

ConcertGolf Partners

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Blue Hill Country Club is flying high and straight after sale to California Company



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New members would come and old members would go, but at Blue Hill Country Club, the debt wasn't going away.

Five months ago, the golf club was struggling with about \$5 million of longstanding debt. With no increase in membership, the club had little hope of freeing itself from its financial burden.

The member-owned club decided to sell Blue Hill to a corporate country club operator. Concert Golf Partners, which is based in Newport Beach, Calif., was the winning bidder.

Ownership of the 90-year-old club was transferred in December, and now Blue Hill Country Club is debt free. Concert Golf has promised to invest about \$2.9 million to improve the club, and Blue Hill has partnered with the Harvard Club of Boston to extend member benefits. About 40 families have joined the Canton club, said Blue Hill general manager Francisco Ventura.

“The folks at Concert Golf are very responsive to the needs of this club,” Ventura said. “They could and were able to pay off the debt. ... It’s much easier to get funding now, and Concert Golf gives Blue Hill the potential to continue to be a premier facility.”

Located at 23 Pecunit St., Blue Hill is the only New England course to ever host a PGA Golf Championship, in 1956.

Before the new partnership, one of the club's board of directors' main goals was to preserve the course's 27 holes.

But Ventura said some developers wanted to convert nine holes into housing. Concert Golf agreed to preserve the course as it stands. Concert Golf promised to spend \$2.9 million on development and improvements at Blue Hill Country Club within two years. Plans include expanding the driving range, repairing the parking lot and renovating the Grille Room, the club's restaurant. Ventura said he expects Concert Golf to fulfill its promise before the 24 months are up.

Concert Golf has lowered dues by 30 percent while still providing golf, tennis, pool and dining services.

Concert Golf Partners Chairman Peter Nanula said adding Blue Hill has the potential to diversify his company's portfolio.

"(Concert Golf) helps member-owned upscale private clubs to recapitalize, and we're in a much better position to help them accomplish their goals," Nanula said. "The sky is the limit at Blue Hill. It's a major golf course and a great club."

Concert Golf now has 12 country clubs spread throughout the country and Blue Hill members can play at all of them.

Ventura said he is excited about the new partnership with the Harvard Club of Boston.

Nanula is a member of the Harvard Club, and he was pivotal in establishing the new relationship, Ventura said.

Blue Hill members can skip the wait list at the Harvard Club to be immediately considered for membership, and vice versa for those at the Harvard Club. Instead of paying dues for both clubs, dual members pay the greater of both bills for full access.

"We're always looking to expand the value that we bring to our members," said Karin Galvin, marketing membership coordinator at the Harvard Club.

Ventura said the relationship demonstrates a growing trend among country clubs.

“Clubs are finding ways to give more added value to existing members,” Ventura said. “We are one of a few pioneer clubs that have tapped into this city-club-country-club relationship.”