

Polson Bay Golf Association (PBGA)

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Information for City of Polson

Purpose and Community Benefit

The Polson Bay Golf Association (PBGA) proposes to work together with the City of Polson to shift the day-to-day operation of the Polson Bay Golf Course to the Association while the City continues to own the course.

This proposal is guided by a simple principle: the golf course exists for the benefit of the public and the long-term health of a City-owned asset. The intent is responsible stewardship, community access, and reinvestment into the course itself.

Who We Are

The PBGA is a local, nonprofit community-based organization made up of golfers, community members, and individuals who are closely involved with the course.

Board Members

- **Josh Maki** – Local golfer and resident, Chief Administrative Office (CAO) of S&K Technologies;
- **Shelly Cottet** – Local golfer, resident, and Polson Golf Board member. Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of S&K Gaming
- **Roger Wallace** – Retired, longtime Polson Bay Golf Course Head Golf Professional, resident, and from 1987-2022 Director/President of Links Management Golf.
- **Larry Ashcraft** – Retired Commercial Airline Pilot, Restaurateur, resident, golfer, Polson Golf Board and Polson Jr. Golf Board member.

- **Dave Cottingham** – Retired General Contractor, entrepreneur, resident, golfer, and Polson Golf Board member.
- **Kiel Duckworth** – Local golfer and resident, business owner and lawyer at Duckworth Law Office in Polson.

The Association was formed through years of discussion among the golfing community and those who care deeply about the future of the course. Its members are volunteers who share a common goal: to see the Polson Bay Golf Course remain a strong, well-maintained, and accessible community asset.

Why This Change is Being Considered

The City is currently burdened with operating the golf course. The current arrangement costs the City both time and money. The financial cost is passed back down to the golf course, which affects the ability to make the golf course better. We want to reduce this cost, which allows reinvestment into the golf course and frees up the City to work on other issues.

Like many municipal golf courses, Polson's course operates within tight financial margins. While it generally supports ongoing operations, there is limited flexibility for larger upgrades, long-term improvements, and major reinvestment.

It is anticipated that operating the course through the PBGA may allow for greater operational flexibility and efficiency over time. Any net positive financial performance under this model would be expected to be directed back into:

- Course maintenance,
- Infrastructure and facility improvements,
- Equipment upgrades, and
- Long-term course sustainability.

The focus is on strengthening the course for the future rather than generating profit for any individual or organization.

Other Montana Communities Do This

We did not invent this idea, we borrowed it from successful models including Buffalo Hills in Kalispell and Whitefish Lake Golf Club in Whitefish. Both Kalispell and Whitefish found years ago that that its City-owned course was better off managed by a group of locals, organized as an Association. The arrangement is symbiotic – taking the burden off the City, preserving its asset through reinvestment.

The similar successful arrangements between cities and local golf associations in Montana provide confidence that this model can work well for Polson.

Public Access and Affordability Will Remain

We are committed to affordable public golf and maintaining our position as regional leader in that regard. Polson has been a leader in affordability and access and we intend to keep it that way.

The golf course will remain a public facility. It will not become a private or members-only course. Public access and community use will continue to be central features of the course.

Support for Youth and Junior Golf

The Association will continue to support the Mission Valley Junior Golf Association and youth golf programs. Junior golf is viewed as a vital community benefit and an important part of the long-term vision for the course.

Benefits to the City and Community

Benefits seen in other Montana Communities

- Reduce the City's day-to-day management responsibilities
- Improve the overall condition and performance of the golf course,
- Strengthen the long-term value of the City's asset, and
- Maintain affordable public recreation for the community.

Current Status

We prepared a draft Lease. We obtained a copy of the successful Kalispell (Buffalo Hills) lease and modified the lease to fit Polson. We did not want to reinvent the wheel, instead choosing to

adopt a proven lease. We are awaiting confirmation of interest from the City of Polson before working towards finalizing the lease and clarifying important issues (equipment transfer, bonds, capital, etc.).

A full legal lease and operating agreement would be developed in coordination with the city and presented to the City Commission for review and approval at a later time.

Conclusion

This proposal reflects a collaborative effort to ensure the Polson Bay Golf Course remains a high-quality, publicly accessible facility for years to come. By combining City ownership with Association operation, the goal is to promote long-term sustainability, community benefit, and continued public enjoyment of this important City asset.