

Under new ownership, Philmont Country Club in Lower Moreland plans \$4M in renovations



LOWER MORELAND >> Philmont Country Club, a private club in Huntingdon Valley, will begin renovations to usher in a new contemporary atmosphere, estimated at \$4.15 million.

In March, Philmont Country Club members agreed to sell the club to Concert Golf Partners, a boutique owner and operator of private clubs, with an attached agreement that Concert Golf will invest in improvements to the club that will help modernize the club that they, in turn, hope will make the club even more socially engaged. Concert Golf also paid off all of Philmont's debt immediately after the

March closing. Philmont officials say they hope the new additions and enhancements will help draw in more young professionals and families.

Concert Golf Partners owns and operates 16 private clubs in the nation, including White Manor Country Club in Malvern.

Philmont was previously run under the member-managed club model, where members volunteer to be a part of a committee that plays a direct role in keeping up with the day-to-day tasks of the club. Concert Golf Partners will now be fully vested in taking the club to the next level while still keeping the core values and culture in place, according to Philmont officials.

"There's a lack of continuity as board members turn over every two to three years," said Gerald Heller, the new general manager of the club.

Instead of having bankers, lawyers and doctors making golf course decisions, "we now have a company who's very well versed and very knowledgeable in country club operations," Heller said.

Heller said he believes this will help Philmont plan for the future better and being under a boutique model also provides the club opportunities to partner with other organizations and clubs.

Founded in 1906 by Ellis Gimbel, Philmont Country Club now boasts 36 holes of golf, 10 Har-Tru outdoor tennis courts, an Olympic-size swimming pool and an 88,000-square-foot clubhouse.

To keep members involved and engaged in helping the club grow, Philmont plans to implement an advisory board where between six to 10 members will meet with management monthly to share their feedback, according to Heller. He said it is important to stay in touch with members as they move forward.

The renovations for the club will be focused around the pool, expanding the grille room, retooling all North Course bunkers, redesigning the 18th hole and a complete overhaul and revamp of the locker rooms, according to Philmont officials. The club plans to make a fitness center and outdoor dining areas as additions to the social scene.

Four months into new management, Philmont has already seen an increase in membership.

“We’ve picked up about 62 to 65 members since March,” Heller said.

Heller said the work they’ve done around the pool so far to enhance it from an afterthought to a restored style environment has made it more like a resort than just an ordinary pool.

“We’ve done a lot of things to bring excitement back to the club and that’s resulting in an increase in membership,” he says.

For Philmont Country Club, looking toward the future means also prioritizing future generations.

“The county club is no longer just a place for mom and dad to go on the weekends,” Heller said.

Camps and other activities like junior chess and junior tennis help expose kids to activities they may not be exposed to at school, while also helping them find better ways to interact with one another, according to Heller.

The club is moving into having more family oriented social activities.

“We may have been built around the idea of a golf course,” Heller said, “but it’s the networking, it’s the social interaction that really creates what the club is all about.”