Hello, Members!

This will be the first in a series of postings intended to raise awareness among the members of what it takes to run a facility of the quality of BRSP. The series is intended to answer the often-asked question:” Where does all the money go?”

In order to make the numbers mean something you can wrap your hands around; I break everything down by what it costs each and every one of our roughly 2400 members. You may wonder why I am bothering you with a line item that is just 50 cents per member, and the answer is “because dollars are made up of pennies”. By the time I publish the final article, you should know 1) That I keep track of where every penny is going and 2) how all those little pennies add up. Another takeaway is that if these costs are spread among more members, the burden on each membership will be less. We are ramping up a membership drive, but our best recruiters are **YOU**. Be looking for people who might make good members and tout the benefits to them!

For our first installment, we will examine something topical, at the forefront of our attention: Weather.

I do a deep dive into the topic, so here is its summary in case you don’t want to read any further: cold, snowy, and dark cost money. Roughly $50 of your membership, or 13%, to be exact.

Now, for detail-oriented readers, here is the deep dive: We have several costs associated with winter weather.

* Snow removal from the lots
  + Our contract with Morgans covers snow removal from the lots for any snow event exceeding 3 inches accumulation, and sand/gravel spread on demand for icy conditions. This contract costs the club $22,500 per season currently, though that is going to go up in price next year, as Morgan’s is losing money on the contract for the second year in a row. This snow removal cost each member $9.38 this year.
* Snow removal from the ranges and fields
  + This snow removal is done by park staff and includes all the removal done on the R/P ranges, shotgun fields, and in front of storage conexes and outbuildings. Often this work must be done more than once per snow event, because prevailing winds deposit the snow from north of the park into the walkways and range surfaces that have been cleared, requiring a second or third clearing of the same spaces. So far in the 2023-24 winter, we have already spent 400 person-hours on this task, a total cost of $9600, and we are barely 2/3 of the way through the winter, with most of February and all of March (historically, the heaviest snow month) still ahead of us. By spring, I expect to have spent $15,500, or $6.47 per member on manpower alone.
  + We use the tractor, skid steer, snowblower, and manual shoveling for this. Tractor and Skid Steer have expected service lifetimes of ten years, while the snowblower is replaced every two years, and the shovels need replacement annually. Spreading the costs of this equipment across their lifetimes (and dividing by 2 for the tractor and skid steer, since they are used for other purposes in the summer), We end up with an average annual expenditure of $12,400 per year for acquisition/replacement, or $5.17 per member.
  + We burned $2800 of fuel last year on this task. Since we don’t know exactly what consumption will end up this season, I am using Jan-March and Nov-Dec of last year for this figure. Our fuel costs due to inflation have risen about 18% over last year, so I can predict we will finish this season at $3300, or $1.38 per member. Seemingly insignificant, but this all adds up.
* Snow removal from the rooftops
  + As anyone who watches the news can tell you, it would be irresponsible for me to leave the snow on our rooftops and just wait for a roof collapse. So, we have done removal from the rooftops at a cost of $3180 in labor. I expect this is the only time we will have to do this this winter, so let’s say it is costing every member $1.33.
* Ice melt for icy conditions on walkways (clubhouse, RP shelters, concrete portions of shotgun fields)
  + We purchase ice melt in bulk, a pallet at a time, so we get a good price. I expect to spend $7,200 this season, or $3 per member.
  + We spend approximately $16,240 in labor per season spreading (and respreading) salt across these walkways and shooting stations, or $6.77 per member.
* Sand and gravel for lots
  + The snow removal contract covers on-demand spreading of sand and gravel, but the actual traction mix costs $100 per ton, and it takes three tons to do our lots and driveways one time. The few icy days we had in November cost us $1800. We can expect March and April to cost as much or more. Thankfully, December, Jan, and February have stayed cold enough that we did not have to use any sand/gravel. Total expected cost for the season is $4500, or $1.88 per member.
* Utilities for heat
  + Our Enstar bill for all the buildings combined is currently averaging $2,138 per month. Through the six months of cold, that works out to $12,828, or $5.35 per member. Enstar had been granted permission to implement a rate increase by the Utilities Commission, so we can expect that to rise significantly.
* Utilities for light (dark goes with cold in AK)
  + Lights on the fields and ranges cost us more than lights in the buildings and on the lots, but people cannot shoot in the dark (low-light league notwithstanding). Our electric bill is averaging $1439.58 per month, counting all meters. Cost for the winter season would be $8640, or $3.60 per member. MEA has also been granted a rate hike, so this cost will be rising as well.
* Propane and heaters for event participants
  + Many of our winter one-shot events have this cost built into the cost calculation, but events that take place all year round and do not have a higher price in the winter have this cost supported by admin dollars, to the tune of roughly $1200 dollars per season, or 50 cents per member.
* Equipment wear and tear
  + This category is hard to predict from month-to-month, but equipment breaks down more often in the cold, and repairs become more frequent as the equipment ages. So far this season, repairs to the skid steer, tractor, and attachments for them have cost us $2600. During 2023, we spent $4892 on repairs, or $2.04 per member.

As you can see, winter costs us a lot of money, and it costs us at a time of year when revenues are down. This is why we need to enter each winter with a sizeable cushion of money in the bank. Weather related expenditures account for $49.87 per member per year, without counting emergencies like the RP office roof leak ($2600) or the furnace in the old clubhouse ($800). That is 13% of what you pay for your membership, used up just to keep us open in the cold and dark.

Obviously, there are steps that can be taken to mitigate the costs, such as the reduced winter hours of operation that I implemented, and which should save us $20,000 dollars in utilities and staffing. But such measures come with a cost in membership value (you lose some hours of range availability).

Next up in our “Where does all the money go?” series: Personnel Costs. Look for it next week.