

Imarvel at our country's success in spite of the fact that it's basically run by committee. From tiny homeowners' associations to monolithic corporations, committees misdirect and foul up most decisions. But nothing compares to that most nefarious of bodies, the green committee.

Having sat on a green committee for two years, my experience told me that the particular freak show I was a part of had to be an anomaly. You couldn't make up the things that were said or suggested to our superintendents.

The sort of stupidity exemplified by green committees not only wreaks havoc on the game and ruins the lives of innocent superintendents, it also adds millions of wasted dollars to golf course maintenance and construction budgets.

So in the spirit of Dr. Laura, the guru of stupid things we do, here are the Ten Stupid Things Green Committees Do to Mess Up Their Courses:

1. Think they are on earth to beautify everything.

When you get appointed to a green committee, the golf course becomes your exterior design project.

2. Think they are arborists. The most destructive work by green committees is often in the dreaded memorial tree program. They believe it's their duty to commemorate every member who dies, as if this was an unusual achievement.

3. Think they have a solution to every problem.

I sat in on a recent meeting where one member suggested that the superintendent look into importing nematodes to solve a maintenance building termite problem. Next thing you know, those little nematodes will ignore the termites and be out on the back nine greens having a one-course meal. And we all know who will get the blame for that disaster!

4. Think they are architects. One of my favorites is the lack of regard that committee members have for the architectural heritage of their courses. "With all due respect Mr. Chairman, just because our course is the only untouched C.B. Tillinghast course in New Jersey, that doesn't mean we can't improve it."

5. Think they should tell architects how to do a master plan. Why bother to hire architects if you tell them exactly what you want and what you think is required of a master plan?

Green Committees: 'Stupid Is As Stupid Does'

BY GEOFF SHACKELFORD



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6. Think every superintendent conspires to make their lives miserable. One of my favorite green committee meeting moments came when a lovely woman named Francis angrily accused our superintendent of only carrying out maintenance work during ladies playing hours.

7. Making policy to fit their needs. "Judge, that bunker on 14 is really unfair," Chairman Bob said. "I rolled a drive 60 yards and it swallowed up my ball. It's just not right."

"Well Bob," Judge replied, "if that trap comes out, the one I don't like on 15 goes, too."

8. They try to outdo what neighboring or famous courses are doing. Most of the excessive ideas come the third week of April, right after that tournament in Georgia.

9. Think they are superintendents. My favorite is the committee person who will interrupt staff members while they are working on an important project.

10. Get appointed a green committee member and become an expert on everything.

I'm amazed at committee members who feign knowledge about all subjects: bunker placement, mowing heights, chemical applications and even termites (and nematodes!).

As Alister MacKenzie lamented in 1934: "It's strange that a committee consisting of doctors, lawyers, architects, and engineers — who no doubt recognize the importance of mental training and experience in their own professions — attach so little importance to it in golf."

Despite MacKenzie's eloquence, it was Forrest Gump who summed up the green committee best: "Stupid is as stupid does."

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