

# Former GCSAA president speaks out on proposed bylaw changes

There was some thought, on my part, to just let the new bylaws slide by without expressing my opinion. However, after hearing from a number of my friends from around the country, I have decided to express my thoughts on this matter.

As many of you know, during my presidency of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, proposed bylaws were brought to the membership and were overridden. This could very well be the case again this month. The membership should question any and all changes, especially changes that are announced in *Golf Course Management* magazine, which seems to be very one-sided.

Do you really believe they (staff or the board of directors) could not find at least one member who would question these proposed bylaws? Those of you who read the article in this magazine understand how they have tried to mesmerize us.

If the association is able to put out information like this unchallenged now, it makes one wonder what our voice will be in the future. A number of times Bob Williams — the enterprising president of the GCSAA in the late 1950s — has said to me, "Is the tail

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wagging the dog?"

During my term as president, we tried to change the bylaws to give the board the power to set the fee for dues. That bylaw proposal was defeated, with only a small percentage of delegates in favor of the change. The bylaw change did not occur, and probably was for the better.

Even if you trust people running the association at present, what about future boards? The more power you give a governing body, the less power we have in our own hands. We support the association with our dues, which is only a small percentage of the association's budget. Most of us realize this already.

The golf courses with the most purchasing power are the main support of the association. Just think of that statement for a moment. We, the superintendents of these golf courses, are the ones the association needs to really make the whole organization work.

Let the directors come to the delegates and explain their futuristic ideas. Then give the delegates the opportunity to give their ideas in return. This might be called accountability. Will you have that with your one vote? NOT!! Just maybe the next statement will be, "Read my lips—no more increases in dues."

The one vote is another issue. We have that one vote in our local chapters. This, you might say, is our electoral college. The chapter delegates are typically your



Mike Bavier

most interested people in your local chapter, usually responsible and dedicated. Have they failed us in the past? My opinion is, they have done a fine job.

Are they telling us that the directors on the board are incompetent? Some of us might question the directors' thinking, but we also realize they are doing a good job. Remember, they are part-time administrators. The delegate method of voting has worked in the past, and would probably continue to work in the future.

Some of the fiber of our association — again I repeat, "Our Association" — is the camaraderie that has developed between delegates. This is what makes an association something you want to be a member of now, and hopefully in the future.

The GCSAA Golf Tournament is another good example of "association fiber." Reflect back and remember the conferences that you were most involved with were probably the ones that you had the best time at, and enjoyed the most. The hospitality rooms are also another piece of fiber.

Will all this be eliminated by the new election process? These fibers are all part of the "association fabric" that we currently enjoy.

Change is important, we all know that. Keep the two-thirds vote to amend the bylaws, and let the directors do their job selling their ideas to the membership,

instead of mandating them.

The delegates should start meeting at the conference to discuss the future of the association and make suggestions in the form of motions to the GCSAA board. This was done in the past, and should be considered again. The Past Presidents Council (that was started by Bob Williams and functioned as an advisory group) was recently dissolved by the board of directors.

The council still exists but meets merely as a social group. The delegates and the Past Presidents Council should also be included in the decision-making process.

Remember: Bill Roberts said, "Any feat of decision-making being concentrated in the hands of too few is unfounded. The membership retains final authority over direction of association affairs through the election process."

In your dreams!!!

The purpose for which the association was formed was "to provide for and enhance the recognition of the golf course superintendent as a professional." As professionals, we need to take a close look at the proposed bylaws, make a competent decision, and then proceed with caution.

In spite of some difficult problems over the years, the association has had many accomplishments. If you would like to discuss any of this, give me a call at (708) 358-7030 and let's talk. Otherwise, see you all in Anaheim.

## Letters

### ANOTHER BYLAW OPINION

**Editor's note:** The following letter has been reprinted with permission from the author. It originally appeared in *Through the Green*, published by the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association.

To the editor:

In June, I wrote to President Roberts and requested a copy of the by-law changes to be presented at Anaheim or a copy of the by-law changes put to a vote by the members in 1991. In his response I did not receive either document, but did receive a "Future Directions" pamphlet. As I review the pamphlet, I have further questions.

- On the vote of members — The changes would not only take away Delegate Vote, but also Proxy Vote. If most people vote by mail there would be no chance for discussing the issues as we now have at the Candidate Briefing.

- On classification — If changed, not only will the Board set new classifications, but will have the right to add requirements for present classifications. If the changes needed can't be communicated well enough to get two-thirds of the members to know it is a better way, then it might not be a better way. I do feel some changes in classification of membership is needed and necessary, but should come through the approval of present members.

- On the Nominating and Election Committee — Who knows what the procedure will be? Usually if a change is proposed, the new way of doing things is presented for inspection and review, not just doing away with the old.

- On the Field Staffing Program — I continue to believe a trial period is better than an all out program, especially when, according to the pamphlet, this Field Staff-

ing Program will require a \$40 to \$50 PER YEAR dues increase. No wonder the Board wants the right to set dues. Wouldn't it be nice if we superintendents could develop our budget and then tell the members of the club what their dues will be for the year?

- And about the subject of cost — Why do we have to pay \$7 for a copy of Conference Proceedings and \$20 for an Employee Manual? What has happened to SERVICE to the members.

In the June issue of *Newsline* I see the headquarters building is being expanded. Less than a year ago at the dedication, we were told the new building would be good for four to five years. It seems like a tremendous cost to the Association and what is the status of the old H.Q. building? What success would a field staff person have at getting new members at a dues figure of \$350 to \$400 per year and increasing at a \$40 to \$50 rate per year?

As I urge all GCSAA members, I say again — Ask any question, study the answer, and be ready to support your decision by talking with your Chapter Delegate. We all want a better Association for the benefit of all its members.

Palmer Maples, Jr.  
CGCS

### BYLAW CHANGES? IF IT AIN'T BROKE...

To the editor:

My thoughts on the GCSAAs' proposed bylaw changes:

#### 1. Voting Procedures

I am personally opposed to this change from the present voting delegate system to a one-person, one-vote system that would eliminate proxy and delegate voting.

While it sounds very appealing and democratic on the surface, I believe that it would

in fact put more power in the hands of fewer people. I have been a voting delegate for the last two years, and in that time the annual meetings that I have participated in have been approximately 5,000 votes cast. A one-person, one-vote system would almost certainly see that number diminish significantly.

I can understand why some people would like to see the delegate system eliminated. In the past this system has been abused by some individuals who fancied themselves power brokers or king makers. I can honestly say that I have not seen this kind of behavior in the last two years. While there may have been abuses in the past, I think that the current group of voting delegates has acted professionally and honestly.

#### 2. Dues Approval Procedures

I am undecided on this issue. It does occur to me that I cannot recall a time when a proposed dues increase was voted down. In the past, the Board of Directors has done a very good job of justifying their proposals for dues increases, and I think the membership has responded by following the Board's direction in approving increases. One area that I would be concerned about in giving the Board the ability to increase dues is that we could suddenly see our dues increased to cover the cost of "special projects."

One bone of contention that I, and apparently many members, have is that our new headquarters building, which supposedly was built to serve our associations needs well into the future has already been expanded. This expansion, to the best of my memory was kept very low key and the justification for it also escaped me. I would be concerned about these types of projects becoming a normal occurrence if we had a Board of Directors that felt free to fund

projects by increasing dues.

#### 3. Authority to Set Membership Requirements

I will not argue that there are probable changes that need to be made in both membership requirements and classification. However, I would like to see a program for these changes proposed by the Board of Directors for approval by the membership.

I am not against the idea of opening the association to other individuals, but I don't want to do it at the risk of losing our association's identity. We are the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America, not the golf course mechanic's, golf course spray technician's, or golf course equipment or chemical supplier's association of America.

#### 4. Change in Votes Required for By-Law Changes

Of all the proposed changes this is the one that I can unequivocally say that I oppose. I do not believe that it serves the best interest of the membership to change the present two-thirds requirement in voting to a simple majority. This, particularly in conjunction with the proposed changes in voting procedures, would put the future of the association in relatively few hands.

Our by-laws are, in effect, the constitution of this organization. I believe that if it has served us well for over 60 years then there is merit to the idea that a simple majority should not change that for the sake of expediency.

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