

Dorothy closed her eyes, clicked her heels and said, "There's no place like home." She was talking about Kansas. According to a new *Golfdom* survey, many superintendents are saying "there's no place like home" about Kansas in regard to the GCSAA's headquarters. They don't want the association to leave Lawrence, Kan., where it has been stationed for nearly 30 years.

Golfdom's survey, conducted online in January and February, reveals that 43 percent of 425 superintendents are "against" GCSAA moving to another city. Thirty-four percent said they are "for" a move, 12 percent said they "don't care" if the association moves, and 11 percent said "maybe" the GCSAA should move.

Ever since the GCSAA revealed it was conducting a feasibility study to see if it made sense to move to a more "golf-centric" location, superintendents have weighed in with their opinions. Proponents like the idea of the GCSAA skipping Lawrence for a place with palm trees and perennial sunny skies. Opponents say the GCSAA should never move because Lawrence is a charming town in a central location. Plus, they say a move would be costly and disruptive.

I wonder if the GCSAA's leaders anticipated the attention the issue would receive when they went public about the study late last year. Then again, they had to realize that change — or the potential for it, as in this case — gets people worked up.

The GCSAA made it clear from the beginning that it was only exploring its options. But you can bet your commemorative 75th anniversary GCSAA coffee cup that the association was quite serious about the matter. The GCSAA hired a Chicago firm and paid it handsomely to conduct the study to see if the association would be better off doing business in a city like Jacksonville, Fla., or Phoenix. Hopefully, the GCSAA still isn't paying the firm to collect more information about relocating. That's because there doesn't seem like there's anything left to study.

The GCSAA's board of directors made it clear the relocation issue was going nowhere when it canceled a member vote on a proposed amendment to give the board authority to determine where the headquarters should be located. The board canceled the vote because it said the

There's No Place Like Lawrence

BY LARRY AYLWARD



I'M NOT GOING
OUT ON A LIMB
BY SAYING THAT
THE GCSAA ISN'T
GOING ANYWHERE
FOR THE NEXT
SEVERAL YEARS

membership and the organization needed to step back and take a "pause." Skeptics contend the vote was cancelled because the GCSAA knew the amendment would never pass.

Jon Maddern, certified superintendent at Elk Ridge GC in Atlanta, Mich., and new GCSAA president, admits the association heard "loud and clear" from members that they wanted to have a say in the matter. In the end, whenever that is, they will. GCSAA CEO Steve Mona says members will decide on the matter during a vote. He emphasized the vote will happen during an annual meeting, not a special meeting. So the earliest the vote could happen is next February in San Diego, site of the 2004 convention.

Mona has said the GCSAA was criticized for going public about a possible relocation during a time of financial strife within and outside the association. The complaint has sturdy legs. Why would the GCSAA even think about moving when it was losing money and the overall economy was in the dumps?

"We felt like we needed to go public when we did," Mona says, noting the economy was in better shape when the GCSAA began the feasibility study more than 18 months ago. "It's a little bit like having kids. If you wait until you're ready to have them, you'll never have them."

Mona said no city has offered the GCSAA a deal it can't refuse. At this point, after more than 1.5 years of research, one has to wonder if any city will make such an offer anytime soon.

I'm not going out on a limb by saying that the GCSAA isn't going anywhere for the next several years. The association's members won't let it happen — not next year or the year after.

Who cares that Florida and Phoenix are warmer and have more golfers than Lawrence, Kan.? Hey, there's no place like home.

Golfdom Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.