

Long Range Planning – Properties and Programs Frequently Asked Questions (10/2/17)

As our members know, over the last 10 months, GSHPA has been conducting a strategic and council-wide evaluation of outdoor programs and properties. A volunteer committee will present a comprehensive recommendation related to outdoor programs and properties throughout the GSHPA footprint for a decision by the Board of Directors, on November 2, 2017. We will broadly communicate that decision and what it means to our membership after that date.

Over the course of the last ten months, the board and staff of GSHPA have been dedicated to answering member questions and keeping you apprised of the process. It is a good time to clarify several issues and answer a number of questions that have arisen in the recent weeks.

Is it true that GSHPA is losing membership?

In fact, GSHPA membership numbers are growing. In 2015, membership trends were declining, but GSHPA has stabilized that decline and turned it around through the introduction of technology and creation of a more robust recruitment plan that includes partnering with volunteers. As of September 30, 2016, we began to recruit more new girls than the year prior and as of September 27, 2017, we are beginning the new Girl Scout year with more girls than we have ever before, increasing from the year prior, by 17% or 1598 girls.

If you close camps, won't that contribute to a decline in membership?

Our goal is to continue to grow membership through exciting, relevant and innovative programs that meet the needs of our girls. GSHPA remains committed to providing girls with safe, rewarding outdoor experiences at camps and through well-designed outdoor programs that help Girls Scouts discover and connect to the outdoors. Girls are asking for a wide variety of experiences and troop leaders and volunteers are asking for more support. To meet those needs and expectations, we are working to introduce more program partnerships than ever before. For instance, White Water Challengers offers a white water rafting trip multiple times throughout the

year. Our own program staff will be connecting girls and leaders to Leave No Trace and teaching about how they can leave as little impact on the environment (not only at our camps) as possible, no matter where they are. Later this year, we will be offering three STEM expos across our footprint. Through these examples and others, GSHPA is able to offer more than 13,500 event spots in 2018, compared to 6,800 program spots that were available in 2017.

I heard that GSHPA is selling camps for cash because it is in poor financial condition.

After nearly two years of cutting expenses, carefully evaluating organizational needs, and making difficult decisions, the Board and staff of GSHPA are proud to report a strong financial position. One key indicator - unrestricted cash reserves – are at 15 months, which puts GSHPA above the GSUSA recommended minimum reserve of six months, and secures GSHPA in the top tier of Mid-Atlantic councils.

As part of the process to move the organization to a position of long term viability and operational health, GSHPA has reduced staffing expenses and benefits by more than \$270,000; reinvesting all those savings in programs for girls and volunteers. Financial assistance will increase to \$266,000 in this year's operating budget in order to help more families, girls, and adults to participate in Girl Scouts. The 2018 Operating Budget plans for a cash surplus of \$400,000, which will support capital improvements for programs. The planning and management of a professional budget process with clear governance controls and a professional auditing process enables us to better focus on our mission of serving girls.

We take seriously our opportunity and obligation to allocate council resources so that they can be deployed to best serve all girls in the council membership.

Is GSHPA selling camps to pay for the pension?

As the financial results referenced in this FAQ indicate, GSHPA has the financial resources to meet its share of the GSUSA national pension plan obligation, which was frozen in 2010. Proceeds from any property sales will be kept in a separate fund and will require Board approval to be utilized. As many of you are aware, pension plans across the United States are under-funded and create a strong risk to organizations. GSHPA is concerned about the risk and plans to evaluate alternatives to reduce that exposure in the coming years.

How many camps does GSHPA own?

GSHPA owns seven properties – Camp Archbald, Camp Echo Trail, Camp Furnace Hills, Camp Golden Pond, Camp Happy Valley, Camp Louise, and Camp Small Valley. Camp Louise was closed in the summer of 2016 due to critical infrastructure issues, making many portions of the camp unsafe. Camp Echo Trail is designated as a primitive camping site. Camp Furnace Hills has been closed since February 2017, due to significant storm damage.

What are the camp operating costs and utilization rates?

- In 2014-2015, Camp Archbald was utilized 9.32 percent of the time that it was available and each year costs \$527,000 to operate.
- In 2014-2015, Camp Echo Trail was utilized 23.53 percent of the time that it was available and each year costs \$383,000 to operate.
- In 2014-2015, Camp Furnace Hills was utilized 12.24 percent of the time it was available and each year costs \$432,000 to operate.
- In 2014-2015, Camp Golden Pond was utilized 15.13 percent of the time it was available and each year costs \$90,000 to operate.
- In 2014-2015, Camp Happy Valley was utilized 22.32 percent of the time it was available and each year costs \$160,000 to operate.
- In 2014-2015, Camp Small Valley was utilized 50.02 percent of the time it was available and each year costs \$386,000 to operate.

As our members can see, costs are very high to maintain properties that meet GSHPA's standards, facilitate the experience we want to create, and meet liability requirements. All of these factors are important considerations when we look at our property holdings and determine what type of camping experience we are trying to offer. These costs only include operating expenses. Program expenses are calculated separately.

Why is GSHPA clear-cutting its camp properties?

GSHPA is not clear-cutting its properties. Because all of the properties owned by GSHPA have significant portions of their acreage covered in trees, on-going maintenance and tree-removal is a regular part of the management process and an environmental and safety requirement. A certified forestry evaluator has been assessing each property's tree population and making recommendations on how to manage, remove and restore the properties to a healthy and safe environment. Both the health of the trees and the safety of our campers are top priorities in the forestry management process.

Why is GSHPA only offering programs at Camp Small Valley?

At this time, Camp Small Valley is the best prepared property to offer resident camp experiences. Programs and day camps are also conveniently being offered at many regional locations including local YWCAs, community centers, and schools. We have been actively developing innovative partnerships that will continue to bring Girl Scouting closer to our girls, a particular issue for troops in more rural locations. For example, we've had great success with sending the STEM Mobile out to any location within the GSHPA 30-county footprint. As GSHPA develops even more partnerships with other program partners, the locations where girls can have outdoor experiences and program opportunities will continue to expand.

How do you respond to criticism of GSHPA, board and staff that members and non-members are posting on social media?

The Girl Scout Law reminds us to treat one another with respect. GSHPA will continue to answer member questions and respond openly and respectfully to member concerns. We are counting on our members to share in the common goal in doing what's best for the girls in GSHPA and the future of the council. All of us at GSHPA pledge to model the kind of behavior that we would like to see from our girls and will not respond to the increasingly personal attacks that contradict the Girl Scout Law.

Girl Scout Law

I will do my best to be
honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,
and to
respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.