

Golf Course Selling Nine Holes

Lakeview Club Considers It A ‘ Business Decision’

By VIC BRADSHAW

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HARRISONBURG — Lakeview Golf Club’s board of directors has decided to sell some of its land and reduce its number of holes to 27.

John H. Kidd, president of the club’s board of directors, said Tuesday afternoon that board members recently voted unanimously to put six of the holes on its Spring Nine course and three on its Peak Nine course on the market.

The 75 acres at the club, located just east of Harrisonburg off U.S. 33, is listed by Lee & Associates, with an asking price of nearly \$1.7 million.

In the last 15 years, he said, the number of rounds played at the club has fallen to about 34,000 from 65,000 to 70,000, and the new level of play isn’t enough to support the operation of 36 holes. The club has made enough money to cover its bills the last two years, but not enough to account for depreciation and other expenses.

“It’s a business decision to try to return to profitability,” said Kidd. “If we recoup 15 to 20 percent of our maintenance costs, we can do that. It’s a great golf course, well-maintained. We just need to shrink it a little bit to match it to the number of rounds we’ve got.”

Most of the land is zoned R-2 for medium-density residential use, he said.

Rockingham County regulations require a lot of at least 12,000 square feet to build a single-family dwelling in the R-2 zone. That means a maximum of 272 homes could be built on the land if developed to its fullest, though it’s likely that roads and other infrastructure would take up space and reduce the total.

With the sale proceeds, Kidd said the club would reduce its debt, keep some money for future improvements, have working capital and provide a return to shareholders.

Interested Neighbor?

Holes one, two, six, seven, eight and nine from the Spring Nine — which are on the western edge of the course between Shen Lake Drive and part of Sunnyside Retirement Community — form one contiguous area that’s been put on the market. Holes seven through nine on the Peak Nine — the easternmost holes on that course — comprise the second area.

Kidd said he thinks board members saved “three of the probably prettiest, most challenging holes” on the Spring Nine to add to the six Peak Nine holes. Marketability of the land for sale also was considered.

Jack Broadus, Sunnyside's president and CEO, said the retirement community already has 14 to 15 acres of undeveloped property for future use. However, its leaders likely will look into the land to see if it might fit into its master plan.

"It will be on our radar screen, to see if it made sense for us in the long term," he said. "It is bordering our property in certain areas."

Play will cease on the nine holes up for sale by Jan. 1, Kidd said, with the land being placed on a less-intensive maintenance program.

Holes three through five on the Spring course and the first six holes of the Peak course will be combined to form a new Forest Nine, which will start on what is now the par-3 third hole on the Spring Nine.

Tournaments Considered

Kidd said the remaining 27 holes should be more than enough to accommodate players without being crowded on all but the busiest days.

"I guess there could be a day where we had two large golf outings that we may have to shut down," he said. "Other than that, there are very few days we ever operated at capacity for 36 holes. If we had double the play 15 years ago on 36 holes, it's easy to see that [the current level of play] will fit within 27 holes."

Tournaments held at the course won't be affected. Kidd said staff members made sure the club could accommodate its existing tournament schedule with nine fewer holes.

A 2010 National Golf Foundation study on golf participation in America found that the number of golfers topped 30 million in 2003 but had declined to 27.1 million by the end of the decade. Participation was projected to rise gradually over the next 11 years and reach 30.2 million by 2020.

In 2000, Lakeview was the primary public course for local golfers in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Since then, Harrisonburg opened its municipal Heritage Oaks Golf Course in fall 2001, and privately owned Packsaddle Ridge opened in Keezletown in spring 2003.

The number of rounds played locally likely hasn't fallen much since 2000, Kidd said, but it's distributed among three courses. He thinks cityowned Heritage Oaks has taken more business from Lakeview than Packsaddle.

"We're not subsidized," he said, a reference to taxpayer-funded Heritage Oaks, which has cost the city millions of dollars to operate over the years. "We're a local private business trying to operate a golf course, and we want to make sure we can do that."

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