NEWSLETTER

May, 1980

Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

Hurts to Pay the Price

Has the cost of dues at your club increased hand in hand with the country's spiraling rate of inflation? If not, in all probability members are now biting the bullet and coming away with severe tooth problems.

Some clubs find themselves in critical financial straits for the sins of the recent past. Those could be clubs which prided themselves on holding the dues and assessment lines in the wake of obvious hikes in the cost to maintain life at the course and dining room at an affluent level. Now, it is coming back to haunt them.

In this case, foresight has been abandoned and hindsight has taken over in the form of huge drains on a club's working capital. Isolated instances of this lack of planning and hard-nosed reaction to reality are popping up all over the place, resulting in emergency measures that figure to sock members in the long run.

Without a regulated program of gradual increases in the dues structure of the country club, those emergency measures have surfaced in the form of expensive loans whose interest compounds the eternal money problem.

Reports have been running a breakneck-speed course at clubs who find themselves strapped for working funds. At today's going rate, for example, a loan for $100,000 could cost a club anywhere from fifteen to twenty thousand dollars in annual interest. Who must pay the price? The members, of course.

Some of the stories emanating from certain clubs are unbelievable. One, in particular, has not had a dues increase in the last five years. During that period, budgets have increased along with services demanded by its members. And, all of a sudden, the club finds itself in a huge financial hole. The immediate remedy is a loan...but at interest rates which have to result in a crash hike in dues and probably an accompanying assessment.

The sad part of this situation stems from the fact that for the past several country club seasons members have been conditioned to paying a set dues fee. Now, with money needed to keep the country club living pace at an expected level, those members must dig down through the bottom of their pocket. Some can afford the jolt, most cannot.

Under the strain of this financial drain on members, the aforementioned club -- plus many like it in the same fix -- must re-evaluate their position to meet the challenge of survival.

The question arises: "are they willing to pay the price?"

Outlandish financial holes can't be filled with hope for a break in the rate of inflation or some unexpected windfall from one or two philanthropic members. They must be met with a realistic approach to operational programs with either a firm tightening of the belt or a concession on the part of club directors to the effect that members be made aware they have to foot the bills.

Tightening the belt could be touchy. The country club can't offer filet mignon at McDonald's prices. Therefore, quality of goods and services must be aligned with the price members are willing to pay for them. If it means limited dinner menus, restriction of serving hours in the dining room and general cutback in maintenance outlay on the course, the members must accept the decline.

Obviously, the personal economic structure of the individual member comes into play here. Those, who feel they can afford to continue the plush country club life, must express willingness to pay for it. Those, who can't, must either convince colleagues that this is the logical road to travel or find themselves another club in tune with their spending habits.

The answer is really simple. If country club members insist on remaining in the upper social echelon -- along with a continuation of lavish benefits that go with that station, they must assume the burden of financing it. And the club's administrators must yield to the pressures of inflation by setting up a realistic payment schedule. Otherwise, somewhere down the road they will become strapped. 1980 goods and services demand 1980 prices. No one can escape this fact...not even the affluent country club member.

Gerry Finn

President's Message

The Bylaws Committee has drafted seven (7) proposed amendments to the existing Bylaws for consideration at the Associations next meeting at Westover.

Passage of each amendment will require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of all voting members present, and we will deal with as many Bylaws as time permits.

At future meetings there will be more proposed amendments and the membership shall be so notified of these.

We know many members do not have Bylaw books and the Association has no extra copies. Hopefully, by years end we can solve this problem

Ron Kirkman
President GCSANE

NEXT MEETING

Westover C.C.
Host Supt. John Pluta
May 13, 1980

Directors meeting	9:00 a.m.
Regular meeting	10:00(Sharp)
Lunch	12:00 Noon
Golf	After Lunch

Directions

Take exit 6 from the Mass. Pike, Springfield exit. Bear right on Burnett Rd. Go to end to intersection take first left. Go 4.6 miles through Granby. Bear left on New Ludlow Road. Course 1/8 miles on right.

Economics on the Golf Course

Item: The cost of chemical products, used to enhance growth and fight disease on golf course turf, has increased some 30 percent since April 1 while coming off an already astronomical price state.

Item: The cost of repair parts for golf course maintenance equipment is 25 to 30 percent higher than a year ago.

Item: The cost of new golf course maintenance equipment parallels the cost of repair parts to substain old equipment.

Item: Many golf courses are operating refined and expensive equipment under the dependence of laborers who are paid an astonishing rate of $3.50 an hour.

Item: Vandalism is on the upswing, keeping up a trend that comes to light whenever economic conditions are unstable.

And the deadbeat goes on and on and on.

What can the golf course superintendent do about such by-products of a national economy which is giving inflation its head and headed for a point where ye old bubble bursts?

The situation causes more than a mild dilemma for the superintendent who often is asked to retain the outstanding course conditions of the past as his costs for it outdistances his operating budget. To be frank, the inflation rate is two times that which constitutes the average yearly budget increase.

Therefore, some changes and even some drastic measures must be entertained by the superintendent in order to give him a fighting chance at performing his prescribed duties. And the first thing he must seek is a realistic look at the problem from the people he has to satisfy -- the country club members.

First, the member must refrain himself from anticipating course conditions similar to those he sees on televsision where the weekly PGA Tour romps over manicured playgrounds. He doesn't belong to those clubs. And, more important, he doesn't have to pick up the tab at them. If one believes those TV courses thrive on ordinary financial outlay, he has been into too many spirits while observing them.

Once the member realizes that his superintendent is not blessed with the lofty budget of the PGA Tour circuit layouts, he has to begin to see light. That's when the superintendent can practice his economics.

Those can be put right to work on the purchase of certain products. One bright example -- fungicides. Cutback in their use would result in a healthy saving. Instead of spraying everything in sight, the super could restrict dosages to greens, fairways and maybe approaches to the putting surfaces.

Another possibility is a re-examination of the use of water. Right now, golf courses depend so much on automatic irrigation methods and constant use of them that they are becoming over-lush. Again, the member must accept this restriction in that he must live with greens that are not under the fall of consistent moisture and prone to disease.

Soft greens are an invitation to damage and subsequent outlay of remedying materials and labor by the superinendent. Sure, it looks all-pro to loft a wedge shot to the green, make it stick and dig up a divot the size of a Mexican hat in the process. But what's the matter with the chip and run shot? It gets the same result even though it doesn't look picture-perfect. So what?

Among other counter measures, which should be available to the super, are allowing greens and fairways to grow higher -- allowing roughs to grow into the perimeters of fairways -- allowing fringes to grow hairy and stepping up the golfer's obligation to assist in keeping conditions at their best. The latter would include more effort into raking traps after shots and repairing ball marks on greens.

Economics on the golf course, then, is a matter of cooperation between golfer and superintendent ....and also a necessary additive to country club maintenance. In the end, both parties will enjoy the setting more and the country club will benefit by it.

Gerry Finn

The following personnel will be voted on at the next meeting for membership.

Mark J. Klimm	Peter Ohlson
Manual Viveiros	David Comee
Ed Brearley	Henry Stelline
Charles Harukewicz	Frank Wingate

Manny Francis Sr. accepting his award from past president Charlie Tadge.

Arthur Washburn, Don Hearn, Burt Frederick and Manny Francis Sr. congratulating Mel Lucas on being elected president of GCSAA.

Seated from left to right: Don Hearn, second vice president; Ron Kirkman, president; Dave Barber, secretary. Standing: Pete Coste, treasurer, Brian Cowan, first vice president.

Any Supt. wishing to attend the LPGA tournament at Ferncroft C.C. may show their cards and be admitted at no charge.

There will be another joint meeting with the club managers June 9, 1980 at Metacomet C.C. Rhode Island.

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