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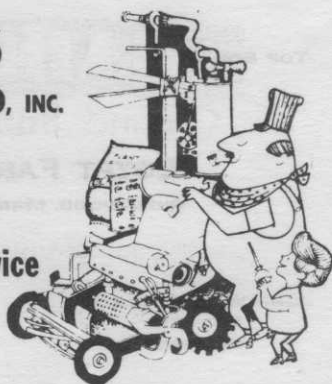
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Committee responsibilities in a country club have always been an enigma to me. We have, in general, a real paradox; the Boards of Governors hire competent and generally well-trained club managers, golf professionals, and green superintendents and then appoint committees composed of poorly-trained, thoroughly inexperienced club members who are eager to run the operation. This obvious paradox in many instances leads to undermining the trained personnel with resultant confusion, inefficiencies and utter chaos.

This reminds me of a parallel situation involving parents and their children's education. All parents, and more recently the students, believe they are born educators, and they don't mind letting the teachers know it.

Similarly, all golfers seem to be born agronomists and have no reluctance to let the superintendents and Green Committee in on all their knowledge.

Human nature being what it is, most individuals when appointed to the Green Committee wish to make a contribution. Unfortunately for most of us, this contribution must represent change. After all, the new committee member has played golf for many years, and, therefore, he's had an opportunity to play most of the different courses in his area, as well as many of the fine courses throughout the country. With these experiences he has drawn conclusions of what he personally thinks makes a great golf course, both from the architectural point of view and from the maintenance procedures he has seen. Now, with an appointment to the Green Committee he finally has an opportunity to implement all these long sought after changes, and he can hardly wait for the first Committee meeting to express all his ideas for improvements.

THE GREEN CHAIRMAN'S LAWN

Now let's stop a minute and objectively analyze our committee's preparedness for this job. While many of us have lawns at home we fertilize regularly, water irregularly, occasionally spray for weeds, and mow about once a week with surprisingly good results, we still can't consider ourselves agronomists. The chances are we have no concept of plant morphology in relationship to what the fertilizer requirements might be; we have never heard of the types of subsoils or their makeup in relationship to maintenance procedures; we probably think *Poa annua* is a rare exotic potted plant and dollarspot must have something to do with the Internal Revenue Service.

Let's face it, we are ill prepared to offer much in the way of constructive criticism to a superintendent's maintenance procedures.

What then, we may ask, should the Green Committee's functions be? How can these truly interested individuals make a significant contribution without jeopardizing the beauty and playability of the

course, the maintenance practices of a superintendent or the superintendent himself?

First of all, it becomes necessary for the Board of Directors to choose a Chairman who has enough maturity and self-discipline to recognize that he really doesn't know much about agronomy. He will therefore be happy to leave the enormously complex problems related to growing grass up to the man who has been trained for this job — the superintendent.

It's surprising how much more cooperative the superintendent will be if this philosophy is understood and conveyed to him from the start.

A GREEN CHAIRMAN'S TENURE

Of equal importance is the projected tenure of this Chairman. Nothing is more devastating to the efficient operation of the Green Committee than the common practice of changing the Chairman every year or two. The confusion that arises from this frequent changing of the guard can't help but disturb a smooth running operation. It takes at least two years for the Chairman to begin understanding the complexities and uncertainties of managing turf. Therefore, just as our man has his and the committee's responsibilities in proper perspective he retires — a sad state of affairs.

In my opinion, no one should be offered this job unless he is willing to serve at least five years and possibly longer. He also should have an indoctrination period of two to three years as a committee member before being offered the Chairmanship. In this way the superintendent will have had an opportunity to make his own observations of the possibility of a potential personality clash. The club President would do well to consult and heed the superintendent's feelings concerning the appointment of a prospective new Chairman.

The superintendent should take it upon himself to introduce his entire crew to the Green Committee, and the committee members should familiarize themselves with the crew's names and their jobs. Nothing motivates a man to do a good job more than recognition. If he has previously been complimented on his work, he is much more likely to tolerate criticism for a subsequent mistake.

ADVISORY OR SUPERVISORY ROLE?

This committee should act primarily in an advisory rather than in a supervisory capacity.

Even the best trained superintendent needs help with many problems related to turf management.

Communication is one area that should be the prime responsibility of the Green Committee. It should act as a buffer between the membership and the superintendent, thus saving him valuable time and thereby increasing the economy of the operation. In addition to planned construction projects, many unforeseen problems arise that inhibit the playability of

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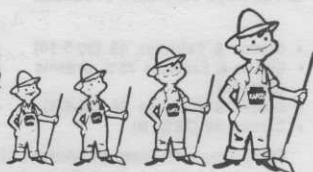
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the course. Unless the membership is appraised of these contingencies as they arise, they will be all over the superintendent, making his life miserable.

If, however, information is given to the membership, it will soften the blow. Most people when presented with the facts will accept the inconveniences, recognizing that the end results could further their enjoyment of the game.

The superintendent must initiate this flow of information to the Committee so that the word can be properly disseminated. Nothing is more embarrassing or frustrating to a Committee member than being asked why certain procedures are being carried out when he himself doesn't realize what they are or why they are being done.

He should also be reminded to advise the club manager and golf professional staff of his plans. It is very important that these three departments coordinate all their activities, preferably in writing. How ridiculous it looks to have the greens aerified the day before a special tournament is being held, simply because the superintendent wasn't notified of the event.

It is becoming increasingly more important to have a Committee member who has had experience in personnel management and labor negotiations. While all costs are constantly rising, the biggest increase in green budgets have to do with the labor force. In order to forestall union activity, country clubs had better be aware of competitive wage scales and be prepared to include fringe benefits of health and life insurance, plus pension plans for the green crew. Most superintendents are generally unfamiliar with the complications and ramifications of these plans and they welcome help from the appropriate member of the committee.

Similarly, it is logical to have an individual very familiar with machinery to aid the superintendent in making an inventory of all his mechanical equipment and prepare a long range plan for an orderly and sensible replacement of these items. Such planning obviates having to go before the Board of Directors with the ridiculous request for four new green mowers, two new tractors, and one seven-gang fairway unit, all in one year. Silly as this statement may seem, it is all too common a practice.

ELEVATE THE SUPERINTENDENT

Continuing with the philosophy of elevating the status of the superintendent in the membership's eyes, it is a good policy to have him periodically appear before the Board of Directors at their regular meetings. Doesn't it make good sense when attempting to obtain Board approval for a major capital expenditure either for equipment or renovation procedures to have the man most familiar with the ramifications of the proposals make the presentation? Valuable time too frequently is lost by the inability of the Green Committee Chairman or his appointed representative to answer pertinent questions relating to this expenditure. However, if the

green superintendent makes the presentation to the Board, all questions can be promptly and correctly answered. Further, by appearing before the Board his status will be enhanced. He will then be, in fact, the boss of the operation.

Built into the framework of the organization and primarily to protect the entire club membership from either an overzealous Green Committee or an equally ambitious superintendent, I would like to recommend that every club take advantage of some of the other services that are available.

In summary, it has become rather obvious that in the years that I have served as a Green Committee Chairman my basic ideas have changed as to the true role of the Green Committee. In any efficiently-run, successful business, appropriately trained individuals are given the responsibilities of the many facets of the operation. Why can't our golf courses be managed with a similar philosophy?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As past President of Orchard Lake Country Club, Orchard Lake, Michigan (1962) and Green Committee Chairman for 12 years, Dr. Fred M. Adams is well versed in country club administration. A pediatrician by vocation, golf has become his avocation. He has been a member of the USGA Green Section Committee for the past eight years and Green Committee Chairman of the Golf Association of Michigan for the past six years.

BOARD MEETING NOTES

A Mid-Atlantic GCSA meeting of the Board of Directors was held on Monday, April 28 at Beltsville, Md. The items discussed were as follows:

Doug Hawes, instructor at the University of Maryland, submitted a letter explaining his latest experiment on Penncross bent as related to the growth habit of the grass with varying temperature and fertility levels. In his letter, he asked if it would be possible for our Association to contribute some financial assistance to help with this project. His feelings coincided with those of the board that this experiment would be of great aid to golf course superintendents not only in this area but in all areas where cool season grasses are prevalent. The board felt that since there had been no scholarship contribution made to the University this year that \$100 would be donated for this project under our Research and Scholarship Fund. Copies of this project, its purposes, set-ups and parallel evaluations are available from any board member for examination.

A letter was read from Mr. George Quigly, the Director of the Institute of Applied Agriculture at the University, asking permission from the Association to add to the Turf Mgmt. Curriculum booklet a phrase reading "A summer placement and management report is a pre-requisite for Turf III. This is arranged in co-operation with the Mid-Atlantic GCSA."

The board authorized Mr. Quigly to go ahead

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