

Munis

Continued from page 45

caddies and shoe shine boys.

No matter what they offer, munis are not just a strong recreation lure for citizens within a community, but also for businesses looking to locate or relocate into an area.

Scott Gardner, director of golf and recreation for Salt Lake City, Utah, said Winged Point, a new muni, was built to attract business to the city's west side.

"With the rapid pace of the world today, people are counting on the green space for a leisurely stroll or a competitive game, and that's what golf does," said Gardner. "We are encouraging people to know that life is more than just a job."

Architect Patrick Wyss, of Rapid City, S. D., who has designed more than 20 munis, added: "Public golf is one of those images of quality of life for a community. Businesses that are looking to locate or relocate look for quality-of-life factors."

Cornish said the presence of a muni raises surrounding property values. Munis also are beneficial to the environment. As Jones said, they enhance a park with their beauty.

"Any golf course architect worth his salt wouldn't go into an area to destroy it and set up a monument to himself," said Graves. "You'll be very conscious of the environment that's there and use it to the best of your ability."

While munis generally are seen in a positive light, architects acknowledge there are several disadvantages. Wyss said someone who owns an existing private daily fee golf course in an area might be threatened by a new municipal course and be forced to reduce green fees.

Dye said munis suffer when operated by management teams that lack golfing backgrounds.

Yet the darkest cloud hovering over the building of new munis is apprehension caused by the economic recession. Even though Jones and Dye, among others, said the recession is not affecting their development of munis, Palermo said the current rate of growth is the result of planning and implementa-

tion that took place three to four years ago. He wouldn't predict what the future holds.

"Fiscal conservatism is ruling the decisions of local governments. Golf courses are not a high priority on the recreation or community needs," Palermo said. "It's not likely municipal courses will take precedence over other municipal improvements. To some degree it's a reflection (of tough economic times)."

FINANCING

To get funds to build municipal courses, communities are practicing what Dye termed "creative financing." Salt Lake City, for example, issued revenue bonds for its

two new munis, meaning bond holders are paid through money generated by the courses.

Graves called revenue bonds "the fairest way to proceed."

In other cases, a town will enter into a lease purchase agreement, where a company will build and finance a course and the municipality will repay the builder on an annual basis from the revenues generated. Payments must be made in order for the municipality to keep the course. The debt is incurred by the leaseholder, not the municipality.

General obligation bonds, another method of funding, put the onus of paying the bond on the taxpayer, regardless of revenues generated

by the course. However, taxing the public appears the least acceptable option.

"The problem is that municipal courses have several strikes against them," said Graves. "The idea is repugnant to some voters. In a typical community, only 10 to 20 percent of a population would play golf. Since the majority of a community doesn't play golf, they'll vote it down. The point is to let the revenues of the golf course pay for it.

"Municipalities provide good public facilities and charge rates that will cover the ongoing high quality of operation and maintenance," said Wyss. "Public golfers are willing to pay the costs of keeping the facility open to the pub-

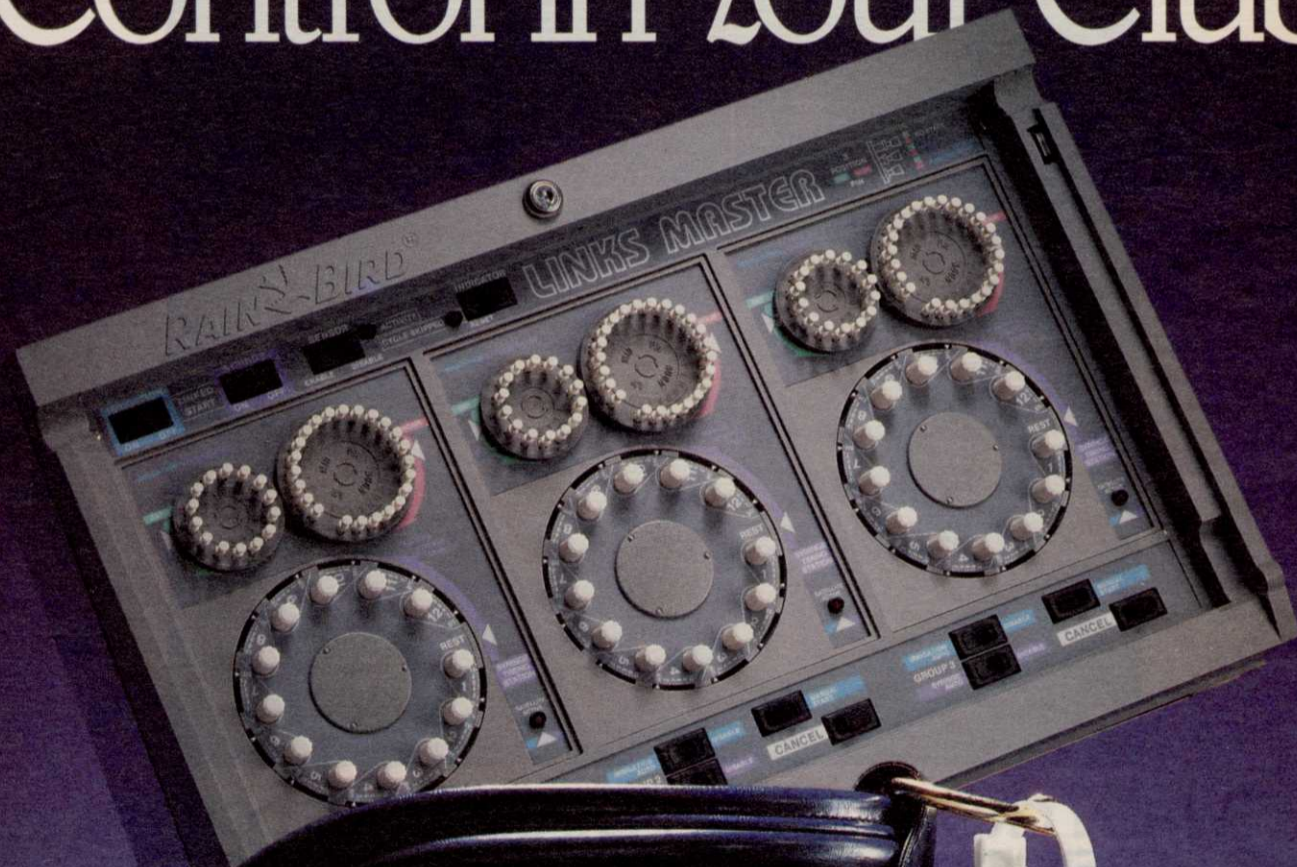
lic. The taxpayer is not inclined to subsidize the cost of the courses. The trend is toward golfer-supported courses."

As golf continues to grow, the supply of golfers will have to meet the demands players are creating. While Wyss admits there may be a slowdown in the next 12 months in the development of municipal courses, he speaks glowingly of the long-range future.

"The demand over the next 10 years will be tremendous," he said. "There's a need out there and we need to keep up with it by providing good public facilities."

Bob Seligman is a free-lance writer based in Pomona, N.Y.

Introducing a New Way to Get More Control in Your Club



Links Master™

Flexible. Powerful. And Affordable.

Control. Links Master offers golf course superintendents more control than any master satellite control system has ever provided. In fact, it features a range of capabilities previously reserved exclusively for central control users. Linking. Stacking. Separate syringe timing. Field backup. Automatic programming. All at an affordable price.

Plus, because Links Master uses the same two-wire path required to operate the MAXI® computer control system, once installed it easily can be upgraded to a MAXI system without any disruption to the course. As a further convenience, both standard and MAXI-ready field satellites are available.

Links Master — the right master satellite control system for the '90s.



RAIN BIRD
Serving Golf's Real Professionals

Rain Bird Sales, Inc. Golf Division
145 North Grand Avenue Glendora, CA 91740 USA

Profits push city to build second 9

SALEM, Mass. — Buoyed by a \$150,000 profit last year at Olde Salem Greens municipal golf course, Mayor Neil J. Harrington is pushing for a second nine holes and a clubhouse.

The new nine would cost \$1.1 million, the clubhouse \$400,000.

The golf course made \$70,000 more in 1990 than in 1989.

"Golf courses are environmentally sound and don't disturb the natural habitat," declared Harrington, who made the course expansion an issue in his successful mayoral campaign.

He plans to meet with environmental groups who have opposed course expansion into the city's last remaining tract of open land, and has met with course architect Philip A. Wogan of Topsfield, Mass.