

**FORD YACHT CLUB
FORWARD PLANNING COMMITTEE
SURVEY REPORT 2008-2009**

Forward Planning is an ongoing activity. The range should be five to ten years with solid goals to be reached in the next three years. Planning without action is wasted effort and planning should result in a vision for the Club that addresses the concerns and desires of the membership. The resulting Mission should contain three elements:

- 1) Strategic alignment of the members,
- 2) A vision that can be sustainable in reality, and
- 3) Maximization of limited resources.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Not everyone will view the future of the Club the same way. Leadership must listen to the Members and develop a plan. Article II of the Club's Constitution states the original purpose of the Club:

To develop and manage a private yacht harbor and boat service, to acquire And maintain property required for these facilities, to provide a program of Social and educational activities, and to provide these services and facilities on a co-operative basis at the lowest possible cost.

Although these purposes remain relevant today, Members have additional concerns. To put together a future plan for the Club, it is necessary that the leadership adopt plans to address those concerns of the Membership with programs and plans that satisfy the three elements stated above.

Almost a year ago, the FPC was given the task of publishing the future plans of the Club. The basic idea was that we would canvass the Membership and inform the various Committees of the Club as to the Membership's position on issues and concerns.

Upon review of the results of the canvass, the latest Mission and Purpose of the Club could be stated as:

By 2013 Ford Yacht Club will be the premier boat club on the Great Lakes for boaters of all ages. We will cater to a family environment that nurtures a legacy for families and supports boating activities of all kinds while maintaining and improving the facilities with only reasonable and effective spending and necessary economic impact on the current membership.

Armed with an underlining Purpose and Mission that the Membership is united behind the leadership, they can then move ahead maximizing the success of the Mission.

As the Club's Directors/Committees adopt programs to address these issues and demands of the Membership, the FPC will publish these programs on a time line presentation in a prominent spot in the Club House with the status of the programs stated therein (proposed by a Committee, adopted by the Board, etc.) and the expected date of completion. It should also be noted here that each Committee Chairperson should also advise this Committee as to assets/equipment that can be expected to be repaired, serviced or replaced (*i.e.*, water heaters, refrigerators, etc.) so that these expenses can be placed on the time line and be factored in with future plans. One other element of the Club's future plans has been added by the Board towards the end of last year. The Club has hired a Consultant who advises leadership as to the economic and practical soundness, drawbacks and other clubs' experiences of various plans, and answer questions that the Club may have totally independent of any faction in the Club. It is with this purpose that we have reviewed the responses by the Membership and make this report.

RESULTS OF THE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

1. Observations made apart from review of responses.

A. A few characteristics of the Membership are obvious before we even look at the actual responses. The first was *apathy*. Almost the entire Membership was beseeched by personal contact, numerous articles and peer pressure to respond to the questionnaire which was designed to facilitate a response. Despite these efforts, a solid statistical representation was the most that could be garnered. The importance of a response was characterized as necessary for the continued success of the Club and yet members refused to respond. A stranger would take that as an indication of satisfaction by the Membership. People familiar with the Club and its Membership would be stymied by this behavior at a time when the Membership was at best, concerned and at worst, dissatisfied with Club leadership decisions. Which brings us to our next observation.

B. One would believe by the apathy demonstrated that there were no real issues facing the Club at this time - That there were no real strong feelings either way concerning decisions made or to be made.

Attend a Board meeting and you would be shocked at the factionalism and hostility existing between its members. It is hard to believe that we are united in Purpose. It is difficult to believe in a successful future where conflict as this exists. It is strongly felt that this has to be dispelled. How can the Club, or any organization, succeed if it is going to be closed-minded or hostile to the discussion of changes to meet its Members' needs?

C. It is obvious that Membership is changing. Equity Members are declining. Age is an obvious cause in light of deaths and Members changing their membership to Senior. Fifty-nine percent of those responding to the survey were 55 and older with many of those planning on going Senior soon. The financial effect of this decline has not been totally realized, but everyone should expect that it could be quite serious,

if not catastrophic. Membership has been recognized directly or indirectly by most of the survey responses as a serious issue facing the Club.

2. Statistical representative response to the survey.

As stated above, the survey was drafted to do two things; the first to discern members' plans for the future and second, priorities they placed on issues facing the club. Various Club leaders and the Board were given the opportunity to add any questions they felt important. A format was adopted to make it as easy as possible to respond and to facilitate analysis. Forms were mailed to the membership. Additional copies were left in the foyer. Members were encouraged to respond at Club functions and by articles in *The Signal Hoist*. Many Members were contacted by phone when other methods failed to get them to respond. This process went on for a period that started before the boating season and continued past haul-out. Not only was everyone given an opportunity to respond, but were encouraged as never before.

The raw number of responses was encouraging. The cross section of the Membership that responded surpassed the critical representative amount. In light of the purpose of the survey, these results should be more than adequate. This should not be considered the *result of a vote* by the membership or even a referendum. It is the purpose to use this information to inform the leadership of Members' ideas and plans. Armed with this information, they can adopt plans with an idea as to the needs of the Club for years to come.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

1. Boating concerns of the Club Membership.

It should come as no surprise that the Membership wants more docks, not only for themselves but as a draw for new members. The majority of the critical demographic of the Club appears to be in favor of larger, wider and deeper slips (larger than those available now, which would be in the 40 to 50 foot range). Please note the *critical demographic* notation. This consists of Members of an age that represents the membership for years to come as well as members of the public who we want to attract as new members. It should also be noted from a practical point of view that when we had wells available for a certain boating class, our Membership increased in that area (Membership increase for 2007). This was the number one response for issues needing attention for that critical age group. There were a few responses that noted the need for larger docks than those we have available to anyone now (this would be in the 60+ foot range). Some Members would buy larger boats if the docks were available and some Members feel that we are one of only a few clubs who have the property to provide this size of a well and, therefore, could draw new members with that unique ability.

Although Equipment did not place very high in the survey, it is probably more important than the General Membership is aware. The Equipment Chairman and the Consultant raised *improved* haul-out equipment as an issue needing more attention.

This was raised because bigger boats need *bigger* equipment and used equipment now is going at for rock bottom prices at this time. This could improve storage revenue and Membership in general (per the consultant).

2. Family activities concerns.

This has been consistently raised by our target demographics as being very important to them and/or for attracting new members. This is also the easiest and cheapest one to address. In fact, recently the Board voted to convert the pool room to the children's activities area. Banana Island fishing tournament and similar activities throughout the summer being stressed and publicized will go along way in satisfying one of the biggest concerns raised by the Membership. The First Mates and the Directors (like Special Projects) should develop family activities for each month, while consulting with the Entertainment Committee.

It was also suggested by numerous Members to clean up and maintain the "beach area" as a beach and swim area for Members and children. This could be accomplished inexpensively by the Members' efforts and satisfy a lot of concerns raised in several different areas. If the geese and debris from the river can be controlled, this asset could be put to good use.

3. Round Island development.

This was raised as an issue by the Membership without explanation as to any detail. This was the very first item raised by the paid Consultant as well. Major logistical problems (access, utilities, etc.) detract from this asset being of any real practical use at this time. However, certain solutions (bridge, discussions with the Township, etc.) are being explored.

4. Improved restaurant service.

The restaurant service is consistently raised as a concern of the Membership. In light of the House Committee's requested report from the Office, FPC believes the House Committee is aware of Membership's concerns. It should be noted that this is one area where, like the pool issue, the Club Membership is strongly divided. There are segments of the Club that wish for very low cost food and those that wish for premier fine dining. This Club is unique and falls somewhere between the two with respect to restaurant service. It has been shown by the Christmas and New Year's party that the current staff is up to meeting heavy service challenges. The key to the success of the house facilities is participation. We need to get more people into the bar and restaurant on a regular basis. If we are going to be family focused, we need to have a menu and at least occasional entertainment that is suited for families (i.e.: monthly bonfires for the teenagers, children's movies, very reasonably priced children's menu).

For this to work, we need to get the whole Club behind it.

5. Pool.

As volatile an issue as this is, it has to be explored. Although this failed in a Membership vote the last time, it is apparent that *a specific pool plan failed* and not the concept in general. This was the number two most raised issue among critical age groups and was raised fourth overall. The Consultant should be able to provide us with other clubs' experiences as to costs, success in drawing members and liability/legal issues.

With real facts put before the Membership and various location options being explored, the position of the members may be different.

These were the main but not all areas of concern raised by the Membership. The raw data is available to any Committee through their liaison with this Committee. Questionnaires were also given to Committee Chairpeople. Those are ongoing in nature, but it is expected that the various Committees will start implementing programs and plans reflecting the Membership concerns.

As stated above, it is of the utmost importance that these plans and programs contain the three elements required to succeed.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT OF THE MEMBERS

Several of the issues raised by the Membership had an extreme polarizing effect on the Club. The pool, dock assignments, even the restaurant have created very strong feelings between the Members.

The key to Forward Planning is to find out where we have a common ground and to develop a common vision.

The Mission stated at the beginning of this report does that. It is believed that all the Members can agree with and get behind the following Mission:

By 2013 Ford Yacht Club will be the premier boat club on the Great Lakes for boaters of all ages. We will cater to a family environment that nurtures a legacy for families and supports boating activities of all kinds while maintaining and improving the facilities with only reasonable and effective spending and necessary economic impact on the current membership.

A VISION THAT CAN BE SUSTAINABLE IN REALITY

The next step is to create a strategy that supports the Mission. This strategy may or may not include a pool, changes to the restaurant and bar and larger docks. The Club leadership needs to look at these issues and see what make us sustainable. With the help of the paid Consultant, an informed decision can be made as to costs, methods of financing, and an educated prediction of return on our investment (will it accomplish what we want it to do?).

Some of our visions in the past have lacked this element and have resulted in plans being abandoned or cost overruns.

MAXIMIZATION OF LIMITED RESOURCES

Resources can be viewed in several ways. Immediately, our thoughts go to cash. These issues will cost money, but that is not our only resource. These were borne out by many of the surveys. We have one of the nicest views of any shoreline in the country. Our access to an International waterway is something we take for granted. The talents of our individual Members are often overlooked except for those that we use over and over again. Our property, the most obvious and largest physical asset, needs to be maximized. Change is inevitable and we need to be proactive on how the change occurs. We can prepare for it and manage it to our advantage.

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Borsenik
Director
Forward Planning Committee