

The Coastal Star

Delray Beach: Hamlet Country Club approves deal to sell to Seagate Hotel & Spa



- Posted by [Deborah Hartz-Seeley](#)
- *Golfers practice outside the Hamlet Country Club. Jerry Lower/The Coastal Star*

By Tim Pallesen

Residents at the Hamlet Country Club have voted overwhelmingly to sell their golf course and clubhouse to the owner of the Seagate Hotel and Spa.

The \$7 million purchase will provide resort amenities to guests at the downtown Delray Beach hotel while freeing Hamlet property owners from the mandatory golf memberships that have crippled home sales.

“Now we will have all the ingredients — golf, tennis and dining — to make us a full destination resort,” said E. Anthony Wilson, chairman of the Seagate Hospitality Group. “It fulfills all the destination choices that our customers are looking for.”

A vote on May 14 showed **98 percent of Hamlet Country Club members in favor of the sale**, according to club president Bill Redman.

“Country club members had the confidence that we operate a very high-end facility and that we will do the same for them,” Wilson said after the vote. “It’s a deal that’s good for everybody.”

Redman said club members found Seagate’s offer attractive because of the financial certainty it brings.

“It’s a struggle for a small club these days when you’re down to around 200 members,” Redman said. “The concept of mandatory membership served its purpose 10 years ago. But that was a different time economically.”

The Hamlet was one of South Florida’s first private country clubs when it opened in 1973. Well-known architect Joe Lee designed the 18-hole golf course.

“It was very exciting when it opened,” one of the first golfers, Al Rodstein, recalled. “We were the first club in Delray Beach. After that others sprung up in Boca Raton and all around us. We had members coming from all over the country.”

Jack Nicklaus was a charter member. Retired pro ballplayers Mickey Mantle and Whitey Ford were frequently seen on the fairways.

Four Hall of Fame golfers from the Ladies Professional Golfers Association — Beth Daniel, Sandy Little, Jane Blaylock and Hollis Stacey — called the Hamlet Country Club their home.

During the club’s glory years, a black-tie event was held every Thursday night in the 38,000-square-foot

ABOLISH MANDATORY MEMBERSHIP

clubhouse.

Club members spent \$10 million in 2007 to renovate the clubhouse with the finest woods, bamboo and silk to create an elegant Balinese interior. The golf course fairways were recontoured and the eight tennis courts were resurfaced.

“But people who got here when they were in their 50s are now in their 90s,” Redman said. “A lot can’t play golf or tennis anymore.”

A country club lifestyle isn’t as attractive for new retirees, he said.

“People now are less interested in making a country club the focal point of their social life. They have diverse interests,” Redman said.

The mandatory \$30,000 country club membership with \$15,300 in annual dues made it difficult for Hamlet homeowners to find buyers for their homes.

“The Hamlet is in a great location that’s central to downtown Delray Beach. But often when potential homebuyers find out that membership is attached, they move on,” said Jo Ann Grayson, a real estate agent who lives in the Hamlet

Seagate won’t require new homebuyers to join the country club.

“That will enhance the values of the properties there,” Grayson said.

Existing club members will each contribute \$20,000 to pay off the \$10 million debt for the 2007 renovations.

Several details still must be worked out before the sale closes sometime this summer. Country club members will get dining privileges at the private Seagate Beach Club and discounted rates at the Seagate Hotel as part of the sale agreement.

But Rodstein, who still golfs at age 94, says the best aspect of Seagate’s takeover is the assurance of stability in the Hamlet.

“They will be introducing the Hamlet to their hotel guests, attracting new club members,” Rodstein said. “Seagate will be a great asset to stabilize our situation and allow us to keep up our high standards for years to come.”

May 30, 2012 at 2:00pm

ABOLISH MANDATORY MEMBERSHIP