

There's No Open Space at Public Course Meeting

Turnout of owners and operators far exceeds expectations; Taxes, many operations, lights discussed by six speakers

Public course operators who, more often than not, plead for the preservation of open space in making their appeals to zoning boards for permits to construct golf courses, were the victims of overcrowding when they held a February seminar in Philadelphia in conjunction with the GCSA's annual turf show.

Harry Eckhoff, the National Golf Foundation's eastern traveller, who arranged and conducted the public course seminar, anticipated that about 150 public and semi-private operators would attend the session, but more than 250 showed up. So, there was nothing to do but double-seat the delegates, stand them in the aisles or cram them in the doorways since the Sheraton's Constitution Room, scene of the meeting, isn't expandable.

Four municipal or county representatives were on the program along with Peter McEvoy, Jr., co-owner of the country's first lighted standard course, which is located in Sewell, N. J., and Max Elbin, the professional at Burning Tree Club in Washington, D. C. William B. McKinney, revenue authority director for Silver Spring, Md., Charles E. Pound, recreation commissioner for Westchester County, N.Y., Richard Sincerbeau, Flint, Mich. municipal golf supervisor and Arthur E. Loeben, director of the Montgomery county planning commission (Norristown, Pa.), represented various city and county boards on the panel.

Not Enough Clout

McKinney pointed out that while golfers are quite numerous, they carry little weight in getting golf course tax referendums passed because they make up no

more than five per cent of the electorate in any part of the U.S. In addition, many voters, even in this supposedly enlightened era, frown upon courses as being frills that are enjoyed only by a small minority and thus refuse to support bond issues for their construction.

McKinney further explained that bond underwriting houses rate course bonds at the bottom of the list, far behind those for schools and other municipal facilities, and won't touch them unless they are backed by general obligation taxes. Course revenue bonds, which carry much higher interest rates than general obligation issues, often aren't saleable because, once again, the bond houses question whether a public course can produce enough revenue to meet expense and pay the annual principal and interest installment.

About the only recourse left for golfers



Elbin



Eckhoff



Sincerbeau

who want a public course, the Silver Spring financial expert said, is to look for revenue sources that aren't dependent upon the community's taxing authority.

Statistics cited by Charles E. Pound of Westchester County's recreation commission, however, partly refute the dour outlook that is taken by the bond houses. Between 1924 and 1961, according to

Pound's figures, \$9,300,000 in revenue was produced by County courses against expenditures of \$7,000,000. The difference has been applied to debt retirement of the courses, with the result that only a balance of \$600,000 remains.

The New York commissioner added that in recent years the county's five courses have been 96 per cent self sufficient from a revenue-expense standpoint and in 1962, they netted \$60,000 after expenses. That represented what would amount to a four per cent profit. Furthermore, a survey of 96 U.S. municipal courses, made two years ago by Westchester officials, showed that between 50 and 60 per cent of the public courses support themselves at no expense to taxpayers.

Pound, who elicited more questions from the audience than any of the other speakers, said that Westchester shop concessions are leased to PGA professionals on a five-year basis. They are charged two cents per round for these and whatever margin accrues after the assessment is paid, is kept by the pros. Restaurant concessions also are handled on a contract basis. To handle the 300 weekday and 400 to 500 weekend rounds at each of the five county courses, Pound said that absolutely no deviations are permitted in reservation taking and assignment. To keep traffic moving smoothly at all courses, foursomes are sent out every seven and one-half minutes.

Constant Renovation

"A municipal golf department," said Dick Sincerbeau of Flint, Mich., "can never stand pat on either the design of its courses or their maintenance. Improvements in both that come either through the suggestions of patrons or from surveys conducted by department officials and employees are made nearly every year in Flint."

In the last two or three years, Flint courses have undergone extensive renovations. Designs of numerous tees and greens have been improved by large scale sloping. Pads around tees and greens and car paths have been added. The material used in making these installations, a hot oil aggregate with a high bituminous concentrate, Sincerbeau noted, has held up exceptionally well. Footbridges at all the city's courses have been revamped with lumber from blighted elms that have been cut down, used for decking. (An article on the operation of Flint municipal

The Longest Day

Charles E. Pound's remark that 687 rounds of golf were played at a Westchester County course in one day in 1930 was accepted with a good deal of skepticism by persons who attended the public course seminar. Those in the audience who took the time to do some computing said it would be impossible to get that many players over a course in 16, 17 or 18 hours of daylight, even allowing for foursomes to start at six-minute intervals.

Pound explained that the information he had was somewhat sketchy since it is 34 years old. He did know that the alleged record was set on a mid-June day, but whether 9-hole rounds were included in the total, wasn't stated. Somebody in the audience suggested that perhaps the Westchester County statistician of those days was including miniature rounds in his figures. This person was reminded that miniature golf wasn't in existence in 1930. (Or was it?)

Everyone in the audience breathed a little easier when Pound said that Westchester's later record of 488 rounds at one course in one day in 1959 was a bona fide one. For a difference of 199 rounds, nobody was going to argue.

courses appears elsewhere in this issue).

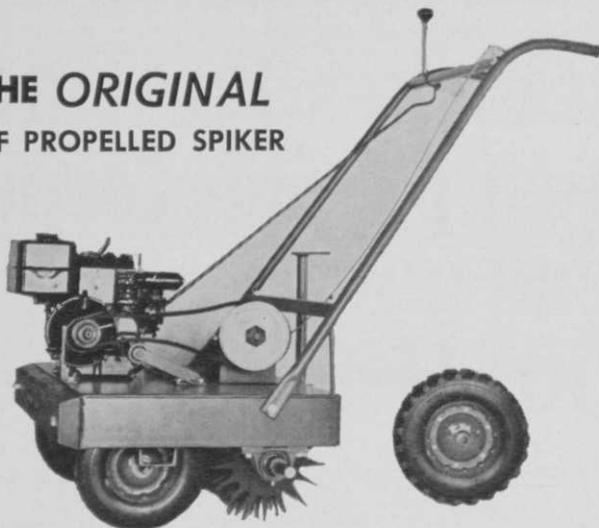
Contract with Pro

In discussing what the professional and the owner or operator of a semi-private or public course should agree on in a contract between the two parties, Max Elbin, the Burning Tree professional, said that both sides should be in a concession-making mood when the document is drawn up, and then be willing to live up 100 per cent to the responsibilities they have undertaken. A sectional PGA representative, said Elbin, often is called in to assist or advise on contracts and he makes every effort to protect the interest of both parties.

"Experience has taught us," said Elbin, "that an agreement that is tipped too much in the favor of one party isn't a good contract. It invariably leads to bickering between the persons involved and in the long run costs both sides money. A PGA pro expects to make a living wage and to share in the customary fringe bene-

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Public Course Meeting

(Continued from page 66)

fits. In return, he is guided by certain standards set by the professional organization and feels responsible for living up to them. The employer's interests are fully covered by these standards."

Elbin cautioned the course owners against hiring drifters and said that every PGA section in the country is equipped to advise an employer if the person he plans to hire is reliable or not.

\$63,000 in Lights

Pete McEvoy, Jr., who with his father, opened the 9-hole lighted Tall Pines course in Sewell, N.J. last August, said that it cost \$63,000 to install the 125 1,000 watt mercury floods that illuminate the course. Tall Pines, the country's first standard layout to be completely lighted, had a little more than two months of play after the floods were put in and McEvoy described the results as "very encouraging."

"We had heavy patronage during the week," McEvoy said, "although play dropped off on the weekends. In our

final week of operation, we had more than 50 per cent more rounds at night than we did the first week after the lights were installed. It was a case of one fellow telling another about Tall Pines and giving a boost to our patronage as we went along."

McEvoy said that to amortize the cost of installing the lights and to cover the expense of operating them (\$4 an hour), he and his father figure that they will have to have 21 18-hole rounds a night 150 nights a year over the next 10 years. Last fall Tall Pines hit a high of 92 rounds in one night. The lights operate on three circuits so that they can be turned on or off by sections.

Don't Push Them Out

The final speaker of the public course seminar, Arthur F. Loeben, an urban planner, emphasized that golf courses are needed in densely populated areas and shouldn't be sacrificed to apartment or residential developments as they so often are. "The few courses that are left along with the small parks within the city," Loeben observed, "are about the only pieces of greenery that are to be seen amid the jungle of concrete and brick-

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work. They are just as important in urban development as housing projects, and we shouldn't be leapfrogging them out beyond the city limits as we expand our metropolitan areas."

Loeben said the Montgomery county commission is convinced that golf courses are self supporting and in a number of cases provide revenue for other municipal recreational undertakings. "The bond underwriters apparently haven't looked very far into the potential of the public golf courses or they wouldn't take the stand they do," he remarked. Loeben added that in some states the construction of public courses is being hamstrung because cities and counties can't go ahead with these projects without state approval. Enabling legislation is needed in such instances to give municipal and county officials the necessary home rule authority to expand recreational facilities.

Francis A. Heitkamper, Portland (Ore.) GC, is the new president of the Pacific Northwest GA, succeeding Lloyd B. Avery of Spokane. William T. Stockton, Sand Point CC, Seattle, is secretary-treasurer. Ernest A. Jonson continues as executive secretary.

Car Manufacturers' Meeting

(Continued from page 82)

cluded in the report of the meeting mailed to all the country's car manufacturers and suppliers.

Following Wright's review and comments and those of the officers and directors, the meeting was opened for a general discussion. Among points developed in the discussion were: No member will have an advantage over another; there should be both car manufacturing and supplier members; and the budget should be determined by program requirements of the organization. Statistics for marketing guidance also were among the subjects discussed. It was agreed that the Association should have sufficient funds at the beginning to properly perform all functions agreed upon.

Schedule Chicago Meetings

A luncheon meeting of golf car manufacturers will be held in Chicago at the Tavern Club at noon on Apr. 2 to complete organization details. Manufacturers not presently members of AGCMA are invited to attend.

At 6 p.m. on the same date, the manu-