

## Money slows NC Golf Council efforts

By MARK LESLIE

Unable to generate either members or cash, the infant North Carolina Golf Council has informed its board of directors that it is "slowing down our activity for the time being."

"We are still incorporated," Executive Director Rick McKeel said. "We are still communicating with the board. But we are refocusing our effort, trying to get those groups, properties, courses and people in the industry who are not currently in any type of organization to get organized."

"Once we feel like we have gotten that message out ... we'll look at creative or new ways of funding our activities, or act as a coalition of those groups."

Crucial to the NCGC's success from the beginning, McKeel said, has been a study of golf's impact on the state economy. But, with a price tag of \$60,000 to \$100,000 and only 30 members to call on for funds, the study was never commissioned.

McKeel and NCGC organizers feel the study is critical because it would define the industry and where it is going. "Then we'll be in a position to take off like a rocket," he said.

Two of the board members — architects Tom Fazio and Dan Maples — feel the council is necessary for the golf industry in North Carolina.

"Golfing people need to get united to let legislators know what clout and influence the golf industry has," Fazio said. "Every state should have a group like this. Not one national organization would do because each state has different laws."

Maples said government is "a sleeping giant" that can unexpectedly unload a crippling piece of legislation affecting the golf industry. The golf council could be on guard against such an action.

But until people in the industry mobilize, the council will sit immobile.

McKeel, who works for Olson Management Group which handles 30 associations, said: "Sometimes it just takes the right combination of people getting upset about something. A new association a lot of times is like a little bottle of nitroglycerin. If it mixes with the air properly, the thing could take off out of nowhere."

He added: "We're primed and ready to go at a moment's notice. We just need the right impetus."

Fazio, who lives in Hendersonville, N.C., said the NCGC's mission statement is to "represent the North Carolina golf industry in the various levels of state government and other appropriate entities in order to promote and ensure the survival, growth, affordability and profitability of the golf industry here."

It is modeled after the Florida Golf Council, which is also experiencing funding problems and has drawn fewer members than organizers had hoped.

Fazio believes the NCGC could inform an uninformed public about golf course maintenance and development.

"People are probably not aware of the degree of sophistication the maintenance has reached in use and application of chemicals and fertilizers. It has advanced tremendously," he said. "Also, we are

designing courses differently today than 10 years ago, before we had such an understanding of some of the environmental concerns."

McKeel said local golf groups around the state — like superintendents, the turfgrass council and club managers — are doing well.

"The golf council was an attempt to bring the varied interests together under one voice so that we could speak through numbers," he said.

## Alton Baker plan dismissed

EUGENE, Ore. — A planned public golf course in Alton Baker Park won't be built.

Instead, Lane County commissioners have established a task force to consider other uses for the east end of the park.

Board Chairwoman Ellie Dumdi, who once had favored seeking a private developer to build and operate an 18-

hole course on the largely undeveloped 220 acres, has changed her mind.

Groups opposing the project had succeeded in placing an initiative measure on the Nov. 3 ballot that would have blocked the project, termed incompatible with the initiative's requirement that only "passive recreational activities" occur in the park.

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