

A former FGCSA president discusses the proposed GCSAA bylaws changes

The letter below was received from past president Cecil Johnston. His thoughts and concerns on the proposed bylaw changes are of such great interest to our association that it was deemed appropriate to publish them in this issue. We appreciate Cecil's candid statements and encourage other members to write letters to the editor on topics they would like to share their viewpoints on.

Dear Tom:

I received the bylaw change information today and I'm wondering what you are thinking.

I guess what bothers me the most is the way our (GCSAA) media has given such a one-sided viewpoint. Before the vote has even been taken, brochures have been sent out about the changes that only express the need for change with no dissenting opinions. I saw a lot of smiling faces saying how necessary and important the changes are and that was it.

Surely there is some wisdom in the bylaws we have successfully lived with all of these years.

When it comes time for the mail-in votes next year, will all of the individuals voting get the same one-sided snow job? Is it really better for mail-in voters to choose candidates they have never even met? I wonder if this type of voting might lead to a lot of "yes" men as directors with no consideration as to how these individuals may interact with others on the board.

I know as a past voting delegate that even after meeting the candidates, hearing them speak, and watching them interact with others, it was still very difficult to decide who would be best for our organization. Will these people give a fair analysis of character and abilities of each candidate so the mail-in voters can make a wise decision or will they, in fact, control the elections even more than at present?

Ballot C. What is so bad about trusting your vote to someone who knows the people and understands the politics better than you do? If businesses and governments elected their leaders without proxy and delegate votes, many would be in much worse condition.

Ballot D. I don't like saying that a "Golf Course Superintendent" is responsible for the environmentally sound management of a golf course. I wouldn't want to be sued by someone who tries to use this document to prove my responsibility. I think even greater responsibility lies with the owners of these properties and then maybe general managers. I wouldn't want an owner someday saying that the superintendent accepted responsibility for the environment and was negligent.

Example: "After all, the superintendent said he was a GCSAA member. The GCSAA Bylaws state that the superintendent is responsible for the environmentally sound management of the golf course. I even paid his dues to be a member."

Maybe we are going a little overboard here. Is mentioning environmental responsibility really necessary?

This is a minute point but are 30 members constituting a quorum at a special meeting really a fair representation of an association of more than 11,000 members?

Ballot F (Section 3). What is wrong with members voting on what membership classes they want in their organization? If the board wants to make other membership classifications, why don't they just come out and tell us? Can't they call a meeting or wait until the annual meeting? If they say they have a plan to expand our membership base, why doesn't someone tell our members what the plan is or are they worried that most members (a two-third majority) might not really want everyone remotely in-

involved with our industry as members?

It already bothers me somewhat when I see an affiliate or associate member advertise that they are a member of the GCSAA. People on this side of the planet still think it is important when someone says they are a member of the GCSAA and I hate to see this privilege abused.

Ballot G. Let me get this straight. The board wants to set all different types of (discount?) dues rates for all different types of memberships so more people are involved. Then the GCSAA will need a larger staff to help all of these people.

Next, they want to increase our dues \$40-50 per year to pay for increased services. Some of this new staff will be assigned to visit courses where the superintendents are not members and try to encourage the superintendent and owners of courses that they should become members of the GCSAA (I hope they don't start going door-to-door on Sundays!). Maybe they can also start a consulting service like the USGA Greens Section soon after that!

Ballot H. You already know my concerns about individual voting.

Article IV, Elections. Brings a few more questions to mind. It is going to take seven to 20 days for me to receive a letter. If that letter must be returned to the association within 15 days, I guess I had better vote at the annual meeting. Does a ballot being postmarked by a certain day qualify the same as being returned to the Association by a certain day?

When you establish a 15-day window for members to mail in their votes, and no longer permit proxy or delegate voting, I wonder how many people will actually be making the decision of who will lead our Association.

One factor to consider is that 60-45 days before the annual meeting, some

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members may consider budget planning and holiday affairs more important. I am also a little skeptical about the future efficiency of the mail system preceding the holidays. Time will tell.

I assume that all mail-in votes will be kept in confidence until after the vote at the annual meeting. Now that there may or may not be an Election Committee, I suppose it is possible that members of the Board or others could hear some of the preliminary results. I prefer that the existence of an impartial Election Committee be specified in the bylaws.

Sincerely,
Cecil Johnston, CGCS
Green Valley Engineering Co
Thailand

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