

## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Bob Kohlstedt, Fox Bend Golf Course



# Midwest Monthly Meetings – Behind the \$cenes

*As past Arrangements Chairman and now Secretary/Treasurer I am often asked why events are so expensive. The board does pay attention to meeting price and it is a topic of discussion; however, much of the information is not conveyed to our membership.*

It is often a fine line we walk to provide the best venues for our events and to increase participation by keeping things affordable. Premier sites have larger expenses to cover and demand a premium price for use of their facility. Superintendents are competitive by nature so by trying to be better than the rest, things sometimes get out of control. Don't get me wrong, host clubs should cover the expense of a Midwest event and it is OK to bring some revenue to your course or club. That's just good business. As we all know everything we do or provide comes with a price tag.

Clubs, both public and private don't give things away like they used to. Some of us remember when clubs would comp the green fees and/or the cart fees and allow the Midwest the use of the facility and have the group pay for the food and beverages consumed. That has not happened in many, many years. With clubs vying for Monday outings that will pay top dollar, MAGCS is often left hanging. Even on the public side, how many tee times need to be blocked for an outing of one of ours? Certainly, it is the better part of the day and in the eyes of a manager, revenue.

It is tough enough for us to find a member that is willing to have a 100 or so of his peers play his or her property for a day, let alone asking them to cut us a deal, or give us a break on price. MAGCS has been very fortunate to have members that are willing to host an event and share their facility with us. I always learn something by seeing someone else's property. I have never attended a meeting where I didn't take something away by playing someone else's masterpiece.

The process of arranging an event starts with the MAGCS member volunteering their facility as a potential host site. The arrangements committee will then develop a list of the host sites and contact the superintendent and schedule the day of the event. Two months before the event contacts are made with the food and beverage manager as well as the pro shop to begin the process of selecting a menu and getting a preliminary per person expense. This is where it gets tricky. If the expense is too high then we look at which services can be reduced or

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eliminated, such as breakfast or locker room service. Once we have arrived at an agreeable price we may add a few extra dollars to cover the expense of prizes and pro shop certificates. This is the cost of the event that is posted as the registration expense but this does not include the "extra" expenses.

The "extra" expenses of providing a MAGCS event that are not covered by registration fees are the things that most overlook. The board knows about them, because they are discussed, but the general membership doesn't always see the true cost of putting on a meeting. Some of these expenses include:

- The host superintendent receives a complimentary foursome.
- The speaker is invited to play golf as a guest of the Midwest.
- Staff is invited to participate in the outing and cover the event for the magazine.
- Speakers are given an honoraria and reimbursed for any travel expenses they incur.
- Our host is given a gift, a plaque and the framed cover of *On Course*.
- The Midwest purchases and provides golf prizes for each meeting.
- There is sponsor signage for each event.
- The Midwest pays merchant processing fees to the credit card companies each time a card is swiped.

Some of the costs are really behind the scenes, but a meeting can't occur without: web updates and programming, meeting notices and mass emails, event formatting and communications, pairing sheets, and account reconciliation.

*(continued on next page)*

These expenses add up over the course of the year and are covered by our very generous sponsors. The Midwest sets the price each month to break even on every event. Over the past three years, your board has done an excellent job of making sure the Association is fiscally prudent and sound (since 1/1/07 thru 12/31/09 our meeting income is \$142,322.50 and our expenses have been \$144,386.86).

Recently we conducted a survey of our members about meetings, and certainly meeting price was a question of interest. Thank you to those 181 members that completed the survey. Overall, the results of the survey supported the work of the board. I am proud to say, the number one item of importance when deciding to attend a meeting is still the education offered at the event. The other items in order of importance were: travel time to meeting, venue, cost, and the day of the week. The most popular day for a meeting is now Tuesday, followed by Monday and most want the meetings to start in the mid morning. Of the 181 members responding, 82% of their employers pay for them to attend a Midwest meeting and it shows that when meetings approach the \$100 mark, members take notice.

Many members responded positively to a less formal and shorter meeting, perhaps a nine-hole event. The board and the partnership task group have noted this and are exploring opportunities to make this happen in the future.

There is a lot of work that goes into each meeting. As a board member, I am thankful every time someone steps up and offers to have us over to play. **-OC**

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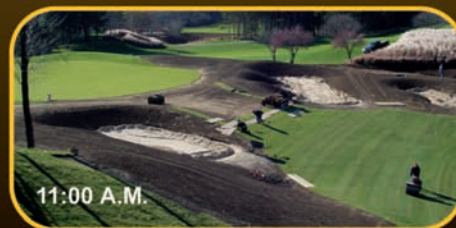
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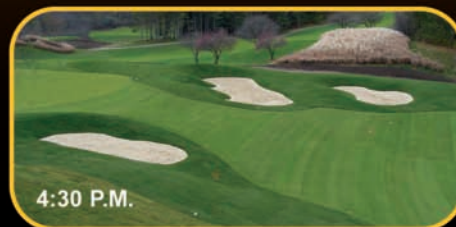
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