

Irrigation System Info Meeting

Bill Freeman Introductory Comments

Thank you for attending this meeting – excuse the somewhat short notice but we believed we could catch many members in Maine during this holiday week.

In a few moments you will hear about a proposed irrigation system from Jay Foster, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee and then a plan to pay for the system from our Treasurer, Peter Van Alstine.

It is worthwhile to have these meetings with club members to make sure you have the facts as there have been varying rumors ever since the possibility of an irrigation system was mentioned at last year's Annual Meeting. During this meeting you will receive all of the information we have at this time.

The Executive Committee is not an expert on irrigation systems so in order to educate ourselves we visited the Rockland Golf Course that installed an irrigation system 15 years ago – and asked many questions including those on the handout you have received.

Executive Committee members have received a copy of all the materials you will receive during this meeting but the committee has not discussed the proposal. That is where you come in – we are interested in the comments of all club members. I have asked members of the Executive Committee attending these two meetings to be in listening mode and not engage in debates with members – we will have plenty of time for the Executive Committee to discuss your comments.

Irrigation on the golf course is not a new topic and has been suggested multiple times in the past including a discussion on whether to invest in an irrigation system or a new maintenance building in 2008. In the case of the Leary Building which cost approximately \$325,000, it was primarily paid for through an assessment of \$1,300 from each member thus raising \$230,000 almost instantly. Because I have heard rumors amongst members about a new assessment – I want you to know up front that the financial plan which will be presented at this meeting does not include an assessment. Now hopefully you can relax and enjoy the presentations.

As most of you are aware, under the Club By-Laws, the Executive Committee is given the responsibility for the efficient and effective operation of the club facilities and to provide club events for the members' enjoyment. It is also responsible for listening to the needs of the members to ensure the club is providing a very positive experience for members.

Under these same By-Laws, the Governing Board has the ultimate authority over the Club finances and approval of any major capital expense. You should know that there have been no decisions made by neither the Executive Committee nor the Governing Board on the proposal to install an irrigation system.

The Buildings & Grounds Committee brought the proposal for an irrigation system to the Executive Committee for consideration. The plan has been worked on for the last 10 months and is still not complete as the specifications and costs in the proposal you will see are still being developed.

The Buildings & Grounds Committee is responsible for maintaining the club grounds and buildings. Most recently this committee has directed the building of new senior tees, resurfaced cart paths and reconstructed the 2nd Tee – all to ensure we provide a pleasant experience for our golfing members. In the case of the cart path work, club members that own golf carts are assessed an annual fee of \$400 to maintain the cart paths and help maintain the golf course. This year the cart fees contribute over \$12,000 in our budget. This committee is also responsible for a pleasant experience for our members that play tennis – thus each Spring the clay courts are resurfaced at a cost of over \$4,000 and the hard courts are resurfaced every 4 to 5 years at a cost of \$7,500.

Before we get to the presentations I also want to raise a concern I have for the long term viability of Megunticook Golf Club- and that deals with membership strength. In order to keep the annual dues to a minimum we need to have a full membership. We currently have a full membership of 175 and 6 on the waiting list. But the number of prospective members has been declining over the years. Most of you have probably seen articles written about the decline of participation in golf and tennis in the United States. If our membership decreased by 10 to 165, the remaining members would see a dues increase of \$265 to make up the difference.

We have tried to entice younger people to join the club by offering prospective members 40 years and younger a discount in the initiation fees of over 40% with not a great deal of success. In the past, legacy members have been responsible for a large part of the membership. 8 years ago, there were 48 persons on the Legacy Waiting List, today we 2. In the last 5 years 24 new members have joined of whom only 4 are legacies. Today we have 6 parties on the Wait List with 3 prospective candidates to be interviewed this summer. In the last 10 years many of the new members are retirees looking for a club with members they can socialize with, enjoy the rich heritage of a historic golf club and have a pleasant experience on the golf course or tennis courts. If we are to attract new members we need to fulfill the pleasant golfing and tennis experience part.

My final comment is about the rich tradition and uniqueness of Megunticook Golf Club. Members love this club and I don't think that feeling will ever disappear. I have heard several members mention that if a new irrigation system is installed, the unique character of the club will be changed. Appearance wise there would be two changes – (1) more and greener grass on the golf course and (2) the addition of a pond in front of the 1st tee replacing the area some members refer to as the swamp.

It is appropriate to ask questions during these presentations realizing that Jay or Peter may delay answering the question as it will be covered in their presentations.

