

Balancing The Budget

By Wayne Kappauf, CGCS

Balancing the budget is a concept that everyone in business uses and is expected to achieve. It simply means balancing revenues against expenses or not spending more than you bring in.

The United States government can't seem to do it, the state government can't do it and neither can local government. Big corporations can't do it and many don't even try. For that matter most of the people in America can't do it in their own households.

Golf course superintendents, however, are expected to do it and most of us do. We do not do it by printing more money, taxing our members and adding surcharges on greens fees. We do it by keeping in touch with what is going on around us, by making the most of

what we have and finding better ways.

When I was single I ate steak; when we had kids we ate hamburger; when the kids grew up I went back to steak; when the stock market crashed I went back to hamburger (actually ground turkey).

We all have to adapt to our surroundings and situations. Superintendents are among the very best. We invent ways to do more with less. We create work schedules that allow us to be more productive. We research and find better products that give us the best bang for the buck.

We find the best way to stretch a pound of nitrogen and a gallon of water. If we cannot afford to boom spray, then we spot spray and educate our clients about an occasional weed or two. Instead of cutting the entire flower budget we make sure we take care of key areas and pay extra attention to detail and visual impact.

Superintendents know the game of golf and what it takes to produce

memorable rounds for their players. We know how to prioritize what comes first and what can wait until the budget crisis is over. We would love to have a perfect golf course but the word "perfect" is more suited for a "perfect sunset" or the "Miami Dolphins' perfect season" than it is for a golf course. Superintendents get that and understand what they have to do to make their operations successful.

The next few years are going to be interesting. Balancing the budget will continue to be an issue. While we should all be confident that the economy will turn around, I think we would all agree that balancing the federal budget could take years.

Superintendents will not have that luxury of time. Our employers expect that budget balanced every year. We will have to come up with even more ideas to do more with less. I think we will. I look forward to eating steak again soon but for now hamburger helper sounds pretty good. ■

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