

Homework overcomes objections

Grounds director prepared himself with research before making his big pitch

BY JEFFREY MCGINNIS

Paul Monahan, director of buildings and grounds for the Warren Township High School District (#121), Gurnee, IL, has lots of grounds and landscaping tasks to do every day. Like most public schools, however, he has to work with a limited budget.

He felt the most efficient way to accomplish all the maintenance chores he and his grounds crew faced was to replace an older, although still serviceable, tractor with a newer piece of equipment capable of performing many different maintenance tasks.

The problem: tight budget, old equipment

His big challenge was convincing the school board to spend money for the new type of tractor board members weren't familiar with, a Carraro SuperTrac unit.

In building his case, Monahan took a logical, business-like approach in making a presentation to the school board. He did a detailed comparison of various tractor models and their capabilities prior to submitting his request. He compared different features, then matched that up against the school district's grounds job requirements.

Because he researched his department's



Monahan can now plow snow and drop salt all in one pass with this new unit.

needs and several different models of tractors, he was able to present a convincing case for the particular model of tractor he desired. The board voted to buy the more expensive compact tractor model, mostly because of Monahan's claim that he could derive more use out of it, including the reversibility of driver controls.

The solution: buy a multi-task machine

"The old tractor we had wasn't powerful enough for us, and it was too big to use on our campus sidewalks for winter snow blowing and salt spreading," Monahan says. "For snow blowing, we would actually have to hook up the attachments and drive in reverse, craning our heads around to see where we were going. It wasn't easy."

Monahan's new reversible model eliminates that discomfort. Now, he puts the snow blower in front of the machine and the salt

spreader behind it, completing two functions in one pass. The tractor also adds options, including heating, air conditioning and a stereo for his workers who have to sit for long periods in the tractor. "My guys love it. Winter or summer, they basically fight each other for the chance to drive the tractor," he says.

But what moved the school board to approve the purchase, he believes, is the many different uses Monahan squeezes out of this one machine, with some functions being front-attached and others rear-attached, thanks to the unit's reversibility feature.

He uses the unit for snow removal, salt/sand spreading, mowing, athletic field overseeding, infield grooming, turf fertilization, aeration, rolling, moving dirt, and weed control by adding a 200-gal. spray attachment with a boom arm.

"It's excellent on sidewalks, like when you're doing the snow blowing work. When you turn a 90-degree corner, the articulating part of the tractor allows the rear attachments to track exactly to the path of the front tires. I don't hear any more complaints about scraping fire hydrants or parked cars, which is a relief." **LM**

— Jeffrey McGinnis is a partner with Gaul Advertising Inc., Wayne, PA.

Vitals

Institution name: Warren Township High School

No. schools in district: Two

No. grounds employees: 17

No. of acres maintained: 39 acres

Equipment used: Carraro Supertrac Tractor

Grounds maintenance budget: \$100,000