



VILLAGE OF BARTLETT COMMITTEE MINUTES December 19, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

President Wallace called the Committee of the Whole meeting of December 19, 2023 of the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Bartlett to order on the above date at 7:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chairmen Deyne, Gandsey, Gunsteen, Hopkins, LaPorte, Suwanski, President Wallace

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Village Administrator Paula Schumacher, Assistant Village Administrator Scott Skrycki, Sr. Management Analyst Samuel Hughes, Management Analyst Joey Dienberg, Finance Director Todd Dowden, Public Works Director Dan Dinges, Civil Engineer Nick Talarico, Planning and Development Director Kristy Stone, Grounds Superintendent Matt Giermak, Golf Pro Phil Lenz, Food and beverage Manager Paul Peterson, Chief Geoff Pretkelis, Deputy Chief Rob Sweeney, Deputy Chief Rob Sweeney, Village Attorney Kurt Asprooth and Village Clerk Lorna Giles.

TOWN HALL:

None

BUILDING AND ZONING COMMITTEE, CHAIRMAN GUNSTEEN

1. Promenade of Bartlett Mixed Use Development

Chairman Gunsteen introduced the item.

Director of Planning and Development Services Kristy Stone stated Gary Diegan notes this is a theoretical sound study, and he is recommending there be a follow-up sound study. If there is concern about the construction of the sound wall, we can always have the applicant bond for the sound wall and not install it until the follow-up sound study is completed.

Trustee LaPorte asked if we could do away with the sound wall and just do a berm with some bushes. Long term, the sound wall might need to be maintained.

Ms. Stone stated once it is operational, we can look at other measures to put in place.

Chairman Gunsteen asked what the current sound wall elevation height was.

Ms. Stone stated it was 10' high from grade.

Chairman Gunsteen stated it will look like a fortress. He would rather see a berm with bushes or evergreens, etc.



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Ms. Stone stated the sound wall will no longer be along Stearns and Newport. The sound study said that was not necessary, so it is just looking at one along the rear of the gas station because there could be some impacts on the Dunkin drive-thru.

Trustee Gunsteen asked if the sound wall could be pushed back slightly to add greenery to the front.

President Wallace liked having a bond to make sure we need a wall first.

The item was forwarded to the village board for a final vote.

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOLF COMMITTEE, CHAIRMAN DEYNE

1. Public Works Golf Projects

Chairman Deyne introduced the item.

Chairman Gandsey asked if these were projects that we didn't know about or more routine.

Assistant Village Administrator Scott Skrycki stated, for the most part, it is routine maintenance.

Chairman Hopkins asked if it is common not to send routine maintenance out to bid.

Mr. Skrycki stated it depends on the nature of the maintenance. For example, in some of these projects that we have, we may go out and look at pricing, but if it is convenient and a cost savings, we would talk to public works.

Chairman Hopkins confirmed that we would not know if we could save any money by going out to bid on these projects because they were not sent out to bid.

Mr. Skrycki stated some of the items you are seeing, like stump grinding or minimal cart path repair, those types of low-priced items we would not necessarily go out to bid for. We would reach out to companies to get pricing and compare them.

President Wallace stated it would probably take staff longer to review the bids on a \$5,000 job than the savings would be.

Trustee Deyne stated he knows some of those prices are estimates, but public works has saved us over \$10,000.

Trustee Hopkins asked what staff is looking for from the board.

Village Administrator Paula Schumacher stated this is for discussion purposes. It was an item that was asked to be reviewed, so the board can give direction, otherwise, we can continue as we have been.

Trustee Hopkins stated he does not have a problem with public works saving money for us, as long as the golf course reimburses public works for the time.



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President Wallace thought that made sense.

2. Bartlett Hills Golf Revenue and Operational Analysis

Trustee Deyne introduced the item.

Mr. Skrycki stated we took a look at the golf course in its totality and broke it down in terms of an operational fiscal year. We looked at the fiscal year ending April 30, 2023. We have seen some success in golf in the last couple of years, especially coming off of COVID. We have seen a rise in rounds, coming off a low total of 26,000. Closing out the most recent fiscal year was approximately 32,000 rounds. You will also see the food and beverage side of the operation, which is a bit down this year. There is also a comprehensive revenue analysis in the memo, which lumps in grounds maintenance, an expenditure of approximately \$586,000. You have to include that in the full chart in the most recent fiscal year along with food and beverage. It does not count for any direct revenue generation, but it does support the golf course and food and beverage. That part is in the full analysis you see. Through the current date, the golf course in total is up \$115,000 compared to last year. That says we are doing well, but we do not have March in the books nor April, and those months are complete wildcards, but based on a historical analysis, this year is off to a really good start. In the memo, you will see a chart of rates. Based on the discussion during budget time last year, we raised our rates \$3 per head. That was pretty aggressive for us, and we are raising our rates another dollar per head. This will be the first time in many years we have raised rates two years in a row, but based on the quality of the course and the way golf is going, we think it calls for that.

Chairman Hopkins asked if we are seeing that across golf.

Mr. Skrycki stated our golf pro and his staff review rates at our courses, and some are increasing while others are not. It depends on what projects they have going on as well. On a list of 20 comparables, about 15 years ago, we were probably in that 12 range; we are now probably in the 6 to 7 range.

Chairman Hopkins asked if we will see any staffing level changes now that we are not going to have them fixing the water system so often. Mr. Skrycki stated they will be able to use that time to beautify the course, which will justify us continuing to justify our rates. It would not justify reducing the employee count, though.

Mr. Skrycki stated looking at food and beverage and some of the challenges we have with labor costs, we were paying banquet servers \$12 per hour and now we are paying them \$18, line cooks were \$10 and now \$15. For 2020-2021, we only had wedding numbers in the teens, so those are outliers, but in 2024, you will see 32 scheduled. We are hoping for 5-7 more after the engagement season is over here shortly. Looking at golf, it is very weather-dependent. We started off this year strong with about \$18,000 in revenue in December vs. \$4,000 last year. We still have to see what March and April bring, though. If you lose one weekend, you lose about \$12,000. Some of the things we see over the next few years is the change from some of the weddings we are seeing with more casual weddings. We have 7 casual weddings booked next year which generate a 55% profit vs. a 40% profit from a traditional wedding.



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Trustee Deyne asked what the difference between a traditional and casual wedding was. Mr. Skrycki stated a traditional wedding is a plated meal. The casual package is more buffet style. There is less staff required for casual as well. Food and Beverage is raising their rates by 6% in this year, and any bookings after January first will see a 10% increase from where we are now.

Chairman Gandsey asked what the goal is for the number of weddings.

Food and Beverage Manager Paul Petersen stated we have seen some years in the 60's, but usually, they are around the 40's.

President Wallace stated we should have a yearly goal.

Chairman Gunsteen asked why we had four weddings cancel last year.

Mr. Petersen stated half of those were COVID-related, and the other half were breakups. We keep their deposit and try to fill the date on short notice.

Mr. Skrycki stated Paul, Phil, and Matt are the three divisional heads, and they report to him. There are more municipal courses in the state that are unprofitable vs. profitable. We strive to do that, but it is important for the board to know we have not been stagnant. Ten years ago, we had another 1.5 employees, so we are doing more with less staff. Our wedding capacity has changed from 160 to 210. A dozen years ago, you could not play golf year-round. If you were here in December, greens would have been covered. Our midway and beverage cart is coming off record years. This has a lot to do with the deals we have had, weather, etc. last year we were open 365 days. That has not been the norm. We understand we need to dig a little deeper to try to make money on the operation.

President Wallace suggested having a target number of banquets/events. We need to know our break-even point, and without knowing that number, it's hard to push staff to hit a number.

Mr. Skrycki stated when we work on the budget, we formulate it based on what we have in the books, and sometimes you might get a top-tier wedding that reduces or increases the guest count by 50 or change food or upgraded sashes on chairs, etc., but we can certainly do some more intensive goal setting.

Chairman LaPorte asked if the irrigation expense is included in the golf program.

Mr. Skrycki stated that would begin next year; this is looking at our last full fiscal year.

Chairman LaPorte stated so that number will increase expenses for that next year. We did a good job of getting closer to breaking even, but we will have to cover about \$115,000 more next year. It would help to get a couple more banquets since they are a larger profit for us.

Chairman Gunsteen stated he thinks we need to be ahead of the curve on increasing our prices. We need to look at revenue coming in and balance that with the additional labor and costs to run the facility. This is our first look at this. He wants to take a look back at this and look at different ideas and ways to make money. He wants to know if there are additional areas we can bring in revenue for the banquet other than



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weddings. We might already be doing that, but we might be missing something, so he wants to take a good look at that.

Chairman LaPorte stated we have a really good product in Bartlett Hills. He wants to let more people know to come to Bartlett Hills.

Chairman Gunsteen thought we should utilize our branding to help sell Bartlett Hills. We are utilizing a service to brand Bartlett, and it should be utilized.

Chairman Gandsey stated she had her birthday party there and it was fantastic. There are some opportunities to highlight and market the other smaller events as well.

Mr. Skrycki stated we can certainly do some more marketing for the other types of events, but Paul can talk a little more about the other events we hold, sweet sixteen, bar mitzvah's, etc.

Mr. Petersen stated they do a lot of the golf outings, junior golf, rotary events, etc.

Chairman Gandsey stated she goes to a lot of these events and doesn't see much about marketing those other smaller events when there.

Ms. Schumacher stated A-5 is coming back to discuss the surveys, but you make a good point that Bartlett Hills should be added to that. It builds a sense of community since it does hold a lot of the outings for our local civic groups, the firecracker tournament, Mother's Day brunch, etc. Putting a spotlight on that through our branding is an excellent direction.

Mr. Skrycki stated Bartlett Hills used to be called a value course. We are shifting away from that and beginning to be more of an upper tier.

Chairman Gunsteen stated as we brand it as a premier golf course in the area, it will be pretty self-explanatory since it is a very well-run course, and the food and banquet facility is very good.

President Wallace stated he knows in the last two years he has seen premier golfers that play at Royal Fox who play at our course and love it. It tells you a lot when golfers like that enjoy our course.

Ms. Schumacher stated since we are a municipal golf course, we do have that welcoming environment of being open to people of all skill levels. Phil has done a lot to bring in the high school tournaments and practices which helps build that community as well.

Chairman Gunsteen stated those GPS additions to the carts really help make it premier as well. We can't control the weather or people breaking up, but we can do what we can to make money for the course.

Chairman LaPorte stated he looks forward to seeing the numbers a year from now; it's just the expenses are still exceeding the revenue. We could have the best of everything, but if that keeps happening, it doesn't matter.

Chairman Suwanski asked how far out weddings are booked on average.

Mr. Petersen usually within a year nowadays.



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Chairman Suwanski stated the comments about cost increases and contracts having prices locked in; that seems to be an issue. How are other facilities handling those issues.

Mr. Petersen stated that passing along those costs can lead to a bad review and a sour taste in people's mouths.

Chairman Suwanski asked if other facilities are doing that, but she did not suggest Bartlet Hills do that.

Mr. Petersen stated some do not include prices on their website, and that turns a lot of people off right away when they are searching, so it's hard to count how many people we would lose.

Mr. Skrycki added that price sensitivity is a lot greater now than in the past. Ten to fifteen years ago, every individual who paid for the wedding was a parent; now they are brides and grooms.

Chairman LaPorte stated the flip side of that is if we are losing money, then why are we in business.

Ms. Schumacher stated then that area will be townhomes.

Chairman Hopkins stated the golf side is successful. If you look at the banquet side, if you had more banquets, it can be profitable. He thinks 6-7 years ago we had this same discussion about expanding the banquet hall to hold larger weddings; did that happen.

Mr. Skrycki stated it did not. The pandemic was very good for golf but very bad for banquets. The expansion allowed us to have large parties, though.

Chairman Hopkins stated he used other municipalities to use consultants to show a sure-fire way to make it successful. He does not want to change what's going on out there because it is successful; it's just the numbers. He doesn't know if a consultant could change it, but none of the board members are experts in running a golf course.

Chairman Gunsteen asked about the branding timeframe.

Mr. Skrycki stated they are coming back to the board in February and hoping to get feedback. The branding campaign will hopefully start in April/May.

Ms. Schumacher stated we will be coming back with the second round of funding during budget season for that.

Chairman Gunsteen stated we should put our heads together and see if as branding comes in, we start to see a change.

Mr. Skrycki stated he thought the branding would be great, but some of the things we do, we do not operate within our four walls, we have had staff members pretend to be husband and wife to see prices on chicken upgrades and everything else involved. Certainly, the analysis we do year after year might not be reflected in the memo, but we do things like that and like Chairman Gandsey suggested maybe more goal sighting would be more appropriate.



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Chairman Gunsteen stated he knows it was a joke, but as long as he is here, he will not vote to get rid of the golf course; they can always change with the times to get profitable. He thinks branding has to be focused on where we generate revenue, and that is one of the areas. It's a great course and a good value.

Chairman LaPorte stated he thinks the facility is a great product; we just need more people to know about it.

President Wallace stated he is of the opinion that if you need to get a consultant, you have the wrong people driving the ship. Restaurants need to make money, and so do banquet facilities. If we have too much staff or too many full-time staff, then something needs to change. He would suggest we sharpen our pencil on targets to try to figure out where we can break even.

Chairman Deyne thanked the staff of Bartlett Hills for all their work.

Chairman Deyne moved to adjourn the Committee of the Whole meeting and that motion was seconded by Chairman Gandsey.

ROLL CALL VOTE TO ADJOURN

PRESENT: Chairmen Deyne, Gandsey, Gunsteen, Hopkins, LaPorte, Suwanski

ABSENT: None

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Samuel Hughes
Deputy Village Clerk