginning of June and the contractor finished at the end of July. The "Billy Bunker" process went well and it worked when we received heavy rains.

Part of the renovation process included adding new forward tees which were completed at the end of July. The other two components to the renovation process were also completed on time. The fence that surrounds the perimeter of the golf course and the junior course were repaired from aging and the spring tornado of 2019. Finally, several greens had zoysia installed around the perimeter, with only 6 holes left to complete. Holes #10,12,14,15 16 and 17 are scheduled for early summer of this year.

Some of the plans for 2021 include tree removal this winter, mainly dead pine trees and dying ash trees. Jonathan stated that he has increased the fertilizer budget to apply to some heavy use areas. Aerification will be done in March. Because of the heavy use of the new forward tees an evaluation will need to be made to rebuild and make larger and to resod some of them.

The drainage pipe on #10 fairway is scheduled for late winter or early spring. Finally, cart path repairs on holes #13 and #17 will be done when the weather is warmer.

Jeff Johnson began his report by stating that 2020 was a very different year due to the pandemic. When the pandemic first began the course was closed for 3 days then reopened for walkers only. This caused a problem for disabled individuals who couldn't play because of the no cart restrictions. On or around the first of April those who possessed a legitimate handicap card could use a single cart. Full cart usage began on April 17 with the restriction of one person per cart. It was at this time requests for play and tee times boomed. Tee times had to be spread out as to provide for social distancing and to have enough carts for every one wanting to play. During this time the course was sold out virtually every day.

During this time the carts were sanitized before they went out and when they returned. This was very labor intensive. Also, from March 25th until April 25th the clubhouse was closed and no snack bar sales, pro shop sales or driving range sales were allowed. Also, no golf lessons were allowed as well. Starting on May 22nd the clubhouse reopened to limited capacity. On June 8th, 2 riders per cart were allowed and this drove a surge in the number of rounds played.

The month of April was the worst month in the history of the golf course but fortunes turned in the months from June to December. During those months the numbers of rounds played were the best in 20 years. November was the 4th best November recorded and December was the 3rd best ever. Overall rounds and revenue were up 19% from the previous year. The total number of rounds for the year was 34,723 as compared to 28,267 in 2019. It was the best revenue year ever for golf carts and the 5th best revenue year for green fees.

Unfortunately, junior golf and the First Tee program had to be canceled for the year in an abundance of caution. All other lesson programs that were scheduled were canceled as well. Private lessons were given starting in June with protection protocols in place.

Over half the number of tournaments that were scheduled were canceled. The first big event held at the course was on Friday July 31st. Registration was set up with social distancing in place and cart staging was divided into 6 different areas and limited to 24 players in each area. Food for post tournament activities were done outside with different areas designated for seating to accomplish social distancing. This tournament provided a template for staff to host other events safely.

Finally, Jeff reported that 2020 was the best year in 20 years and that he expects the demand for play to continue to be high for 2021. Jeff closed by stating that a new cart fleet is expected to be delivered between April 1 and May 1. The current fleet held up well until the very end of the year when the batteries started to lose their efficiency.

A suggestion was made by Jeff Johnson that the board not meet again until it can meet in person or if there is a pressing issue meet via zoom again. All members agreed.

Mark Mohler made a motion to adjourn and a second was made by Kevin Jones. All members voted aye.