



# Calling all Green Committee Chairs

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PHOTOS: LUKE CELLA

On the first of March the CDGA hosted their Annual Officers and Director's Workshop at Medinah Country Club. The event is designed for a two-fold purpose. First, to help new volunteers within club governance learn about their responsibilities as they take on leadership roles and second, to share best practices among club operations.

The morning begins with a general session where larger issues are addressed and discussed with all the attendees – I admit, I've missed this part every time I've attended. My interest has always lied in the breakout groups; when all the green committee chairs, members and golf course superintendents come together to share information.

Shelly Solow, co-chair of the CDGA's Green Section has moderated the event for as long as I've attended and he is not shy about telling new and old green Chairmen alike their roles and responsibilities. Mr. Solow has been the Chairman of the Green Committee at Briarwood Country Club as long as I can remember. He takes it seriously and brings up many points throughout his introduction.

He begins by telling the group that "more golf courses have been ruined by green chairs that come in with an agenda," explaining to them, "don't try and remodel the golf course." Rows of silver maples line enough of our golf courses from groups that wanted to make things more difficult and tighten things up!

Shelly lets them know in clear and simple terms that they are not an agronomist and they shouldn't even pretend to be one, furthermore – there is no need because that is what the golf course superintendent is – clubs already have an expert. He lays out their job description in a couple of key concepts:

Hire a qualified superintendent (if there isn't one) – if there is one, get to know what they do – spend a morning

or two with them – not when you get up – when they get up – see first hand what it takes to manage a golf course – you'll have an instant appreciation for their knowledge and dedication.

Second is to create standards for the grounds and golf course.

Third make certain the budget matches the desired standards. Golf courses on TV are unrealistic expectations to place on any staff day in and day out – especially when the budget is not present to meet those expectations. This discrepancy only creates problems for you and for the superintendent.

Communicate to the membership information from your committee and from the superintendent.

Shelly goes on to explain how to interact with the rest of the membership as the Green Chair.

Let the club know the largest asset is the golf course and treat it this way.

Allow the members to see the equipment they own – have a hosted shop tour – or park equipment for all to see on a chosen day – educate them on cost and value of it. Makes it easier to replace and maintain.

Last job, most difficult and most important is to shield the superintendent from the members – especially those ones that could do the job better than your superintendent. "You know who they are, they're the ones that keep asking your superintendent the same question two, three

times on the same topic. It is your duty as Green Chair to pull these people aside and discuss the matter with them." Your superintendent can't win a fight against them – an employee against a member, it will never be in the employee favor. "You need to keep your ears open and address these issues within the club so your superintendent has the club environment to do their job. "

Shelly suggests to try and minimize the turnover on the green committee. He's been chair for many years and Briarwood and it has really helped with the continuity each year. If you choose to have a large committee, make sure you control the majority of that committee and that it is truly a cross section of the membership.

The key to a successful experience is to stay in communication with your superintendent. Talk to them a couple of times a week. You'll find that it is the most rewarding committee at the club.

Shelly shares an important message to prospective green committee chairs and members, often one we take for granted. He has a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for the profession and continues to support and share.

The rest of the morning consisted of short talks by area superintendents and professionals. This year John Miller of GCSAA spoke about the benefits of the GCSAA, Scott Witte, CGCS presented an overview of water issues, Dr. Nangle, CDGA spoke for a few minutes on the CDGA program, Dave Ward talked about prairie grasses and naturalized areas, Curtis Tyrrell, CGCS MG talked on tree management and Bob Vavrek of USGA wrapped up the session with highlights from 2013 and what the spring may bring. These talks were all designed for members of green committees – all very good with sound base information. For me, the real interest lies in the questions and interactions from the audience.

Questions after John Miller's talk:

John talked about Methyl Bromide and what to do if you are planning a regrass in the near future.

Will the cold temperatures experienced this winter reduce the populations of Emerald Ash Borer so it no longer a prob-

lem?

John did speak about the current bill (SB 3565) in Illinois that we have been watching; if ratified, it would give some municipalities within Cook County the right to govern pesticides within their individual boundaries.

Cantigny Golf Club uses effluent water from the city of Wheaton and Scott explained they just entered into a 99-year agreement with the city to use the water for irrigation. A question that arose centered on the contract and if there were water quality standards that had to be met before the city released the water to Cantigny?

There was interest in how much the new pump that was installed at Cantigny cost. Another question centered on if there are outside companies that can complete an irrigation audit and create a master plan. Are there any courses that use reverse osmosis (RO) in the area to treat their irrigation water?



*Dave Ward addresses the audience at the Directors and Officers Workshop on the native plantings he manages at Coyote Run Golf Course.*

Dave Ward's talk spurred the question about how much do native areas actually cost to

maintain versus turf cover? Superintendents were curious how Dave plants native plants into his fescue areas (he collects seed from his native areas and then just spreads the seed

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out each spring).

Curtis Tyrrell's talk was a pared down version he gave at our Turf Clinic a few years ago about tree removal at Medinah CC. His talk opened a discussion on fans and the importance of air movement.

Ed Nangle gave a very abbreviated talk, explaining that "Poa is like an Irishman, it likes it wet and cloudy." He did get asked about the bacterial wilt issue but a topic that was quickly put on the back burner when talk turned to our winter.

Bob Vavrek followed up with what we may see this spring. It certainly raised many eyebrows from the audience, especially the golf course superintendents in the group. Bob stated, "the benefits of removing snow or ice from greens or even covering them each year – it is tough to tell if these things will help to prevent injury this year." Bob explained that we are experiencing a record setting winter, as we all know, and it stands to reason that there will be some turf damage out there. It is not unlike experiencing extreme heat when we have record setting summers, it is just on the opposite end. One key Bob explained to get up and running is the irrigation system. If damage does occur and courses plot their road to recovery using seed, it is imperative the seed does not dry out – as we all know. Getting your irrigation system charged up and ready to go will keep recovery going throughout spring even if we get a dry afternoon or two. @



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