pipe and wire, communication cable to the halfway house, aerator wire and wire or piping to restrooms. If you want to include any of these items in your project, add them to the budget, but make sure you bid them as separate items as again, they are not part of the irrigation system and can then be easily removed from the project if there is not enough money. And you might think about adding a lightning detection/protection system either with or without horns/sirens.

You also need to include your design fees, staking fees and engineering fees. And if you want a GPS as built, then that fee, as well. You may also have a programming fee for your central depending where you are located and who is providing the programming.

Lastly you need to think about rock. If you’re lucky enough to not have any on your course, you just saved a lot of money. Odds are you have some and it has to be carefully budgeted. You need to use your experience digging on the golf course and how much exposed ledge there is. If you have rock walls on the golf course that’s a good sign that you have lots of rock because it had to come from somewhere.

Rock is the one big “if” and you can’t afford to be very far off in its budgeting. You’d rather be over than under, trust me. I recently broke my course record with $560,000 of rock costs on an 18-hole system. That’s not a number you can afford to miss in the budget.

Your budget should also have a contingency. I am not a believer in big contingencies for golf course irrigation systems. If you and your designer do your due diligence up front so you know all your costs, you won’t have to carry a large contingency and will come in on budget.

Make sure you have good numbers when you go to the membership for funds and/or approvals. This means have a design and if at all possible hard bid numbers, especially if your course has a reputation for being over budget on projects.

Members never think you will come in on budget so they automatically add in their head to whatever number you give them. They cannot argue with hard numbers, just estimated ones. 

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When I see a cart parked too close to a green, I grind my teeth. When I am regularly assaulted by the setting sun, I bite my tongue. When I am regularly assaulted by the setting sun, I grind my teeth. I don't punch a clock so I never know when my day will end. I am not a golf course superintendent, a disciplinarian, a politician, and a psychologist – sometimes all at the same time. I race the setting sun on my way home. And I wake up and do it again the next day.

I'm a golf course superintendent. I wake up before the birds. I am fueled on caffeine, sugar and adrenaline. I have the worst farmer's tan you've ever seen. I grind my teeth when I see a cart parked too close to a green. I don't punch a clock so I never know when my day will end. I bite my tongue when I am regularly assaulted about green speed. Most people think all I do is drive around all day on a cart. I know the golf course better than the most-tenured member. I am a motivator, a scientist, a counselor, a disciplinarian, a politician, and a psychologist – sometimes all at the same time. I race the setting sun on my way home. And I wake up and do it again the next day.

I'm a superintendent and I love my job. But there's a hidden cost to this business, and it's not something you learn in turf school. Make it work. Find the time, and make the time. Commit to a life outside of the golf course. Find a hobby, and one that both you and your family can all enjoy. The course will still be there tomorrow, and young kids grow like weeds. Blink and you'll find yourself scratching your head wondering where all that time went.

I'm a superintendent and I love my job. But there's a hidden cost to this business, and it's not something you learn in turf school.
SipcamAdvan is all about minimizing turfgrass stress and maximizing turfgrass health. With that focus in mind, we are devoting considerable resources to our exclusive line of ETQ™ turf fungicides. Supported by lab and field research, these science-based solutions blend proven active ingredients with ETQ technology. The result is simultaneous disease control and protection from UV light, heat and other stress factors. Your reward is improved turf color, strength, density and consistency . . . along with excellent disease control. ETQ technology. Discover the benefits.