

GCSAA Chapter Delegates Meeting

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The 15th annual Chapter Delegates meeting was held October 13th-15th in Kansas City. The meeting is designed as a means for GCSAA to communicate to each of the 104 affiliated chapters regarding current programs, initiatives and policies of importance to its members. In return, it provides an opportunity for chapters to express viewpoints; ideas and concerns they may have that are relevant to the profession, the industry and the game to GCSAA. Delegates were also able to meet with GCSAA board candidates to better understand their platforms and opinions on a variety of topics.

The financial conversations centered on the establishment of long-term dues pricing strategy. At the request of the Delegates, the board and staff presented a proposal that would tie the establishment of membership dues to the Consumer Price Index. Historically, the association has enacted a dues increase in larger increments on average every five to seven years. The result has been a loss of members immediately following these increases. There was widespread agreement at the meeting that smaller dues increases would be more easily absorbed at the facility level and less likely to result in membership declines. If enacted, the GCSAA Board of Directors would vote on a dues increase every 2 years. A dues increase would not be automatic and would not be allowed to exceed the Consumer Price Index total for the previous 2-year period.

Tied to the discussion of revenues was an examination of GCSAA membership numbers. From a high of more than 22,000 in 2001, the association's membership has declined approximately 10% to just over 20,000 today. There was agreement that the situation has been created in large part by a weak golf economy and the implementation of member standards. Staff presented a seven-phased membership growth and recruitment campaign enacted late last year. Delegates supported the efforts, realizing such an initiative will take time to yield results and must be long-term in nature. They were especially supportive of the GCSAA field staff pilot program and encouraged strong consideration for expanding it in the near future.

The liveliest debate was on GCSAA's philosophy regarding the positioning of the association and its membership classes. Delegates shared a variety of opinions, but ultimately agreed that for membership standards to have value in the marketplace, then they must be promoted externally. There was unanimous support that greater resources be dedicated to marketing the association, with a focus on Class A as being the preferred membership class. It was noted, however, that promoting Class A does not mean that marketing other membership classes should not be part of the program.

Noting that chapters will be an integral component in the success of revenue generation, membership growth and retention, and marketing efforts, discussion also included an examination of chapter effectiveness. Specifically, the delegates were charged with providing the board and staff direction as to how the association could best invest resources to enhance chapter operations. The top three items were: a.) membership recruitment and retention; b.) chapter executive development and support; c.) chapter meeting effectiveness (attendance, timing, satisfaction, value, etc.). It was the consensus that many of the issues were interrelated and thus could be addressed if programs and services are developed and coordinated appropriately. Once again, support for expanding the field staff pilot program was communicated, and suggested as a means to implement effectiveness programs.

Delegates also expressed interest in providing support to GCSAA's advocacy efforts. They were briefed on the process the association follows for commenting to the EPA on product re-registration. The process includes an element for member input to GCSAA actions, plus the opportunity for chapters and members to become directly engaged as well.

Once again, I came away from this meeting feeling very proud of our national association and appreciative for all that they do to enhance the Superintendent profession. They have a firm grasp on the Superintendent profession, the game itself, the business side of golf and how they all relate to the Superintendents and their career.