

Superintendents should strive to raise visibility of profession

The Golf Course Superintendents Association of America has been the topic of many animated discussions over the last several months, and for good reason.



Andrew Overbeck, editor

Any time an association as large as the GCSAA proposes a substantial dues increase there is bound to be chatter amongst its members. But when you add a possible relocation, PDI implementation and a public relations flap over excessive (or necessary) board of director travel, conversations among GCSAA members get downright heated.

We've tackled the above issues in the pages of *Golf Course News* this month. In the Point/Counterpoint below, the merits of changing the GCSAA's articles of incorporation in order to ease relocation are debated. Our page one Q&A with GCSAA CEO Stephen F. Mona, however, puts this debate and other issues in proper perspective.

The GCSAA has a long list of initiatives, but what exactly is it trying to accomplish?

According to Mona, it all boils down to "providing the best possible future for our members." And

a key part of that is raising the level of recognition, visibility and credibility of the golf course superintendent. By doing so, Mona hopes that superintendents will have more job security, more lucrative jobs and increased career opportunities.

These are worthy, and needed, goals.

I went to Boone, N.C., this fall to talk to the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents about these goals, and what superintendents could do to achieve them.

At the cocktail reception the night before my talk, the bartender, who assured me he played golf, asked me in a hushed voice, "What exactly do these supervisors do anyway?"

His question may be ignorant, but it makes sense. Superintendents are supposed to do their jobs as quietly as possible. They have to get on the course early, get the work done and get the heck out of there and let the golfers play. Superintendents, then, must take another avenue to "advertise" their importance.

I've seen plenty of examples this year of superintendents in-

creasing their profile and it all boils down to communication.

Superintendents in Pennsylvania and New Jersey worked with their local DEPs to negotiate fair water restrictions. Superintendents in the Carolinas wrote letters to local newspapers explain-

ing why they could irrigate while homeowners had to let their lawns die. And superintendents handling numerous renovations wrote regular articles in club newsletters keeping members aware of project timelines.

By communicating proactively, these superintendents increased their effectiveness, profile and importance. So don't just rely on the GCSAA to do it for you. Get out there and practice the art of self-promotion.



Of course I'm one to talk, my

father-in-law doesn't even know what I do for a living. According to this year's family Christmas letter, I am the editor of "International Golf Club News" and get to "play at prestigious golf clubs around the world." I wish.

POINT

Changing articles subverts system of checks and balances

By STEVEN COOK, CGCS

The GCSAA is considering a proposal to change the association's articles of incorporation, removing the name of Lawrence, Kan., as its principal office and place of business. This change would allow the board of directors the freedom to relocate the association – without membership approval. While this proposal has some merit, many GCSAA members feel the amendment would put absolute power to relocate in the hands of too few people.

This is not an issue of trust. Neither is it an issue of the merits of relocation, but rather it is an issue of empowerment. Unrestricted empowerment – without a system of checks and balances – limits the GCSAA's effectiveness and draws unfair criticism to the leadership.

Those who support amending the articles have the best interests of the association at heart. They are considering numerous facts and judiciously exploring options. They worry that without the latitude this amendment will bring, the board will be unable to quickly respond to market conditions. They also worry that consensus among GCSAA members will be difficult to achieve in a timely manner and thus prevent relocation if an attractive offer for our current building is tendered.

These worries are not unfounded, but they can be addressed and still allow the membership a voice in the process. Market conditions will always fluctuate and there will continue to be offers for our current headquarters. The GCSAA board of directors should communicate to the membership the merits of relocation, justify where and why we are relocating and provide the associated cost-



Steven Cook

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COUNTERPOINT

A sound relocation process will lead to a sound decision

By TIMOTHY T. O'NEILL, CGCS

Be it their profession, the environment, their facility or their national membership association, golf course superintendents on the whole are passionate individuals. Therefore, I was not surprised emotions have been high since it was announced that GCSAA was considering a change in the location of its headquarters. Rather than being disappointed by the comments on the subject, I was encouraged that the sentiments verified members are passionate about their association and what it represents.

I was appointed by GCSAA president Michael Wallace, CGCS, to coordinate the communication of the process that will ultimately answer the relocation question. Having this responsibility has afforded me the opportunity to hear from a variety of constituents with a variety of comments, questions and concerns on the issue.

Rather than focus on whether GCSAA should be located in Lawrence, Kan., Orlando, Jacksonville, Atlanta, Houston or any other city, I would like to direct my comments to the process we are undertaking. The opinion of the GCSAA board of directors is a sound study will determine the best location for the association's headquarters. This process will analyze the financial implications, the ability to service the membership and the opportunity to advance the association in the eyes of key constituents – most importantly the members.

Why was Lawrence selected in the first place? At the time, Lawrence was a logical location – the association was offered a



Timothy T. O'Neill

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Publisher

Jonathan Whitney

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Andrew Overbeck

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Derek Rice

Contributing Writers

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Editorial Office

Golf Course News

106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

aoverbeck@golfcoursenews.com

drice@golfcoursenews.com

Advertising Offices

Golf Course News

106 Lafayette St., P.O. Box 997

Yarmouth, ME 04096

207-846-0600; Fax: 207-846-0657

Midwest, Western U.S. Sales:

Jonathan Whitney

207-846-0600, ext. 263

jwhitney@golfcoursenews.com

Eastern U.S. Sales:

Michael Pajak

207-846-0600, ext. 223

mpajak@golfcoursenews.com

Marketplace and Classifieds

Anne Washburn

207-846-0600, ext. 230

awashburn@golfcoursenews.com

Subscription Information

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Langhorne, PA 19047

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