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Shining Rock opens to rave reviews

GOLF CLUB DRAWS CROWDS OVER WEEKEND

BY THOMAS MATTSO
 TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

NORTHBRIDGE — You don't have to look on Shining Rock Golf Club to beyond for a startling view. Although that happens. No, the views that most golfers find at the new, 18-hole championship links that opened recently are pretty absorbing right between tee and green, or two-tiered green. Or three-tiered green.

And if France had owned the wall of ledge fronting the fourth green, that country would not have needed reinforcements for the stormed Bastille. Nobody would have dared attack such a curtain of ledge.

Nobody that is, but golfers at the new Shining Rock golf course.

Last weekend was only the second since the course opened for play

Friday, April 23. And already the place is swarming with golfers trying to unlock the secrets of this intriguing layout.

Veteran pro Lee Danielian, now affiliated with the new club, put it straight from the shoulder. The first five holes, he said, are — well, how to put it? "Challenging" would be the gentlemanly way of describing them. "Awe-inspiring." Yes, as in a view from the tee. But when they call the place "Shining Rock," they are not kidding. It might just as well have been named "mesmerizing rock." Or put on your sunglasses because you don't really want to think about all of that molten lava between you and the green.

In truth, however, such ledge deposits are mostly notable on just one hole — the fourth. And if it is dif-

ficult, it is also a kind of fantasy hole. The kind you imagine when you cross the Badlands of South Dakota and you idly wonder whether you could get a shot across a ravine to the top of a butte.

However, even with the quiet of the electric golf carts, no screams were heard last Saturday, for example, except from a reaction to the hole-in-one recorded by Karyn Danielian, the pro's wife.

"I hit a 9-wood on No. 15," she said. The par-3 hole measures 138 yards from the women's tees. Asked whether it was her first hole-in-one, she said it was the third she has recorded during her golf career. Attending the feat were Lynn Pawley of Southboro, Elizabeth Levins of



Golf pro Lee Danielian tees off on the first hole, as Shining Rock owner/manager Tim Gordon looks on.
 Thomas Mattson photo
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Douglas schools reduce FY 2011 proposal

BY THOMAS MATTSO
 TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

DOUGLAS — The School Committee, looking ahead to this past Tuesday's Town Meeting, last week voted to adopt the fiscal 2011 departmental budget of \$12,001,011.

School Business Manager Dean Iacobucci told the committee at a meeting April 28 that the \$12 million budget consists of an operating budget of \$11,265,931 and a transportation budget of \$735,080.

"We are at the point in time when the School Committee should adopt an FY2011 operating budget," Iacobucci said.

"Unfortunately, a considerable amount of uncertainty remains regarding state funding to cities/towns as well as uncertainty regarding school spending requirements at the local level."

At present, he noted, the schools' proposed operating budget has been reduced to the amount the town previously requested — \$11,265,931.

"A total of \$360,030 in reductions/changes is being recommended to reach this level," he explained. He said the reduction has been achieved by several actions, but largely by moving the cost of some positions from the operating budget to grants Iacobucci said he now believes the schools will receive in fiscal 2011.

Iacobucci also said the schools will purchase this year the textbooks/materials initially included in the schools' proposed 2011 budget, using stimulus funds that allow the schools to remove these expenses (\$91,022) from next year's funding request.

"It is also extremely important to remember that our budget will require additional action by the School Committee," he said. "The original budget amount supported by the town was based on funding provided by the governor's budget."

Since that time, he added, state officials have indicated there may



John O'Toole on trombone for the Blackstone Valley Community Concert Band.
 Thomas Mattson photo

SPACE ODYSSEY

COMMUNITY CONCERT BAND GIVES 'OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD' PERFORMANCE

BY THOMAS MATTSO
 TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

NORTHBRIDGE — Some 400 people showed up for a galaxy of offerings by the Blackstone Valley Community Concert Band Friday night, April 30, at the Northbridge High School auditorium.

Director Kathleen Penza, of Uxbridge, directed some 39 musicians from 30 communities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

"Tonight," said host Michael Seibold, "we will treat you to a sampling of music that portrays the mystery and excitement of outer space."

First came Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra," composed in 1896. Next came the "Transit of Venus March," by

John Philip Sousa, written in 1882 to celebrate the transit of Venus. For more than a century, the score was thought to be lost, but a Library of Congress worker found it in 2003.

Then came "The Planets," a seven-movement orchestral suite by composer Gustav Holst, known as British but also a Dane who was born in Norway. Holst wrote the piece in 1914. The band played the "Jupiter" movement, a rather hectic projection representing jollity.

Seibold introduced the next piece, "When You Wish Upon a Star," by Leigh Harline and New Washington, as introduced in the 1940 Walt Disney classic

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Uxbridge voters to decide budget

BY ANDY LEVIN
 TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

UXBRIDGE — Town Meeting voters will be asked to take action on 15 warrant articles, foremost among them the town's fiscal year 2011 budget and a bylaw amendment that would allow the establishment of "life science" companies in certain zoning districts.

The Annual Town Meeting will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, May 11, at Uxbridge High School.

The town manager's recommended fiscal 2011 budget of \$33,675,357 represents an increase of \$85,570, or 24 percent, over current levels of spending. Municipal department spending would increase by \$13,493, or 2.28 percent, according to Town Manager Michael Szlosek.

In his budget memorandum to selectmen, Szlosek explained that

capital purchases — a new police cruiser and replacement gear for the fire department — account for almost half the increase. An additional \$33,000 would bolster the veteran's agent budget, which Szlosek noted has been "chronically underfunded."

Szlosek said there are two salary adjustments in the spending plan: one for the firefighters union, which is in the final year of its contract, and another for a Town Hall staff member due a pay raise after completing a probationary period.

"There are no contract settlements and therefore no budgeted increases for the clerical, DPW and police unions," he said.

"Management staff is entering its third year without salary increases."

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Alternatives' clients and staff members protested discrimination, in all its forms, last Friday.
 Andy Levin photo

Alternatives takes a 'Stand Against Racism'

BY ANDY LEVIN
 TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

NORTHBRIDGE — Unjust hatred and bigotry of any type were targeted for elimination here last week.

Alternatives joined thousands of other organizations across the country Friday, April 30 to "Stand Against Racism," a YWCA-sponsored campaign now in its third year. Staff, volunteers and clientele

of the Whitinsville-based human services agency signed a pledge against discrimination, listened to inspirational music and discussed how to combat a problem they said is still quite present in America.

Approximately 1,900 such events took place nationwide last Friday, with an anticipated 250,000 people signing the pledge, according to Kelly Seddiki, Alternatives' direc-

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It's 'Play Away' at Shining Rock

GOLF

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Hopkinton and Deb Young of Hopkinton.

It was the first ace ever at the new golf course.

One of the surprises of the course is the maturity of the bent fairway grass. That is because the first nine has been playable for several years while the owners of the property and town officials have been crossing the "ts" and dotting the "is."

The Shining Rock Golf Club now becomes the second largest enterprise in Rockdale after the Beaumont Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, whose original facility was the Paul Whittin mansion, now offices, with a nursing home added onto it. The Salmon family started the nursing home, then expanded to Westborough and to other locations in the state.

The Beaumont facility in Rockdale put that village of the town of Northbridge on the medical-care

map. And it is expected the Shining Rock Golf Club will gain wide respect for the quality of its layout and only reinforce Rockdale as a going concern.

For those from outside the area, it needs to be explained that Rockdale residents for years thought the town government favored Whitinsville, where the most historic business in town — the former Whittin Machine Works — was located for the better part of two centuries. Although that slight animosity toward big-brother village to the southwest has largely faded, according to some observers of the local scene, the turnaround of Rockdale as a place of quality nursing home care and an upscale golf course has its ironies.

The town government recently made a point of rehabilitating Main Street in Rockdale before doing the same for Whitinsville. The housing on Main Street in Rockdale was also rehabilitated. And low-and-moderate-income apartments on Taft and Plantation streets were rehabilitated. Meanwhile, a series of townhouses was built for people 55 and over off Gendron Street, also in Rockdale.

Only about two or three miles to the east of the golf course in Upton are two schools of note — the 13-town Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School and Nipmuc Regional High School. Although it is more common in other parts of the country, course owner Timothy Gordon explained, the dual-membership arrangement between Hopkinton Golf Club and Shining Rock is something the manager-owner expects to catch on. Currently, Norwood Cooperative Bank and SR (Shining Rock) Golf Club LLC are the joint owners of the golf course. Meanwhile, Pulte Homes of Westborough continues building housing adjacent to the course.

Reid Blute, vice president of Land Acquisition for Pulte, attended a Planning Board meeting last week to seek the release of lots for 30 townhouses on Sand Trap Court. So far, 66 of the originally planned 142 housing units at Shining Rock Golf Community have been built. Some 76 remain to be put up. The Planning Board required Pulte to post a bond against completion of the lots. A bond was also required for Pulte to go

ahead with 16 single-family houses on Shining Rock Drive Extension.

Gordon was ecstatic last week at the way the club's membership has taken off. There are 60 Shining Rock members and another 400 members, including some families, from Hopkinton Country Club who can play either course with their dual memberships.

There are three groups of golfers who will be playing the Shining Rock golf course: The general public; members of Shining Rock, and members of Hopkinton Country Club.

While he was still managing Saddle Hill Golf Club, the forerunner of Hopkinton Country Club, Gordon looked up Fred Ruland, who he knew was trying to develop Shining Rock but running into some contractor and other roadblocks despite a strong town meeting vote supporting his venture.

"We started talking," Gordon said of Ruland, himself and his partners.

Although Gordon quipped at one Planning Board meeting that it might seem to be going against the economic stream to start an enterprise now, he said he was anything but light-hearted when the economy really plunged in January 2009.

He harked back to 1981 when, he said, those who invested in business in a bad economic climate looked like heroes when the market turned around in 1995 and 1996.

"The idea," he said, "was always to make a course for people looking for a reciprocal club."

Taking into account responses he has come across to the opening, Gordon said: "People are saying they waited forever for the course to open and that they're excited to have it done."

"It's beautiful and the greens are challenging," he said of Shining Rock. "The course is stunning to look at. It's really challenging the first few holes. I've heard comparisons to Blackstone National (in Sutton) and Red Tail in Devens."

It's surprising when you step on the course. It looks so ready."

Gordon has said he plans to open a clubhouse in the spring of 2011.

The course has some five different tees for each hole. The "Gold" course measures 6,735 yards. The "Black" runs to 6,535. Other lengths from



Thomas Mattson photos

From left, Lynn Pawley, of Southborough, Elizabeth Levins, of Hopkinton, Karyn Daniellian, of Southborough, and Deb Young, of Hopkinton, were a foursome last Saturday at Shining Rock.

shorter tees include the "Blue," at 6,210, the "White" at 5,613, and the "Red" at 5,009 yards.

The first hole sets the tone of the golf course. It is a downhill par four of around 400 yards that slopes left and is well-trapped around the green. Standing on the tee, a player may get the feeling this will be a picturesque outing with vistas from tee to green.

Golfers are advised to stay left-center on No. 2 for an easier approach to this roughly 400-yard par four. On the third, a 500-yard par five, a hidden ravine is in front of the green.

On perhaps the signature fourth, the "ledge hole," the player has to carry about 250 yards from the back tees to make it over the ravine and sheet of rock, or 140 yards from the front tee. The distance to clear the ravine is measured on each tee box by a metal plate. Once over the ravine, the player has fewer than 100 yards to the green on this tricky par-four.

"Hit it straight and hit it long," experienced players say of No. 5, called "a monstrous par three that will be a great challenge." It is 239 to 198 yards, depending on the tee. The fairway opens up after the bridge. For the sake of putting, players are advised to stay below the hole.

Staying below the hole is even more important on No. 6, a short, 300 to 270-yard uphill triple par four. This hole has a three-tiered green, and putting from the back is not the recommended choice.

The seventh, another short par four, has a green with a false front and lots of undulations. The eighth is a par three of 200 to 146 yards with a two-tiered green. Far left is out of bounds in the Upton State Forest.

The ninth is a 496-to-490-yard par five that players can go to town on.

On the back nine, No. 16 is a notable par five in that it ranges in length from a Herculean 648 to 563 yards.

Everyone — from Tim Gordon to Operations Manager Lou Papadellis, pro Lee Daniellian and others — seems genuinely excited about the new golf course.

Just as it has recorded its first ace, soon there will come a course record score followed by even lower scores.

But if things are looking too la-de-da, don't think Tim Gordon can't find a few more shining rocks to maybe use to build a sheer wall in front of some green or other.

Just to keep the golfers humble.



Golf pro Lee Daniellian tees off on the fourth hole.

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