

# NGF report

## NGF PLEDGES CONTINUING SUPPORT TO MUNY COURSE DEVELOPMENT

ARLINGTON, HTS., ILL.—In kicking off this year's winter conference agenda in the Windy City suburb, Don Rossi, executive director of the National Golf Foundation, placed special emphasis on daily fee and municipal golf facility development, although the meeting warmed up with general overviews of the state of the industry presented by some distinguished guest speakers.

The conference, which ran from January 2 to 6 at the Arlington Park Towers Hotel, was highlighted by some encouraging remarks from guest speaker, Mark Cox, executive director of the Professional Golfers' Assn., who pledged to NGF his association's continuing support and cooperation. Cox said that in the past many efforts of both organizations had somewhat overlapped, particularly in the areas of teaching and junior programs. The Professional Golfers' Assn., said Cox, will work toward better communications with the National Golf Foundation in the coming years to avoid duplicating their respective energies where it is unnecessary.

Other guest speakers included Dr. James R. Watson, vice president, The Toro Company, who discussed the effect of several problems, such as the energy crisis and inflation, on the golf industry; Ken Emerson, executive director, National Club Assn., who informed attendees of the status of current greenbelt and other pending golf industry-related legislation; and Glen J. Hartung of the Walden Investment Corp. and treasurer, Rolling Green CC, who spoke on budgeting and financial reporting for clubs.

In stating the "Industry Viewpoint," as Dr. Watson titled his presentation, he professed confidence that all involved with the turfgrass industry will continue to produce highly satisfactory recreational and aesthetic turf facilities. He pointed to the energy crisis as one of the major factors contributing to uncertainty among golf industry people and outlined some problems that can be expected in the months ahead. Some of these were: 1) delays in delivery of certain products—both whole goods and parts; 2) shortages of fertilizer materials and an increase in their cost

along with most other materials and supplies; 3) shortages and delays in delivery of petro-chemical products, particularly polypropylene derivatives; 4) tighter budgets and higher prices in general, and 5) increased usage of all turf facilities resulting from a shorter work week.

Leading off on the heart of the agenda (municipal course development), NGF consultant, Harry C. Eckhoff presented a digest of Federal aid programs for public golf/recreation complexes. "The tremendous growth in public golf courses reflected by their whopping 64 per cent increase since 1961," said Eckhoff, "brings clearly into focus the trend in golf course development in recent years that golf no longer belongs solely to the few. It is everyman's game." He stated that population growth, urbanization, more leisure time and increased personal income and mobility were among the myriad factors responsible for the increased pressure on public recreation facilities including golf courses. A good solution to the demand problem, said Eckhoff, is more municipal courses owned and operated by cities, counties and states or regional park-recreational districts.

Eckhoff stressed the need for "municipal courses" because land costs and operating expenses, including rising taxes, make it increasingly difficult for member-owned clubs and private courses to survive financially in many communities. He added that more financial resources are available to municipalities. Among them are the sale of general obligation or revenue bonds, Federal grants, private development with leaseback and outright public or private donations.

Eckhoff listed such possibilities of Federal assistance to municipalities as: 1) Legacy of Parks: Surplus Property programs; 2) Bureau of Outdoor Recreation Grants/Land and Water Conservation Fund; 3) Commercial Public-Service Facilities on National Forests; 4) Farmers Home Administration Loan Programs; 5) Community Facilities Loan Program; 6) Revenue Sharing, and 7) Small Business Administration Loans.

In his discussion of the role of the golf car at private, daily fee and municipal golf courses, Larry Smith, NGF facility development consultant, stated that golf car rentals are presently

the fastest growing source of revenue for private clubs and many daily fee facilities. "At municipal courses," said Smith, "park directors and executives are finding out there is a real market for them, and more and more are adding golf cars to their courses or increasing the sizes of their present fleets. The extra income, when channeled to a golf professional in the form of either a full or partial concession," added Smith, "often means the difference between being able to afford a professional or doing without one."

NGF facility development consultant Mike Sheridan presented some of the problems responsible for the acute membership problems being experienced by private country clubs, ranging from inflation and its residual effect to taxation and general member apathy regarding the radically changing socio-economic environment in which clubs are operating.

The other facility development staff members delivered highly informative, though in some cases, specialized presentations on virtually every facet of golf course development with Fred Stewart discussing the delicately balanced relationship between the architect, contractor and the club; Sheridan D. Much telling of increasing weekday play on public courses; Jerry Claussen holding forth on the role of the golf course in real estate development; Buddie Johnson studying the sanitary land fill as a golf course site; and George Kerr rounding out current information on irrigation systems utilized in golf facilities.

Lorraine Abbott, NGF Director of Educational Services, spoke on the variety of National Golf Foundation educational service programs aiding 700 clinics and golf workshops for 74,000 participants, conducted in virtually every state of the country. The increasing importance of effective teaching methodology in developing future golfers, says Abbott, has caused golf instructors to seek more information on techniques in teaching and has sparked them to improve their personal skills.

NGF Public Relations Director, Ben Chlevin, outlined current National Golf Foundation publicity and promotional programs to keep the industry informed of strides being made in the perpetuation of golf and challenges yet to be met. □