



MEMBERS' DIALOGUE ON LAND LEASE



GC Members, along with the Club's Chairman and Deputy Chairman, were present to address Members' queries

On 5 March 2014, a Members' Dialogue session with the General Committee (GC) was held to elaborate on the Ministry of Law's (MinLaw's) decision regarding SICC's land lease. Present that evening were 453 Club Members, the GC, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of SICC.

Acting General Manager (AGM) Desmond Tay opened the meeting, after which President Tay Joo Soon delivered a short address to welcome Members. Addressing the presence of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman at the meeting, President mentioned that there was no conflict of interest in their attendance as the decision on the land lease had been made by MinLaw. Furthermore, they had been present at all meetings with MinLaw and were a constant source of support to the Club. President also informed Members that earlier that morning, MinLaw had suggested in an email sent to the Club that SICC should submit a suitable proposal to Singapore Labour Foundation (SLF) for consideration by the end of March in order to meet the 28 February 2015 deadline. The email also highlighted that the proposal should outline the land and facilities that will be handed over to SLF for the operation of a public course when the Club's lease expires in 2021.

AGM Tay then took the audience through a comprehensive presentation, during which MinLaw's decision—to extend the lease of the Club's Island location until 2040 and one course at the Bukit location until 2030, and to hand the other course at the Bukit location over to SLF after the current lease expires in 2021—was presented to Members once again. The presentation also highlighted the various key factors that led the GC and MinLaw to suggest retaining the Island Location as the logical choice. These factors included the benefits of having two locations, more land and Gross Floor Area (GFA), greater potential to create five 9-hole courses, more non-golfing facilities, increased ease of managing the future sharing of ancillary golfing facilities with the public, less capital expenditure required to cater for various non-golfing facilities, and the reduced risk of rezoning.

After the presentation, the floor was opened for Members to raise their questions and concerns before the GC.



AGM Desmond Tay made a presentation at the start of the meeting



*Top: Club Chairman James Koh Cher Siang (L) with President Tay Joo Soon
Below: Vice Chairman Khoo Boon Hui (L) with President*



A few Members urged the GC to consider a referendum to allow Members to determine the choice between retaining Island or Bukit Location. On this matter, the GC emphasised that there is only one offer from MinLaw; there is no alternative offer. GC Member Tan Chin Seng further explained that, at present, the constitution of the Club does not include the provision for a referendum. The GC, however, said that Members could exercise their rights under the Club's constitution if they were in favour of the alternative proposal.

Members were also informed that in a meeting in December 2013, the government had indicated that the lease of only one of SICC's two locations would be renewed. The GC had at all times been focused on trying to secure extensions for both locations. Having secured this concession, it is imperative that the Club acts decisively and swiftly on the current offer from MinLaw.

The GC emphasised that time was of the essence. SICC had until the end of March 2014 to comply with MinLaw's suggestion for the Club to submit its proposal on the sharing of ancillary golfing facilities at the Bukit Location after 2021, in order to reach an agreement with the SLF by 28 February 2015. Submitting an alternative proposal to MinLaw for the sharing of the Island Location instead could involve lengthy negotiations without any guarantee that it would be favourably considered. This would lose the Club precious time in working out a proposal with the SLF and put the Club at risk of failing to meet the February 2015 deadline. The GC considered that it would not be judicious to put the Club through the risk of losing one entire location in 2021.



Members also took to the floor to share their concerns and suggestions regarding the sharing of the ancillary golfing facilities and the golf courses at the Bukit location. Some shared their fondness for the Bukit course and eschewed suggestions that the golf courses be reconfigured and demarcated. They felt strongly that the courses should remain as they are and in particular that the integrity of Bukit should be retained as it is for members' use. One member shared the experience in the UK where golf clubs had negotiated rights of play on neighbouring public courses and recommended that the Club should do the same at the Bukit location post 2030. Others also suggested that the Club should refrain from unnecessary expenditure on the leasehold land and supported the idea that the Club should instead invest in a new Bukit Clubhouse on the freehold land to provide for members' needs. Whilst President pointed out that it was premature at this point to share what sort of sharing arrangements might transpire and urged Members to keep an open mind. He assured members that he was not in favour of unnecessary capital expenditure on the leasehold land.

Conclusion

President urged all Members to keep an open mind with regard to the arrangements to be made with SLF. He reiterated that it would not be in the Club's interest to fail to reach an agreement with the SLF by the stipulated deadline.

Some Members expressed appreciation for GC's efforts in handling the negotiations with MinLaw and securing a concession with regards to the Bukit Location. The majority of the Members present at the meeting were supportive of the GC's recommendations. In closing the dialogue session, President assured Members that the GC would spare no effort to secure the long-term interest of the Club and its Members.

President thanked Members for their interest shown in participating in the Members' Dialogue and the meeting was thereafter adjourned.

Members paying attention to the presentation at the Dialogue Session



1. GC Member Rayson Hazra replies to Members' queries
2. Honorary Treasurer Paul Kwek addressing a Member
3. GC Member Tan Chin Seng answers a Member's question