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 well be the case again this month. The membership should question any and all changes, especially changes that are announced in Golf Course Management newsletter, 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 changes? Those of you who read the late 1950s — has said to me, “Is the tail 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 changes did not occur, and probably was for the better.

Even if you trust people running the association at present, what about future boards? When 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 our budget. Must we realize this already.

The golf courses with the most purchasing power are the main support of the association. Just think of that statistic — $350 to $400 per year. We, the superintendents of these golf courses, are the ones the association needs to make the right decision and explain their futuristic ideas. Then give the delegates the opportunity to give their ideas in return. This might be the direction of accountability. Will you know 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 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 probably would 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 the membership involved with. I know that even 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.

It is important, we all know that Keep the two-thirds vote to amend the bylaws, and let the directors do their job selling 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 Ted Leggins 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 maintain 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 careful 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 (708) 358-7030 and let’s talk. Otherwise, see you all in Anaheim.

Mike Barvier, GCSSA, is president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

Mike Barvier

Letters

ANOTHER BYLAW OPINION

Editor’s note: The following letter has been reprinted with permission from the author. It originally appeared in The Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association.

To the editor:

I recently 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. I was told 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 GCSA meetings. I believe they are also another piece of fiber.

• On classification — There will be no mandatory change in classification of memberships 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 done away with the old.

• On the field staffing program — I continue to believe a trial period is better than all an out program, especially when, according to the pamphlet, this Field Staffing Program will require a $40 to $50 per year 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 does the Board want $57 for a copy of Conference Proceedings and $20 for an Employee Manual? What has happened to SERVICE to the members.

As a member of Region 1, 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 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 per year rate?

As I urge all GCSAA members, I say again — Ask any question, study the amendment, take the time to share your views with the Chapter by talking with your Chapter Delegate. We all want a better Association for the benefit of all its members.

Palm Maples, Jr.

CGCS

BYLAW CHANGES IF IT AIN’T BROKE...

My thoughts on the GCSAA’s 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 be very one-sided.

2. Dues Approval Procedures

If changed, not only will the Board set new classifications, but also will have the right to add requirements for those in the new classifications. If changes need to be communicated well enough to get two-thirds of the members to know it is a better way, then it might not be done. I believe there need to be changes in classification of memberships needed and necessary, but should come through the approval of present members.

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 lose the “soul” of 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 Board of Directors in the hands of too few.

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 it is merit to the idea that a simple majority should not change that for the sake of expediency.

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