

2015 Annual Report to the Ocean Pines Board of Directors Clubs Advisory Committee

Section I, Committee members and status of terms

Les Purcell - Chair	2nd Term, ends 9/20/16
Audrey Wahl	2nd Term, ends 6/22/16
Gary Miller	1st Term, ends 9/27/17
Steve Lind	1st Term, ends 1/23/16
Donna Hickey	1st Term, ends 9/27/17
Wayne Littleton	1st Term, ends 1/23/16
Tom Terry	Board Liaison

There are currently two openings on the committee.

A quick note to inform new BOD about the Committee's work prior to the new YC opening. One issue with the name "Yacht Club" was that it invoked a feeling of exclusivity "for members only" that had actually kept many new residents away. The Committee thought it important to give the new restaurant a name that would bring more people in to the new facility and do away with the mistaken but popular "members only, private club" feeling.

To that end, we suggested holding a name change contest that had the additional purpose of increasing our contact list. We also suggested the grand opening hospitality table at the front door which committee members manned with the purpose of greeting customers and holding a free raffle for dinner and wine, again with the goal of building our email contact list.

All of the committee's suggestions come from discussions among the members regarding comments gathered from current and past customers as well as our own experiences at The Cove and other local establishments.

Section II, Summary of major activities during reporting period

Search for new YC GM resulted in Jerry Lewis being hired. He has an abundance of experience in the local restaurant industry. Although the search took longer than we had hoped, the CAC, which had three members participate in the interview process, feels that the new GM will be a great

asset to the YC. Jerry had to hit the ground running because he came on board just as the summer season was starting. That is a very hectic time for even an established manager but Jerry was up to the challenge. It will probably take some time to implement all of the ideas he brings to the position but he has been very receptive to suggestions from the Committee, and we appreciate that.

Suggested purchasing additional Hi-Top tables to extend the lower bar area into the dining room. One of the big complaints is the lack of space for customers around the indoor bar. Expanding the bar sitting area within the confines of the bar is not really an option. The CAC suggested expanding the bar into the dining room area near the bar entrance. We suggested adding Hi-Top tables which have been used effectively during the winter months.

To provide seating during the outdoor concerts, white plastic chairs are made available to patrons listening to the music and enjoying the view. For ease of storing the chairs in an area where customers had easy access to them, they were stored on the water side of the Tiki Bar next to the pool fence. This created a bit of an eyesore for both the patrons sitting at or near that side of the bar and blocked the view of swimmers inside the fence. At our suggestion, the chairs are now moved to a different location near the YC building improving the view around and from within the YC pool.

There is limited seating space around the Tiki bar. In an effort to expand the seating options and provide additional premium seating for the paying bar customers we suggested placing some of the new Hi-Tops on both sides of the bar. This option has worked well although during sunny days, the tables get moved to whichever side of the bar has shade. Since these tables are “self service” for bar patrons only and no wait staff serves the tables, they are not adding to the County seating limit for served food or drinks.

When the summer concerts started it became apparent very quickly that the bars were not able to keep pace with the customers demands for drinks. Part of the problem was the lack of a service bar which required the wait staff to take time and space away from the bartenders working the bar. To help with this problem we suggested using “Beer/Wine” satellite stations on busy weekend nights to ease the crowded bar area. One benefit of this

option is that the stations can be set up and taken down as needed. Although a temporary service bar was set up in the Marina “store”, the addition of a dedicated service bar will greatly improve the efficiency of the other two bars. We understand that the service bar plans have finally been approved by the county and construction should start soon.

Many thoughts and suggestions were offered regarding the menu, some of which have been implemented. One suggestion that the Committee is excited about is adding a designated bar menu that is available whenever the bars are open. The goal is to offer several lower cost but profitable selections to those patrons who do not want to eat or spend the money on a full dinner entree. This is especially true for members that spend time at the YC pool and do not have any inexpensive lunch items to choose from. The Beach Club and Tern Grill menu’s are examples of good lunch options.

Section III, Problems encountered & Assistance Required

Amenity or Business?

The biggest problem that the CAC encountered is the ongoing question of whether the YC/Cove is an amenity paid for and for the pleasure of the OP residents, or is it a stand alone restaurant that needs to be financially self sufficient like the rest of the local food establishments.

It is our understanding that it was decided some time ago by a OP BOD vote that all the “possible profit centers, including the YC, Beach Club, CC, Aquatics and racquet sports **ARE ALL AMENITIES** that should make an effort to break even. They are not to make a profit at the expense of providing amenity type services” such as the fire pits for sitting and enjoying, or music for all to enjoy, etc. It seems that all of the discussion about losses need to be balanced with this BOD decision.

Unfortunately, the discussion and proposal earlier this year by one of the Board members, that the Cove be closed down during the winter months because it was “losing” money has only fueled this debate. In reality, and according to the OP BOD, The Cove is very unique in that it is BOTH an amenity AND a business that needs to watch its expenses and strive to at least break even. Most business owners will agree that you have to provide a good product and service in order to be successful. The Cove however is restricted by whatever the OP BOD dictates after the budget

process is completed. To meet the needs of the community, the committee recommends that The Cove remain open throughout the year.

Additional Items Needed

Since opening the new YC, items not implemented in the initial plan and additional items identified by the CAC that would better meet the needs of the community include but are not limited to; ceiling and “air screen” fans (downdraft fans over doors to keep the flies out), sun umbrellas, retractable awning for second floor deck, decorations, additional bar seating (Hi-Tops and drink rail), professional interior decorator consultation, and a service bar. We strongly suggest that those items be included in a Capital Improvement fund dedicated just for that purpose.

Parking/seating issues with the County.

Can we add additional seating if valet parking is offered at the YC? Customers could park off campus and be taken by golf cart to the Cove. A detailed plan is available from the CAC if wanted.

Not enough seating for paying customers at the Tiki Bar.

In addition to the Hi-Tops suggested, install a raised 'shelf' with bar stools along the bayside of the veranda - - facing the view - - from the pool fence to the stairway similar to the setup at the Sunset Grill. As with the hi-tops, it would be self service, and would increase the seating capacity (and business) of the tiki bar without adding to the County “service count”. This could be constructed in-house by OP employees.

Handicap and wheelchair accessibility to The Cove and the YC pool is really not adequate. The only handicapped parking is on the right side of the building near the dumpsters and service entrance. A customer using a walker, wheelchair or scooter who is trying to get to either the pool or The Cove entrance has to park farther away than anyone else and once parked, the route they have to navigate to get to the building front or side entrance is not level. Once the customer gets to the entrance door, there is no automatic door opener to assist them getting into the building. Once inside, there are no automatic door openers to help them get past the foyer or into any of the bathrooms. Although the current handicapped access may have been approved by the county, it is still a problem keeping a growing portion of our community from using the facility.

YC Pool Lights

Adding lights at the YC pool extends the time for family fun night which increases the business potential at the Tiki Bar on the busiest weeknights of the season. Lights will also offer the opportunity to add “adult Happy Hour swims”, Dive-in movie nights, etc.

Cigarettes

Although there is a designated smoking area outside near the YC pool, there are no signs directing smokers to that location. There are also no “No Smoking” signs posted around the YC campus. This causes an uncertainty among the staff about advising customers that they are not allowed to smoke outside except in the designated area. Posting signs is the first step in educating customers about where smoking is allowed and will help keep the patio free of cigarette butts.

Section IV, Request for items to be included in the next OPA Budget

a) The Yacht Club

Purchase additional Hi-Tops to expand the indoor bar during the winter and provide additional seating for paying Tiki Bar customers during the summer.

Placing several Hi-Tops inside the pool area near the bar would also benefit the pool customers.

Add a “drink rail/shelf” in the corners of the inside bars that will allow customers to stand with a place to put their drinks and/or food. Bar stools could be added as they were in the old YC.

Purchase several large umbrellas to provide shade on the west side of the Tiki Bar. At present it gets so hot on sunny days that customers cant sit on that side of the bar. The same is true for the second floor deck which would be greatly improved with the addition of a retractable awning.

A major complaint expressed to the CAC is the look of and service at The Cove.

Service is an issue at times due to short staffing, inexperienced line cooks, and the lack of a full time expediter. We are also very

concerned about public comments concerning consistency of the food and menu.

“Cafeteria like” is what many of the customers say about The Cove’s appearance. Again, providing a budget specifically to improve the decor of the Dining Room would greatly improve the look and feel of our premier restaurant. One easy option would be to purchase glass table tops and short table cloths for all of the inside tables. Placing a piece of glass the same size as the table on top of a short table cloth will add a much needed touch of class to the room. The glass is easy to clean after each use and it protects the table cloth so that it needs fewer washings.

Three or four panel room dividers that would help hide the wait staffs work station AND improve the acoustics in the dining room would also improve the look and feel as well as help with the acoustics.

Flies were a major problem this year. Several suggestions were made to help control the fly population AND keep them from bothering diners both inside and out. One suggestion was investigating the use of the “Rutgers Fly Trap” (*copy of the report and plans for building are available at www.rutgers.edu*) which interrupts the breeding cycle of the flies. The thought being that you have to eliminate the flies in order to keep them away from the customers. Trying to keep them out of the building and away from outside diners can have some success, but getting rid of them entirely will eliminate the problem for good. The ceiling fans that were installed in July have helped a lot but they do not cover all of the doors into the bar and dining room. A few “down draft” or “air screen” type fans have been ordered which will keep the fly’s from entering the building at the locations where they are installed, but every door should be covered. Controlling the fly population should be a major goal. The fans will only help keep the majority of flies out of the building and away from those outdoor diners fortunate enough to be seated under one. Those sitting outside of the fans air flow are not protected at all. Several of the restaurants in the area that are next to the water or marshy areas do not have fly problems. Maybe we need to hire an exterminator who specializes in controlling flies.

Bringing in paying customers during the shoulder and winter seasons is important if The Cove is to be successful. One huge draw is watching

football games. If advertised successfully, with a good bar menu and HH specials, an investment in the NFL package will draw customers in to The Cove and should be considered for this football season. Something that will set "Sunday Football at The Cove" apart from all others is holding it in the upstairs bar with a tailgate/Bar-B-Q during half-time on the second floor deck. Other activities might include; Trivia night (Very well attended last year), murder mystery night, wine tastings/diners, bourbon and scotch tastings/diners, old time swing or big band dance, etc.

Move the current handicapped parking spaces or add additional ones on the pool side of the parking lot. Install a ramp to access the patio and automatic door openers to The Cove, including the foyer and bathrooms.

b) The Beach Club

The Beach Club offers a good variety of food options that are prepared properly, the staff is efficient and cordial, and the bar service is very good.

There is an upstairs bar with a great view and plenty of seating that many people don't know is there. More effort should be made to advertise that it is available to rent for private parties. During the summer and shoulder seasons, OP should hold special evening events such as wine tastings or dinners, offer music and dancing or some other events to draw attention to this underused amenity.

The Beach Club Building is in need of a major face lift. It looks dated and old and the bathroom/locker rooms are very unpleasant to use. An upgrade, not necessarily a replacement, should be considered in the not too distant future.

c) The Country Club

The country Club building is in very bad shape but regardless of that fact, it is used constantly by OP groups who do not have any other place to meet. To make the space more user friendly right away, we suggest doing a major cleaning and purchasing outdoor dining tables and seating for use on the patio to replace the current furniture that is moldy and dirty. The Community Center does not have the room originally planned, so whatever

form a new or remodeled Country Club takes, it should include ample meeting rooms.

Section V, Recommendations for Board Action

A) Yacht Club Building/The Cove

FINISH THE YC BUILDING

- 1) Designate a specific budget amount for improvements to The Coves decor:
 - * RFP for a Professional Interior Decorator Consultation
Create budget to implement suggestions
 - * Purchase 12 Additional Hi-Tops
 - * Construct “Drink Rails” in corners of indoor bars.
 - * Purchase Glass Table Tops & Linen Tablecloths
- * Replace several (all?) of the can lighting in DR with replacement pendants. *Examples at:*
[“www.homedecorators.com/lighting/ceiling-fixtures/pendant-light-kits/”](http://www.homedecorators.com/lighting/ceiling-fixtures/pendant-light-kits/)
 - * Purchase 3 additional bench seats to add 2 more booths to seating along interior wall.
 - * Install Sound Baffles upstairs and down to improve acoustics.
 - * Purchase decorative room dividers to hide work stations and improve acoustics throughout the building.
- 2) Complete the Service Bar.
- 3) Hire an exterminator to eliminate the fly problem.
Cover all of the entrance doors with an “air curtain” fan
- 4) Add a couple large TV’s and provide the Football package
Use upstairs bar for Football games.
- 5) Implement a discount debit card system that would bring needed money into The Cove during the slim winter months. *Details of one proposal are attached.*
Many customers have suggested a prepaid OPA debit card that would work similarly to the pool pass cards. A set amount of money is pre-loaded onto the card which can be used at The Cove and

Beach Club. When it runs out, it can be re-loaded. Maybe this can be in conjunction with the discount card idea?

- 6) Purchase several large cantilevered umbrellas for around the Tiki Bar
- 7) Add a retractable awning to the second floor deck.
- 8) Install a couple outdoor speakers for music around pool
- 9) Increase and maintain training of staff
- 10) Create a survey asking customers what items they would like to see on the Cove menu. Ask for input on items that have been on the menu in the past and new items that have never been on the menu. Include survey with bill or post on website?
- 11) Make facility more handicapped/wheelchair friendly per suggestions above
- 12) Install a drink rail/bar on the water side of the Tiki Bar facing the water extending from the pool fence to the first set of steps. Purchase bar stools or seats for the rail/bar *A sample photo of one at the Sunset Grill is attached.*
- 13) Install lighting at the YC pool and Tiki Bar to allow for more use of both.
- 14) Install "No Smoking except in designated area" signs around YC campus as well as a sign stating "Designated Smoking Area".

B) Beach Club

- * Start looking at making improvements to the Beach Club building and include it in the Capital Improvement Plan
- * Look at ways to draw customers to rent the second floor bar space. Hold some "special" events there to make residents aware of the improvements there. It has a beautiful view and it is underused.

C) Country Club

- * Deep clean interior
- * Purchase outdoor dining and seating furniture for patio
- * Be sure to include adequate meeting rooms in improvement/replacement plans.

Attached Addendum

Discount debit card example
 Photo of drink rail/bar @ Sunset Grill

1) **Discount swipe cards.**

Purpose; bring in needed revenue during the winter months, sell only from Labor Day to March 1st. Will put “paid in advance” money into the coffers during the slow season, as well as encourage the year round residents to frequent the Cove and help keep the staff working. Even if some of the cards purchased are used during the summer, the money is on the books in the winter when needed the most.

Implimentation; The following is only an example of the possible discounts.

Gift VIP: \$115 card sells for \$100, a 13% Discount

Bronze VIP: \$200 card sells for \$170, a 15% Discount

Silver VIP: \$250 card sells for \$210, a 16% Discount

Gold VIP: \$500 card sells for \$415, a 17% Discount

Cards would **not be valid** with other discounts or special events such as NYEve Party, Mystery Dinner, prime rib night, HH, etc.

Prices this past winter were very low but with this plan there would not have to be any \$2 off apps, no cheap menu items, HH drink prices only at the bar and hi-tops or for the entire room during special promotions such as Trivia Night. If you want discounts buy a card, simple as that. **NONE OF OUR COMPETITORS OFFER THIS UNIQUE OPTION**

Possible issue; Can the OP IT system handle a swipe card like this? It would work in a similar way as the Pool Pass swipe cards which keep a running tally of how much money is left on the card after each use so it should be doable.