Carlson to help draft development standards in Sarasota County

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is Development Services department to come up with golf course development standards because it was too time-consuming to handle approvals on a case-by-case basis.

"The Board of Commissioners asked for design and performance standards for golf course development because as it stands today, there is nothing that specifically addresses golf courses," said Dorothy Zysko, resources protection services manager for the county. "They felt it was more appropriate to look at courses in general and devise standards that would apply to all courses. This would also give developers an idea ahead of time of what the county expects of them.'

The standards, which are still being formulated, will integrate the best management practices developed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Florida Water Management District and will cover requirements including site acreage, buffer zones, setbacks, open space, stormwater and drainage, water use, habitat management, and construction and post construction monitoring. Requiring courses to become members of an environmental program like Audubon International is also being considered.

Zysko decided to put together an advisory committee made up of interested parties to discuss the proposed standards. In addition to Carlson, members from Audubon International, the Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the GCSAA and two developers and engineering firms attended the first meeting in February. The committee aims to have final regulations in place by the end of May.

According to Zysko, Carlson was a natural choice for the committee because of the work he has done at Venice G&CC. "We felt there was a need for a more comprehensive approach to water use and conservation and habitat preservation. Tom has done quite a bit on his course, so we asked him to participate," she said.

Carlson, who came to the club two years ago, immediately pushed the members to become Audubon certified.

"This is the perfect course for it," he said. "We have wetlands, pinelands, uplands and oak hammock. It's a perfect mix of terrain and vegetation."

Carlson started by building a new maintenance facility from the ground up, putting in a state-of-the-art mix load station, a wash water system and fuel tanks. Then he went to work restoring habitat and wetland areas on the course.

"We have fresh-water wetlands, but they are disconnected and no longer flow naturally," he said. "We had upland pastures that were moving into them, so we are working with the county to use a nearby lake to inundate them once a year to bring them back to their natural cycle."

"We also cleaned up the buffer zones and converted turf to natural areas to connect habitat and give wildlife cover," he added.

A new high-tech irrigation system helped reduce water use by 34 million gallons last year and using Polyon-coated slow-release pesticides has helped reduce chemical use.

Showcasing the course's environmental improvements has been an important step in the process, said Carlson.

"We had the county's Integrated Water Management officials over for a tour and they didn't realize that golf courses were working on mitigating environmental impacts. They had no idea. They didn't know Audubon International existed," he said.

Carlson is quick to admit that his situation at Venice G&CC allows him to spend the extra time on environmental projects.

"I am fortunate here because I can spend time on this," he said. "I have a good staff and a great assistant that runs the course and frees up my time. Although I do get a lot of work done when people leave for the day."

He also said the development standards being discussed would likely make golf course construction more expensive, but it would do away with practices that have given the golf course industry a black eye.

"Yes, it will bring up the cost of construction," said Carlson. "But it will ensure that what is built is responsible. By having requirements right off the bat, it will select out those who don't want to be responsible."
Vendors applaud GCSAA, NGCOA show merger

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marketing for Flowtronex. “We think meeting with owners, especially if they are side-by-side with the superintendent, at one big show will be a great opportunity.”

Even chemical and fertilizer companies are eager for the opportunity to be in front of both members of the buying team. “With our product line on the chemical side of the business, there is a lot of differentiation of our product versus our competitor’s product,” said Peter Farno, vice president of sales and marketing for Bayer ES. “This opens up the owners to why our product versus our competitor’s product,” said Peter Farno, vice president of sales and marketing for Bayer ES. “This opens up the owners to why they should value our products versus competitive products. It’s an audience we don’t always get in front of.”

The joint show will offer owners a larger perspective on the golf industry than they normally get. “This year was the first year we had been associated with the superintendent, at one big show will be a great opportunity.”

— Tom Levey

Link Up 2 Golf expands

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on-course experiences. The program will culminate in a four-hole scramble. This year’s new markets will be: Carolinas Section - Raleigh, N.C., Charlotte, N.C., Greensboro, N.C., Greensville, S.C., Columbia, S.C.


North Florida Section: Tampa, Sarasota, Jacksonville, Orlando, Tallahassee Northern Ohio Section: Toledo, Cleveland, Akron Southern California Section: Ventura County, Bakersfield, San Diego Southern Ohio Section: Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton Tennessee Section: Nashville Since its creation, Link Up 2 Golf has attracted more than 1,200 students.

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GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Optimism springs from NGCOA show
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This has driven out several cash sources," explained Thomas Bruff of KPMG Golf Practice.

But Golf Course News editorial advisory board member Larry Hirsh of Golf Property Analysts made the point that course owners need to look to their local banks for financing. He feels that the older and more established golf operations could be in a significantly better position, as they may not be carrying as heavy a debt load as the newer golf developments.

"I am not ready to conclude that the 'mom and pop' operation will be the significant player in the future but I do think that there is a trend developing that way as management groups struggle to find ways to increase profitability," Hirsh told an economics seminar.

Hirsh noted that there is a different buyer coming into the golf market now, one who has a passion for golf and can accept lower profits to become involved in the game. Many believe the passion for the game is one that needs to be brought back to the forefront of golf.

But the most important issue to be addressed was the slump in rounds played nationwide and how to reverse that trend. The detailed research carried out by Golf 20/20 put things into perspective. Golf is a $62 billion industry that has at its core 10 million best customers (those who play at least 25 rounds or spend $1,000 annually).

The survey found another 12 million potential best customers playing golf, and an ESPN.com poll found 45 million people who say they are golfers. So the challenge to the golf industry is how to get this large pool of golfers back to the golf course.

The answers seem to hinge on two points. First, course owners were urged to improve maintenance task with all the speed and capability," Hirsh told an economics seminar. But the most important issue to be addressed was the slump in rounds played nationwide and how to reverse that trend. The detailed research carried out by Golf 20/20 put things into perspective. Golf is a $62 billion industry that has at its core 10 million best customers (those who play at least 25 rounds or spend $1,000 annually).

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The answers seem to hinge on two points. First, course owners were urged to improve maintenance and pop' operation will be the significant change in rounds played. Second, is the challenge of bringing new golfers to the game.

An ambitious project, Link Up 2 Golf, created by the PGA of America, will be expanded this summer (see story on page 3), and course owners are being advised how they can help make golf a better experience for the new golfer.

During the problem solvers sessions many explained some of their ideas for encouraging junior golfers through value passes and encouraging afternoon family days to fill afternoon tee times. Some even presented ideas of creating three-hole and six-hole experiences for beginning golfers to get them comfortable in course situations. All these ideas aim to address concerns that golf takes too much time.

Conference attendees were also very positive about the recent announcement that the NGCOA and the GCSAA conferences will merge in 2005. This obvious linking of trade shows will join superintendents with the controllers of the checkbook, which should improve efficiency for both parties.

Tom O'Malley of Saddleback Golf Course in Firestone, Colo., summed up the feeling of many about the combining of the two shows. "I think it is a no-brainer and I really can't see any downside to it," he said. "I don't think that it will take away from our autonomy and I know that it will make our purchasing decisions much easier."

Periodicals postage paid at Yarmouth, Maine, and additional mailing offices. Golf Course News (ISSN 1054-0064) is published monthly by United Publications, Inc., 100 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997, Yarmouth, ME 04096. Phone number is 207-846-0600. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited material or prices quoted in the newspaper. Contributors are responsible for proper release of proprietary classified information. Copyright © 2003 by United Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction, in whole and in part, without the written permission from the publisher is expressly prohibited. Reprints may be obtained from PARS International at 212-221-9595 or by email at jchipnet@pariint.com. Back issues, when available, cost $17 each within the past 12 months, $22 each prior to the past 12 months. Back issue orders must be paid in advance either by check or charged to American Express, Visa or MasterCard.

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