

# News

## MUNI GOLF

### San Francisco gives it back to citizens

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Ever wonder how you could lose more than \$300,000 in the golf business in a year? You might want to take a lesson from the city of San Francisco, which after eight declining years of play on its municipal system is turning the direction of course management back to the populace.

It reads like a horror story. The fate of muni golf in the city by the bay has been poorly handled by the local administration and the Recreation and Parks Commission. Recently, the San Francisco board of supervisors relented under pressure to the formation of a citizen's golf advisory committee, to focus in on the problems of the 81-hole system that contains six different facilities.

Critics of the golf program in San Francisco point to the continuing deterioration of all courses in the system over the last decade. Diversion of allocated funds for golf course improvement by the present administration of Mayor George Moscone or his predecessors has been charged by a citizens group vitally interested in the city's recreational projects.

Frank Proctor, a 67-year-old semi-retired management consultant, drew the nod for the citizens' committee head post and he says the municipal system can be on the right track by this summer.

"We have established a finance committee, a grounds committee, a materials and equipment committee, and a personnel committee. These committees will take a look at just what is existing with the city courses. Simultaneously, we are setting up standards for each golf course. At the same time, we will be looking for outside funds — state and federal," Proctor told GOLF BUSINESS.

Proctor made it clear this was not the first time that such commit-

tees have been formed in San Francisco. Similar groups have been put together to focus on the problems of muni golf and failed. Proctor adds, though, that the whole-hearted support of the board of supervisors has not been with such committees in the past.

Cash losses over and above expenses for 1975 were considerably higher than last year. Figures for that year showed the city lost \$532,000. Biggest headache for the committee, the mayor, and the City Supervisor of Golf John Grant is getting the courses back in shape, so play will increase. "The courses have to be in the worst shape I've ever seen them," said John Fry, head professional at Harding Park Golf Course.

More than 1,600 acres make up

the system, greatly enhancing the quality of life in the San Francisco area, but care of that acreage over the years has been questionable. Civil service dictates who will eventually maintain the facilities, and most of the workmen from the Recreation and Parks Commission have little formal training in course maintenance.

When the renovation project is completed, set now for sometime in 1978. Proctor advocates a 50 cent increase in green fees. "Such an increase would add another \$450,000 to system income," Proctor noted. Fees at the San Francisco courses are now the lowest in the state, at 50 cents a round. Indications are that fees for nonresidents of San Francisco will be instituted, costing somewhat more than local taxpayers that play.

*"The courses have to be in the worst shape I've ever seen them," says Harding Park golf professional John Fry on the San Francisco municipal system. Fry and others working in the bay area may finally be in luck, as city government has relented under citizen pressure and is letting the golfers back into the picture.*





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San Francisco's system is flooded with seniors, people who by and large do not spend much money in the system's pro shops or concession stands. Concessions are offered to private concerns who contract for the service, but with decreasing play over the years, this additional amenity for the San Francisco muni golfer has fallen on hard times. Concessionaires are not bidding for facilities like they once did. Some concessionaires who have been involved with the system have not offered much in the way of consistent service either.

Civil service played havoc with the system last year, when a city employee strike idled maintenance workers for 51 days last spring. Work on the six courses ground to a halt with no preventive care of the turf at all. This episode had to have been the worst in the system's history.

With increased pressure from the citizens groups, suddenly money has been found to get the courses back into shape. Last year, Grant requested \$54,000 for materials and supplies for the six courses, which in itself was way underbudgeted. Proctor told how Mayor Moscone had recently pledged full support of the committee's efforts and more than \$280,000 would be allocated for the overall improvement of the system. Proctor insists the money was always there. That should greatly improve the trend in lost rounds: 180,000 fewer over the last eight years.

Biggest roadblock to Proctor's efforts in the past has been Lou Sabella, a recreation and parks commissioner appointed by previous mayor Alioto. Proctor charges Sabella and others in the department were indifferent to the needs of the municipal golfers in the city.

The city had even thought of raising the fees before the renovation was begun, but the 1,200-member Citizens Golf Association balked at such a move, threatening that they would picket the facilities if rates were raised without adequate improvement of the conditions.

Greatest advocate of the movement inside city government is Supervisor Quentin Kopp, who many in the community look at as a politician with a future outside the sphere of the San Francisco area.

There are indications that San Francisco may go after some solid advice on their system from a city in southern California which has shown that its courses can pay their way well. Anaheim several years ago experienced the same headaches.

Tom Liegler, director of the Anaheim entertainment department, recently reported to GOLF BUSINESS the new net profit figures for the city's courses. The H. G. "Dad" Miller Golf Course netted more than \$152,000 in 1976, a 9 percent jump over the previous season. Anaheim Hills Public Country Club, on the other hand, is undergoing a major renovation project that increased operating expenses an additional \$59,000 plus, so that facility is operating at a deficit for the time being.

What will occur in the San Francisco case is anybody's guess. Proctor and his committee might prove, though, that the power should belong to the people.

### CONFERENCES

#### Superintendents back to class at Purdue

Always searching for education, superintendents attending the 41st Midwest Regional Turfgrass Conference at Purdue University got enough new knowledge to send them into their spring seasons with renewed vigor.

More than 600 turfgrass managers were on hand in West Lafayette, Ind., for the 3-day run last month. Seminars were offered for superintendents on both sides of the business, sessions scheduled discussed the turfgrass market in regards to both private country club and daily fee operations. Owner/operators were also involved in the daily fee forums.

Top speakers filled the program coordinated by Purdue turfgrass specialist Dr. William H. Daniel and the Midwest Regional Turfgrass Foundation. Most notable of the first-day sessions was the presentation handled by superintendent Dave Harmon, Golden Horseshoe, Williamsburg, Va.

Harman, who also serves on