

**Restaurant should not be left to amateurs**

Kala Pearson deserves credit for launching a community take-over of the Ranch House Restaurant and golf course. Kala presented glowing revenue projections at one of the meetings to an overflow crowd at the adult center about four years ago.

*Tuesday, June 25, 2013*

**Commentary: Ranch House controversy hitting a nerve in Beaver Creek**

By Bob Burke

My Turn

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Then the board, in a fateful decision, decided to let Kala manage the property instead of bringing in a professional team to run the restaurant. No one was brought in to do a needs assessment on the golf course. This too was under the management of Kala. This began the slow decline of the property. The large number of eager volunteers who showed up every day slowly dissipated over the next year and a half due to Kala's management style. Donations dried up.

There were projections, but never a plan. Focuses changed daily. Proper management would have come at a cost, but perhaps it could have paid for itself by hiring and training a staff, including a chef, proper kitchen management, and controlling food costs. But the board just let Kala stumble on, eventually running the property into the ground.

It's hard enough to make a restaurant work with proper management, but impossible with amateurs, well intended as they may be. Kala stated that the property began its decline in March after she was asked to leave the board due to her "legal difficulties." This is disingenuous at best. Kala was the driving force for three years and has to take responsibility for the demise of the property, not blame the current board for the last three months. By the time she left, the community was disillusioned, tired of the constant begging for funds and lack of organization at the restaurant.

Does that leave the current board off the hook? Not by a long shot.

The current board is made of townspeople, who, like Kala, have no experience in running a restaurant. Indeed, the current management of the restaurant has had no experience in running a restaurant. But Janet Aniol and Maggie Holt both have been dumping their own financial resources into this black hole and have given of themselves immeasurably. The current board simply is not equipped to engage in high stakes negotiations for the property.

The job of the board now should be one thing - sell the property. There is no money to keep the restaurant or golf course open. Let's save do-gooders who would open their pocket books, give their hard-earned money and accept no more donations. Close the restaurant and turn the keys over to the board.

The last part deals with potential buyers. They should go through a third party, perhaps a broker who will settle for a flat fee at closing in lieu of a commission. And, no board member should meet with potential buyers by themselves.

Should the current board be replaced? That is a question to be decided by all the coalition members, not a hand-picked group selected by Kala Pearson. As a coalition member I was not asked to be at this "emergency meeting." Some of the people who signed that petition should know better. They forgot that old admonition: "Fool me once shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me."

To put Kala back in charge of the property is tantamount to asking a tornado to come back and clean up the mess it made the first time around.

*Bob Burke is a resident of the Beaver Creek area.*