



*Golf Club of Avon*



# **2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

# Golf Club of Avon



## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Mike Waterbury

It was an honor to serve as the President of GCA. I am going to miss the role. I learned a great deal, met new people, got to know some other members better, experienced leadership through influence, helped manage a golf course redesign which was a blast and accomplished our wildest goals. I am very grateful to have served as your President the last two years. We officially survived the waves of the pandemic. We delivered on financial results that would make any business owner (that is you) very satisfied. Specifically, in 2021, we delivered a net surplus of \$531,000. These results allow us to continue to invest in the future of the Club. Net new membership growth of 78 total members (45 golf members) is the most important metric. Over the last 5 years, we would generally add the same number of members who would leave the Club. Amazing results that validate GCA is the place to be in the Farmington Valley and 'our happy place'! We added four new pickleball courts with lights that will be the premier pickleball facility in the area and added a very talented Director of Racquets, Macie Elliott, to lead the development and excitement of GCA's racquets program. Last but not least, the Blue 9 project. Jonathan Charpinsky and team executed flawlessly on a \$2M+ project and we threw a party for the ages! What a ride. None of these results would have been possible without our staff.

I want to thank Kim Pérez, COO/CFO, our leader and her team. Jonathan Charpinsky, Superintendent, led a major redesign and overall management of our golf course. Steve Madison's, Head Golf Professional, relentless efforts to make our golf experience amazing at GCA as well as Brian Phelps, Director of Instruction and Player Development, efforts to teach the game and make it fun for kids and golfers of all ages. Rob Vastano, Executive Chef, who added to his team and continued to deliver the best food in Avon. Lisa Wright, Clubhouse Manager, who amongst labor challenges, the pandemic and everything else that we threw at her just delivered time and time again. Thank you all and your teams and everyone else I could not mention.

Now I turn to the Board of Governors. As some of you know, two years ago, we made some major changes to the bylaws and the overall approach to managing the Club. My observations over the last 10 years of being involved with committees and the Board of Governors was that we were inefficient. Too many board members, too many committees and overall wasted time. If we are going to ask people to volunteer, we should be respectful of their time and their opinions, so we made some changes. Fifteen board members became nine, nine committees became four, the Executive Committee only met on staff management and other confidential matters, and we expected board members to read the materials in advance and approve all the "administrative" decisions at the outset of the meeting. These changes allowed us to execute on our plan and deliver results. I believe it will position the Club for success in the future, but I would also suggest that it is OK to make other changes in the future to reflect the needs of the Club and the Board of Governors. Change can be a very good thing. But with this change, we realized quickly that every Board member mattered and needed to work, there was no place to hide. Therefore, I want to thank all of them. Specifically, Travis Lytle, Jeff Stein and Rebecca Sposito who were on the Executive Committee, but it really was a team effort including Mary Gallagher, Brian Cuddeback, Chrissy Thavenius, Dan Schwartz and Steve Hahn. A special recognition to Steve Hahn who jumped in on the Golf Committee and did not miss a beat. Finally, thank you to our past President Dan Schwartz and all his contributions to GCA.

So, as we look forward to 2022. Let's keep it going. The Club is in great shape- financially, our team, the Board, our Membership. As we look forward to our 100-year anniversary, this year will be all about making new members welcome. It may surprise you, but the tenure of our current membership is:

- 20+ years 22%
- 10-20 years 17%
- 5-10 years 16%
- 2-5 years 18%
- <2 years 28%

So, depending on what bucket you are in, we want to make sure everyone feels welcome and gets the most out of the GCA experience. So, look for meet and greets and social events to bring everyone together and continued focus on ways to get involved with the entire Club. We are also working on a master facility plan. This is key to make sure every investment and decision fits long term and serves as a guide for each Board of Governors. One of the key reasons the Blue 9 project happened was the efforts to develop a long-term course plan by prior boards. We will support and drive the growth of our racquets program so check it out. Year Two of the Blue 9 redesign will be almost as important as Year One and we will continue to focus on this project while maintaining the best 27 holes in the Farmington Valley.

In closing, it was an honor and a privilege to serve at GCA President. It is not easy to manage a business with a \$4M budget and 500 plus owners but nothing worthwhile is easy. I encourage anyone interested to get involved.



Golf Outing



Mother's Day



Blue 9 Celebration



First swing on the new Blue 9—2021



Streamsong Invitational 2022

## MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Travis Lytle & Brian Cuddeback, Co-Chairs

In 2021, we saw amazing new membership activity, an ever increasing demand for food & beverage service and we began thinking strategically about what the membership needs/wants are as we approach our centennial anniversary in 2025.

**Membership** continues to thrive and grow. The committee spent a lot of time and effort to ensure that the Golf Club of Avon continues to grow into a year-round Club that is your Happy (and safe) Place.

In calendar year 2021, we took in 101 new memberships. The 2021 Membership Initiative period ran from September 2020 through August 2021 and brought 98 new members and their families to the Club. The 2022 Membership Initiative which runs through August 2022 has already registered 36 new members and their families. The current Membership Initiative is on track and ahead of where we were at this same time last year.

The committee has spent time planning for our ability to on-board new members; to make them all feel welcome and included. In September, we held our first Meet & Greet in two years to offer such an opportunity to the New Member Class of 2020 and 2021. You'll see this planning continue to manifest itself in format; striving to get outside and focus on the four different features of the Club: Clubhouse, Golf, Racquets and Pool. Our first event was in mid-March with additional events planned in April, May and June to give our newest members an opportunity to meet the staff, meet the existing membership, get to know the Club and learn about all the wonderful amenities it offers. Most of our new memberships are joining the Golf Club of Avon having never belonged to a Club before so it offers a great opportunity to showcase all that we offer as well as instill the right guidance around respect for one another and the staff.

With over 250 new memberships posted since the beginning of the pandemic, the committee has also been mindful of our growth and our ability to offer a fantastic member experience. We've discussed at length the concept of a waitlist. Today, we have 8 Members that are on the Sports Waitlist. Our primary concern in working with the Sports Committee was to ensure that the aquatic experience delivered at the pool would not be diminished with the membership increase. We are keeping a very close eye on this waitlist to ensure we can include these members into the full GCA experience as soon as possible. At this time, we do not have a waitlist for Full Golf memberships.

At the same time, we have been looking at our dues structure. Our Initiation Fees were increased again this year, as we've done since 2017. We will continue to look at dues and fees to ensure we are providing the best value at competitive prices. This year we made an assessment for the Blue 9 Project which was used to enhance not only the golf course but also the racquet facilities; most notably the four new pickleball courts. In addition, there was one heck of a party held to celebrate the success of our capital raise!

Our **House** is in order and continues to re-invent itself within the restaurant and event planning services. We opened for lunch in January amidst the changing COVID climate. Further, we have expanded our dinner service on Sundays this season. Revenue exceeded budget by over \$211,000 but it came from different sources than planned. Member utilization of restaurant services was well above forecast while revenue from Banquets and Outings were below forecast – all a result of wavering positivity rates and a reluctance to gather in large groups. We see these functions trending back to more normal levels in 2022 and beyond. The staff continue to collaborate on different ways to address the changing needs of the membership.

We saw a return to pre-pandemic levels with events like: Bunny Breakfast – 175 members, Easter Brunch - 104 people and Mother's Day Brunch with 234 people attending. All three of these staple events were cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic. Also, Camping Night almost doubled their participation from 2019 levels with 78 people

attending and Fall Festival was right at 2019 levels with 261 people attending. Last, we saw similar levels of participation with both Boo Brunch and Santa Brunch compared to 2020 levels.

We were able to make significant investments in our people and services. We welcomed Brandon Ralph to the Club as our Banquet Chef. We brought in Yuksel Cakrak to the restaurant management staff and we continued to offer our resort style service at the pool which was well received. Our culinary leadership should be commended for all their contributions amidst very real challenges with staffing, supply chain inventories and price increases.

And last, we embarked on the work to create a **Master Plan** for the Golf Club of Avon. This body of work involves solicitation and feedback across the membership base so that we can collectively define the priorities by which this committee and the Board of Governors invest in the Club. This will become a top priority as this committee begins its' work in 2022.

Finally, heartfelt thanks to all the members who contributed to this committee's work with special recognition given to Annette Barrett, Sharon Bell, Donna Hamzy, Mike Leber and Dan Martin for their work on the committee. Thank you also to Sarah Cremeans, Kim Perez, Steve Madison and Lisa Wright. Your dedication, professionalism and guidance during the ever changing year of 2021 was welcomed, appreciated and acted upon.



Camping Night



Fall Festival



Brandon Ralph



Ugly Sweater Happy Hour



Blue 9 Celebration

## **FINANCE AND BUDGET COMMITTEE**

Jeff Stein and Mary Gallagher, Co-Chairs

Our operations in 2021 resulted in a net profit of \$531,539 compared to a net profit of \$396,789 in 2020. Strong membership activity, golf revenues and the Employee Retention Credit all contributed to the Club's financial performance. The Employee Retention Credit totaled just under \$436,000 and was part of the CARES Act. We remain in a good cash position and had no short-term line-of-credit borrowings in 2021. We invested over \$2.3 million in capital improvements; notable projects included the Blue Nine Project, renovation of the Blue Nine bunkers, four pickleball courts, the replacement of Paddle Court #1 and two Trackman simulators.

Membership dues in 2021 were \$2.8 million, \$194,500 ahead of budget and \$246,000 more than last year. Total members ended the year at 546, an increase compared to total members at the end of 2020 of 472. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row, our highest paying dues category, full golf members over the age of 40 increased going from 212 to 235.

Golf revenues were strong both in membership and outing activity. Green fees were \$354,000, \$29,000 ahead of budget and \$80,000 higher than 2020. Cart fees were \$350,000, \$32,000 ahead of budget and \$56,000 higher than 2020.

Our operating expenses (including the restaurant at net) in 2021 were \$3.7 million compared with budgeted operating expenses of \$3.4 million and prior year actual operating expenses of \$3.4 million. Almost every operating department had expenses higher than budget, relating to higher activity levels and conscious efforts to improve the member experience. A number of social events were added or enhanced in 2021.

The Club enters 2022 in a strong financial position. One challenge is the rising cost of labor including the minimum wage increases. The 2022 budget considers these items, and a moderate growth in total members. We have approved a 3% dues increase that became effective on April 1, 2022. This dues increase will allow us to increase our total revenues by \$78,000 or 2%.

Our strong operating results could not have been achieved without the excellent work from our COO/CFO, Kimberly Pérez, and the rest of the operating department managers.

We would like to thank the outstanding work of the Finance and Budget Committee members for their dedication throughout this most difficult year. The committee members are Brian Cuddeback, Greg Tonon, Eliot Bassin, Mike Blackwell, Dan Joseph and Marc Pare.

## **GOLF COMMITTEE**

Steve Hahn, Chair

2021 was the second year that the Golf Committee operated as an integrated group that was formed by merging the Greens and Tournament Committees in April 2020 – this structure continues to be efficient in all aspects of oversight, operations and course maintenance including working together as a group along with Steve Madison & Jonathan Charpinsky to make continuous improvements to our golf course and programs. In July 2021, Steve Hahn took over as Chair. The Committee wishes to express our sincere thanks to Paul Gauthier, former Golf Committee Chair for his tireless efforts to run the committee and champion many projects including the planning and completion of the Blue 9 project – likely the largest project completed at the Golf Club of Avon in decades. Prior to the start of the 2022 golf season, Chris Kunzelmann and Mark Drenga joined the committee and we look forward to utilizing their insight and passion for our great Club along with members Justin Bloom, Mike Carlson, FJ Donino, Peggy Gorham, Lana Seli and Kelly Grim who will stay on for 2022.

## Golf Operations

2021 was a busy year on the golf course. Although off recent highs from the pandemic driven year of 2020, the Club hosted 25,024 rounds of golf. This represents an increase of 16% over 2017, 2018, and 2019 totals. With the Blue Course recovering from a major renovation in the Spring, we used tee time software to administer play on the course through early June. Tee times resumed in mid-September when the Blue Course received a bunker renovation, and were used through the end of the golf season.

In the fall, we assembled a sub-committee tasked with identifying and implementing a Winter Golf Simulator Program. On January 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, we opened the program up to the membership. The program was extremely successful, providing golf entertainment, fun, and engagement during a time period when the Clubhouse is somewhat quiet.

The Club continues to make upgrades to various areas of the Golf Operation. In May 2022, we will be receiving a new fleet of lithium powered golf carts.



## Tournament Program

In 2021, we made great strides in the Member Tournament Program and overcame the challenges of having only 18 holes in the course rotation. We added some new events and made improvements on older ones. We added a Masters Fourball on Masters Weekend to kick off the spring, a Women's Invitational in July, a Ryder Cup team tournament in the fall on the weekend of the Ryder Cup, and the Superintendent's Revenge as our final event of 2021. These tournaments were well attended and received. Going forward, we plan to continue to enhance the Masters Fourball and Superintendents Revenge events, and add a President's Cup Tournament every other year as well. There are also plans in the works to integrate our racquet and golf champions season wrap up into a single event in October – stay tuned!

Our 2021 Club Championship was played as a 3-day, 18 hole per day format in 2021 for the Championship Flight. This change was enjoyed by the players and will remain intact moving forward. Feedback included enjoying playing all 3 courses Red, White and Blue over the weekend while maintaining the Red-course finish that our membership has come to look forward to on Sunday. This year, the finish was exciting as always - there may have been more spectators and carts on the final 9 holes than we have seen in a while! In the end, Justin Bloom prevailed as our 2021 Club Champion.

An advisory committee was formed in the spring to identify areas of focus in the Member Tournament Program. The combination of Golf Genius Tournament Software and the creativity of our Professional Staff provided some very nice enhancements to our Member Tournament Program specifically with Live Mobile Scoring and Handicap Score Posting.

We initiated a Women's Golf League in the spring, which was a successful way to get more women on the course,

playing golf, having fun, and meeting other women. The league consisted of two main groups: one that played golf on their own, and one that did on-course clinics on the course.

### **Congratulations to our 2022 Club Champions**

Club Champion – Justin Bloom

Women's Club Champion – Mary Gallagher

Senior Champion – Jon Zieky

Senior-Senior Champion – Jim Leonard

Boys Champion – Blake Barrett

Girls Champion – Olivia Manganello

Boy's 9 Hole Champion – Bennett Fairchild

Women's 9 Hole League Champion – Ming Yong

Women's 18 Hole League Champion – Patty Swanson



### **GCA Golf Course Projects**

The Blue 9 Renovation Project was, of course, the biggest project tackled in 2021 – with the majority of the tree work wrapping up in March, the addition of soil and seed in the fescue areas continued in the spring of 2021. The bunkers were renovated in the fall and fairway sod was added to the approaches of 4B & 5B to provide a consistency in design compared to the other holes at the Club. A waterless recycling restroom was installed in the fescue area between 3B tee and 6B green. Lastly, in the winter the final tree work was completed down the left side of 4B – this was work that could not be completed in the spring of 2021 as the ground thawed in that area at that time. Kudos to Jonathan Charpinsky and his crew for their tireless efforts to bring this project across the finish line, despite record rain in July 2021!

A new Lightning Detection & Warning System was installed in September 2021 – this system, which is tied into the irrigation system protection, detects lightning strikes 5 miles or closer and sounds a warning alarm directing all players off of the golf course for their safety. Once no lightning is detected for 30 minutes, a different warning tone sounds to show the all-clear.

The well at Lily Pond was cleaned out and is operating at maximum capacity – while we continue to investigate options to find other robust sources of water we are pleased that Lily pond is full at this point.

The telephone poles were removed over Lily Pond by Eversource in July providing an unobstructed view across the



(cont.) pond.

Two Trackman Simulators were installed in the ballroom in January 2022 for member use via signup in the mobile app – the simulators were disassembled in mid-March as inside events began to be held in the ballroom. There is discussion amongst the membership and the board to find a permanent home for the simulators in the future.

As a result of some damage from standing water and tree debris over the course of a very wet 2021 season, the Red 1 rear teeing ground was renovated in early Fall 2021 including proper leveling, pitch for water runoff and drainage and finally sod turf replacement.

Golf course consultant Steve McDonald was hired to tour the course and provide a comprehensive report as a review of all course conditions, maintenance activities and to provide any recommendations based on his professional opinion. Overall it was determined by evaluating the size of the golf course areas (4 acres of greens, 48.2 of tees & fairways) that are maintained, that the conditions being provided match our current budget well. Recommendations were made and plans have been put in place to address the following areas:

- More aggressive aerification of the greens is recommended – this practice was implemented in the Fall of 2021 and will be completed in the spring and fall
- Bunker maintenance and raking techniques are being implemented to firm-up our newly constructed bunkers – additional labor has been allocated in order to accomplish this
- The committee and board have approved the purchase of a Verti-Cutter to improve ball lie in the fairways – this equipment is expected to arrive soon
- The committee and board have approved the purchase of hover-mowers to maintain rough areas where slopes are steep (i.e. around bunkers and alongside of many greens in particular)
- The committee and board have approved the purchase of aerification and seeding equipment to continuously improve areas of our golf course that need additional attention

Overall the Golf Committee is very excited for the 2022 golf season. I know I speak for the entire membership in saying that we are so very fortunate to have Steve Madison, our Head Golf Professional and his team, Jonathan Charpinsky, our very talented Superintendent, and his hard working crew, as well as Kim Perez and her dedicated support staff. We are so thankful for all of your hard work and dedication to the Golf Club of Avon – THANK YOU! We look forward to continuing to engage all new and existing members in an amazing schedule of tournaments throughout the year. While we have a few projects in mind including renovation of the Red 1 teeing area to match the 1W and 1B 1<sup>st</sup> tees, we anticipate a more “construction free” season as we pause from the major projects we have witnessed recently. I hope you will join us on the course for as many events that you can pack into your calendar, and always hope Mother Nature cooperates for an even better year in 2022.



## SPORTS COMMITTEE

Christiana Thavenius & Rebecca Sposito, Co-Chairs

The Sports Committee along with the Board of Governors have been extremely pleased with the continued momentum and interest in the Racquet and Pool related activities in 2021.

With the groundwork established from last year's remarkable interest in racquets, our biggest achievement this year was gaining Board approval for the installation of four new lighted pickleball courts in between the Paddle Courts and the Tennis Pro Shop.

Pickleball is the fastest growing racquet sport and we are very happy that we will have this new amenity at the Club. It's truly a competitive advantage over other clubs in the Farmington Valley, and shows our commitment to providing exceptional recreation amenities, building our club facilities and social events in a fun and welcoming environment.

The court construction is underway and we are planning to be playing by this Memorial Day Weekend. Get your paddles ready!



Our racquet programs had another busy year. The Tuesday and Thursday Tennis clinics were busy with members. The courts continued to be heavily utilized by Junior Clinics, Summer Camps and Private Lessons. The Paddle Leagues and Interclubs were well attended. The 2021-2022 Paddle Club Championships were held March 25th-March 27th. Louisa Hogan and Patty Karlin are the Women's Paddle Champions. Todd Russell and Andrew Matos won the "B" League Men's Paddle Championship and Tony and Lisa Riccio are the Mixed Paddle Champions! Congratulations to all participants.

From a personnel perspective we said goodbye to our Head Tennis Pro for over 20+ years. We thank Cristina Walters for her years of service and commitment to the Club and wish her the best in her new endeavors. With the expanding Racquets program we have welcomed Macie Elliott in the new position of Director of Racquets. She will have accountability and responsibility for the continued enthusiasm and growth for Tennis, Pickleball and Paddle.



The Sports Committee was thrilled that we could resume to a pre-COVID pool season as the FVAH relaxed its guidelines so that we were able to eliminate reservations, welcome back guests, reintroduce swim teams and eliminate spacing on the pool deck.

The Swim Team was a huge success this year. We had many new and returning members to the Swim Team. The team sparked so much interest with new swimmers that those members went on to join Swim Clubs during the Fall & Winter seasons.

A few highlights from the Golf Club of Avon's 2021 Season:

- The Girls 8/under 100 freestyle relay won the event by over 30 seconds!
- The Girls 10/under 100 freestyle relay taking the crown! Along with our other team coming in 4th overall!
- The Boys 8/under 100 freestyle relay taking bronze!
- The girls 10/under freestyle was a HUGE event for us with three members finishing 1th, 2nd and 4th places.



Some highlights from Senior Championships:

- Medals in backstroke performances
- Members placed 4th in the freestyle, 2nd in breaststroke, and 7th in butterfly

Thank you to all the dedicated Sports Committee members, GCA Management, Tennis Professionals and Pool Directors who worked to make this year a success. We are very proud of our achievements in 2021 and look forward to continued growth and success in 2022.



## **2020-2021 BOARD OF GOVERNORS OFFICERS**

PRESIDENT: MICHAEL WATERBURY

VICE PRESIDENT: REBECCA SPOSITO

SECRETARY: TRAVIS LYTLE

TREASURER: JEFFREY STEIN

PAST PRESIDENT: DAN SCHWARTZ

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

BRIAN CUDDEBACK—MARY GALLAGHER—STEVEN HAHN—CHRISTINA THAVENIUS