



A Simple Proposal: GCSAA Should Cut Dues in Half

By Monroe S. Miller

There is a lot of discussion about the GCSAA these days, and much of it is controversial and negative.

The last couple of years have not exactly been the GCSAA's best. Top management has resigned, with little explanation other than foggy references to "the Anderson Study".

A new building is built with trumped up publicity that undoubtedly cost a small fortune. That was okay. Members figured they needed the room. But an addition was then, very quietly, built. Today, that addition, for all practical purposes, sits empty.

The former headquarters building also sits empty and unsold. Great way for our dues money to be spent—a pair of underutilized properties.

The Singapore episode was a fiasco—thousands can chime "I told you so." How many thousands of dollars were wasted on that doomed affair? How many first class air fares (and for whom) did we buy for no good reason?

If you want reason to cry, check out our record in the area of lawsuits. We lose all, or almost all, of them. Probably because the association is guilty of something.

Some of us, a while back, got wind of an incredibly dumb idea that was apparently given serious consideration. You may want to sit down just in case you haven't heard this one; it is a beauty. Somebody actually thought it would be a wise move to create a "University of GCSAA"!

I don't know how true it is, but I heard it too often from too many places for it not to have some truth to it.

I kid you not. We have a system of land grant universities in America that does a superb job of educating young people interested in a career as a golf course superintendent. Students learn from tenured faculty, from members of the National Academy of Science, even once in a while from a Nobel prize winner. Among these land grant

colleges are the world's best research institutions.

But some loose canon thought GCSAA should compete with the land grant institutions with its own university! Bets are the creator of anything so devoid of merit didn't earn a four year degree, therefore having no clue as to what such a plan entailed.

There is more, but why go on?

And, as always, there is a heavy shroud of secrecy in Lawrence. You'd almost think the officers and directors we elect take some sort of vow of silence about the business they conduct—our business, by the way—behind closed doors.

Somebody ought to do a study someday that looks into what happens to the seemingly normal and competent people we elect to our board. Some become arrogant, secretive, and devoid of any candor. They lose common sense. Somehow, the notion of service to members gets lost. It is at times unbelievable.

A colleague and I were visiting about this ship we call GCSAA and how adrift it is. Both of us are long time members, well into our third decade of membership in GCSAA. We wear the member pin with pride, and appreciate the good scholarship program, the health initiatives and several other things the association does well.

But we are both dissatisfied of late. My friend said to me, "I have the answer that will straighten affairs in a hurry.

"Those people in Lawrence simply have too much of our hard earned money to play with, and they are unaccountable for how they spend it. If we cut our dues in half, they will get into a fraction of the trouble."

I think he has something there. Often, the GCSAA seems like just another form of government with an insatiable lust for taxes (dues, in this case). When they get the extra funds, the return to us diminishes to ridiculous projects.

The officers and directors would do well to drop the oddball activities—lots of members will volunteer to help create that list—of the recent past and present, and return to the basics: provide GCSAA members the things they need and will benefit from.

Among those are education, a good quality conference and show, appropriate lobbying, and turfgrass research support.

The staff in Lawrence should be allowed to return to doing what they've done well over the years—provide good quality, pertinent and prompt member services.

The GCSAA wasn't created to "make money", and if that ever is the rational for a program, drop the program.

They could do all of the things we need for half the money we now pay in dues. Halving the dues might force some soul searching and tough decisions. It probably will necessitate a leaner and smaller staff. And it will definitely eliminate serious consideration of some of the weird ideas that have leaked out.

Yet, if you read Mark Kienert's Delegate Report from the last issue of *THE GRASS ROOTS*, you know that one of the current officers thinks the CHAPTERS should pay dues!

Hah! What's the old saying—"it has the chance of a snowball in hell." At least here in Wisconsin and other chapters that are guided by fairness and common sense.

A proposal for more dues is evidence of what I am saying. The current leadership must think that money is the answer to everything that ails our profession.

What GCSAA needs is more creative leadership and a clearer focus on purpose. They do not need more money.

And they need to hear that message from every member who believes it. ♣