



MAGCS Master Plan Revisited

A strategic plan is vital to the long term health of any association. This president's message is the first in a two part series dedicated to the topic of strategic planning.

In December of 2004 the MAGCS board of directors met with Hanes Combest of the GCSAA to work towards developing a strategic plan for the association. The November issue of *On Course* contained a summary of the plan and reported on progress that has been made toward achieving these goals. Long range planning is not a static exercise. It changes and evolves as time passes. Ongoing discussion leads to new ideas and visions. With this in mind, the board met in December of 2006 to revisit the strategic plan. This time the meeting was moderated by our Executive Director, Luke Cella. The objectives were:

- Review the 2004 mission statement
- Review and expand upon 2004 visions
- Review and expand upon goals set in 2004
- Evaluate outstanding goals. Prioritize them and link them to action plans with specific timelines for implementation.

When reviewing the goals set in 2004, it was encouraging to see how many have already been realized.

A review of the mission statement found it still to be an accurate description of the association's purpose. As such no modifications were recommended. For the most part, the visions set forth in 2004 remained the same. The exception being that in 2004 our vision included offering educational and networking opportunities to other turf related organizations (such as sports turf, lawn care, parks and recreation). After discussion it was decided that with the availability of education through the ITF, ITPC and Mid-Am Trade show that this vision would no longer be included as part of the MAGCS strategic plan.

When reviewing the goals set in 2004, it was encouraging to see how many have already been realized. However, two goals were re-evaluated. The first was establishment of an endowment fund for MAGCS scholarships. This has been reviewed by the scholarship committee for two consecutive years. The committee has concluded that current funds are better spent trying to increase the value and term of the existing scholarships, as opposed to putting monies into an endowment fund. A scholarship endowment fund is an admirable goal, but short of a large charitable donation from an outside source it would represent a large undertaking for the association.

The second goal that was revisited had to do with efforts to increase membership size. In 2004 membership was at 685. Over the last two years the valiant work of the membership committee has paid off and the membership currently stands at 812. Currently there is excellent facility penetration in the Chicagoland area. Fewer than 50 courses are not members of the MAGCS. These courses have been contacted and made aware of the benefits that MAGCS has to offer. With this in mind the 2004 goal was modified to place

(continued on page 4)

an emphasis on "taking care" of the current membership by expanding resources dedicated towards enhancing member benefits.

The last topics of discussion were how to achieve goals that have not been realized and setting new goals. The conversation focused on nine primary areas: governance, technology, education, *On Course*, finance, public relations, scholarship, and member benefits.

Governance

The MAGCS board will continue to evolve into a more strategic board. Responsibility for much of the operational activities of the association has been turned over to the executive director. This allows the board to focus more energy on long-range planning. Strategic planning has been incorporated into each board meeting. A year long agenda has been established with specific topics scheduled for discussion at each meeting. A calendar has been compiled that outlines the business activities of the association by month. This will be updated annually to ensure a smooth transition from board to board. Committees already operate based on formal SOPs. The next step is to develop job descriptions for board positions so that officers and directors can better understand and fulfill their responsibilities. Other goals related to governance include succession planning and the development of a program to increase member involvement at all levels of the association.

With completion of the build-out at the Midwest Golf House, the MAGCS business office has transitioned into a larger office and is now located on the second floor. Staff and facility resources have also been increased. This provides the association with the infrastructure needed to strengthen its governance and fulfill some of the goals discussed later in this article. Make sure to ask Luke for the grand tour next time you are in the area.

Technology and the Digital World

We will integrate the use of technology into the management of the association. Technology will be used to streamline procedures and increase pro-

ductivity. It will also be used to increase benefits available to the membership. Use of the website as a means of communicating with the membership will increase. The underlying goal will be to keep the format simple and unobtrusive. The website was first launched in the late 1990s. By 2000 members could elect to receive meeting notifications via e-mail as opposed to U.S. mail. Starting in 2004 new members received all their meeting notifications and association correspondence via e-mail. This transition to paperless communication is set to be completed by 2008, at which time all members will receive meeting notices and correspondences via e-mail. This final transition will start in 2007 as MAGCS employment referral announcements will be available only through the web site. When a new position is posted members will receive an e-mail with a link directing them to the web site. This will save time and money spent on mailings. It will also give members quicker access to employment opportunities.

The web will be used as a means to survey the membership. Gone is the day of long paper surveys. The web gives us the ability to instantly survey members on relevant topics and quickly tabulate responses. This technology has already been implemented. Prior to the GCSAA annual election the MAGCS surveyed all candidates on a variety of key topics using an electronic "Zoomerang" survey. The survey was put together with input from our chapter delegate. The results of the survey were used as a tool to evaluate the candidates and were made available on-line to the membership.

The current message board was discussed and will be evaluated in the near future. We recognize that the

use of the message board has diminished greatly in recent years, but since the cost to maintain it is minimal, there is no great urgency to remove it. The idea of establishing a blog as opposed to a message board is under investigation. Look for an increase in on-line activity. Make sure that you have internet access, and verify that your current e-mail address is on file with Luke.

As membership has grown so has the geographical area that is serviced by the MAGCS. In response, this year the board will conduct two meetings by teleconference. This makes participation more convenient, and minimizes the amount of time that is spent away from the golf course during critical summer months. We hope this will encourage a greater number of members to volunteer for board service. In the future this idea could be expanded to include committee meetings.

Summary

Next month's message will be the second installment on strategic planning. It will cover: education, *On Course*, finance, public relations, scholarship, employment, and member benefits. In closing, I would like to thank all the Gold Tee members for sponsoring the hospitality suite. A special thanks to Sharon Riesenbeck and the Class E Advisory Committee for all their efforts in organizing this great event. The association is truly fortunate to work with an outstanding group of local vendors. Your involvement and financial support is greatly appreciated.

Tim



Specializing in Bedding Plants
Large Variety Fall Mums

ANTON'S Greenhouses & Garden Centers

Rick & Bob Anton
ANTON'S OF KENOSHA
9140 Cooper Rd. (51st Ave.)
Kenosha, WI 53142
414/694-2666

Gary Anton
ANTON'S OF EVANSTON
1126 Pitner Avenue
Evanston, IL 60202
847/864-1134