

To Research and Beyond

By JAMES BADE

President, Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents' Association

A year ago the MGCSA Board was working on the concept of managing a golf course in Forest Lake. While that opportunity did not work out, the foundation was being laid in case another opportunity arose. This past year the people of Mendota Heights voted "yes" to purchasing the Mendota Heights Par 3; this would keep the 15-acre site a golf course instead of becoming another housing development. Hence, another opportunity has come our way to try something bold and innovative as an association.

The City of Mendota Heights is looking for someone to manage their golf course.

Why not the MGCSA? Isn't that what we do best? The overriding reason for this possible venture is, having a place to do real live research. For example, to my knowledge, all NTEP studies are done on University campuses. What if the U of M took promising grasses and put them on a golf course where people are walking and taking divots? What if we took three of the holes and used just organic fertilizer or took three holes and used less water or did a phosphorus study by the pond? The possibilities are vast and these are just some of the reasons why we have kept this idea alive.

The revenues from this operation would be split between the city and the MGCSA.

The MGCSA, being a non-profit, would funnel the revenue right into research. With ever increasing pressures on the environment, recreational use of land is going to be on the forefront of legislative regulation. Therefore, research is going to be an indispensable tool for us. I truly believe that we, golf course superintendents, are environmental stewards. Wouldn't it be great if we had a place to take state legislators and show them the positives of golf course green space? To have a site that shows them we are on the forefront of technology and research is exciting to me.

Beyond the aspect of research, another objective or goal of this project would be to fund a turfgrass pathologist. Isn't that an exciting thought if this venture proved profitable enough? The MGCSA's own pathologist to make site visits when mutating diseases come our way.

So here is what has transpired so far. The Board formed a committee to ask philosophical questions as to why we might pursue this. We also asked ourselves the nuts and bolts questions of how this might all work. Satisfied that we could make this work, we called in the affiliates for a meeting since they are such an integral part of our association. The vendors' opinions and expertise proved invaluable last year so we, the committee, wanted to know if this is a path we should try and take or are there too many red flags that we should put this aside and not waste any time or money?

The vendor meeting was very well attended. Lots of tough questions were asked; at the same time there was a lot of support if we moved forward appropriately. So what is the next step? The Board is going to put a proposal together to present to the city. If the city thinks we are close and it is something that will work out, then we will vote on the measure as an Association. It is unrealistic to think this could happen before the beginning of the New Year, yet we hope to discuss the issue at the Annual Business Meeting.

As always, if you ever have any questions, feel free to call me (*James Bade*) or any other board member on this issue.

*Sincerely,
James Bade*