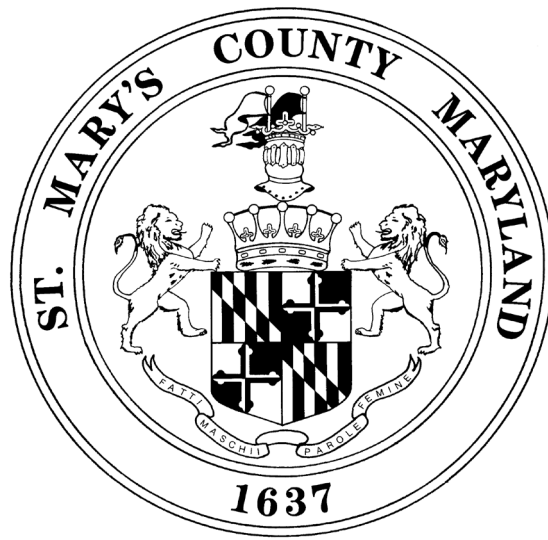


# **Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board**



## **2024 Annual Report**

Bernard Kneeland, Chair  
Thomas Eicholtz, Vice-Chair  
Jim Hodges  
Brian Hammett  
Terry Black  
Jerry Ostrowski

Arthur Shepherd, Director, Department of Recreation

**January 31, 2025**

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose of the Board

The Wicomico Shores Golf Course Advisory Board (WSGCAB) is comprised of seven (7) community members (one of whom is a member of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board) appointed by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) to provide "advice and assistance concerning the Wicomico Shores Golf Course and on issues, fees and policies relating to the Golf Course."

Calendar year 2024 Board members: Bernie Kneeland, Chair; Thomas Eicholtz, Vice-Chair; Jim Hodges; Terry Black; Jerry Ostrowski; Brian Hammett; and Don DeGraves (Recreation and Parks Board member).

### Meeting Attendance in 2024

Members	Jan 17	April 17	Jul 15	Oct 16	Total
B. Kneeland	present	present	present	present	4
J. Hodges	present	present	present	present	4
T. Black	present	present	present	absent	3
Brian Hammett <sup>(1)</sup>	absent	present	absent	absent	1
T. Eicholtz	present	present	present	present	4
Jerry Ostrowski	present	absent	present	present	3
Don Degraves <sup>(2)</sup>	present	absent	absent	absent	1

(1) Brian Hammett moved away during the summer of 2024.

(2) Don DeGraves, Parks and Recreation Representative only attended the first Board meeting in 2024.

### SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2024

- The Board elected the following officers for 2024: Bernie Kneeland, Chairman, Tom Eicholtz, Vice Chairman.
- Annual Report for Calendar 2023 was prepared and submitted.
- The Board had a quorum for all four meetings held in calendar year 2024
- The Board would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Director of Parks and Recreation and the County Commissioners for their continued support particularly with respect to the level of CIP funding provided to the course. These funds have supported the acquisition of equipment to maintain the course and support the completion of several projects that have improved and enhanced the condition of the golf course.
- Based on review of budget performance exhibits (revenue and expense summary reports) during our quarterly meetings the financial performance of the golf course

was positive. The Club Manager has reported that overall golf operations and restaurant were both doing well. Rounds of golf in the first two quarters of FY25 are slightly higher than the same period in FY24. Operating revenues / expenditures for the first two quarters of FY25 are slightly higher than the same period in FY24. Net operating expenses are still positive. Final revenue/ expenditure numbers for FY24 should be available by the end of calendar 2024.

- FY24 rates for 7-day unlimited season passes remained unchanged. Cart fees remained the same. There was a small change in fees for non-season pass holders.
- FY24 CIP funding was approved as requested. FY24 efforts focused on Tee Box improvement, green maintenance and other course areas (e.g. #7, #13, #15).
- The Club Manager and Greens Keeper have developed a 10-year plan for future capital equipment purchases to support course maintenance activity. FY25 Plans include the purchase of a second greens mower, a sand rake machine, a small utility tractor, a green's sprayer, a range cart, a Rough Bat Deck Wing Deck. The sand rake machine, Rough Bat Wings Deck, green's sprayer, and range cart were received in Calendar 24. The Club Manager reported that purchases of capital equipment in FY25 would be funded by the General Fund and not by Capital Improvement funding. This agreement is still in review.
- FY24 funding included ECC funding for capital equipment. Capital equipment purchased and received in Calendar 24 included:
  - (1) Greens mower
  - (2) Zero turn mower
  - Gator vehicle
  - Tractor with bucket
- "No Fishing" signs were added in front of the pond on #11. This was done to address potential injury to fisherman while players were on golf course.
- A new lease for golf carts (switching from Yamaha to Club Car Carts) was implemented in March of 2024.
- The Course Manager had an Agronomy Survey conducted by an USGA field representative. The Agronomy Survey report provided several areas and recommendations to consider to improve the overall maintenance and condition of the golf course. The Course Manager and Head Greens Keeper are working to address/ prioritize some of the recommendations to continue to improve the condition of the golf course.

## **PROBLEMS, CONCERNS & CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED OR EXPECTED**

- The Course Manager has continued to do an admirable job managing course and restaurant operations while assuring the facilities continue to provide high-level services and enjoyable recreational activities despite some supply chain and supply cost issues.
- Maintaining the course in optimal condition to allow for a positive experience for golfers (particularly during peak seasons of play) remains a continuing challenge. Green maintenance concerns will require course management to remain as proactive as possible and continue to pursue required funding to facilitate and support green maintenance efforts.
- Providing staff for both the course and the restaurant with the tools needed for successful operations and upkeep remains an ongoing challenge. The Course General Manager continues to work the issue. Staffing has improved in 2024.
- As county businesses and recreational facilities expand offerings in the expected wind-down of the pandemic, maintaining fees and prices for the course and restaurant at levels that meet current and anticipated future budgetary needs without discouraging community use of the available facilities will require ongoing oversight and discussion.
- Both the course and the restaurant will need to continue exploring new options for making the facility a more inviting destination for families and other groups seeking a wide variety of recreational and entertainment opportunities in St. Mary's County

## **PLANS FOR THE CURRENT CALENDAR YEAR (2025)**

- A priority for current FY25 CIP (150K) funding includes efforts to enhance irrigation for the golf course (Patrick is exploring 3 options), efforts to fix netting and trimming of trees in the driving range area, and continued efforts to work the fairways on #2, #7, and #13, and continued efforts to work the fringe and collar areas around all of the greens. Adequate funding to effect repairs and updates to maintenance facilities and equipment (to ensure the condition of the course remains a top option for recreational activities for citizens of the county) and to maintain and improve green conditions is critical. The Board understands that FY26 CIP funds will be requested in the FY26 budget request.
- The Course Manager has reported that he expects a USGA team to come re-evaluate the course slope and ratings in Calendar 2025.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

- The Board will continue to discuss and make recommendations for the future regarding the CIP plan of action for the golf course and restaurant. FY26 recommendations include:
  - Installation of permanent tee markers
  - Incorporation of a practice area (practice bunker, chipping green)
- The Board will work with the Course Manager and Staff as needed to promote community interest and usage of the facility and its programs.
- The Board will continue to work with the Course General Manager and grounds crew staffing to provide advice and input to help maintain and continually work to improve the physical environment of the course.
- The Board will continue to provide advice and input to the Course Manager on restaurant operations.
- The Board will continue to provide advice and recommendations to the Recreation and Parks division to seek out appropriate opportunities for Wicomico Shores to help serve the public need for diverse healthy and sustainable recreational activities in St. Mary's County to enhance the health and economic well-being of the community.
- The Board encourages the Club Manager to work with the Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Recreation Department to stay abreast of County Green Initiatives to ensure the Golf course is included in any potential Green Initiative funding for improvements to the Golf Club infrastructure.