



Should A Green Committee Be Green?

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IN 1961, over 50 percent of the golf clubs in the United States were private clubs. Today, this percentage is lower, and more and more golf courses are owned and operated by municipalities, individuals, and/or corporations. Some clubs are run by a general manager. This story, however, is directed to those clubs where the green chairman, the green committee and superintendent manage the golf course. Regardless of the type of club or the type of organization, there is no substitute for the most competent superintendent one can find.

Most clubs were formed to have a golf course, and they are judged by their course, its layout, and condition. If it weren't for golf, there would be little

reason to have all the other amenities associated with most modern country clubs today. The green committee is perhaps the most important committee of all, since it is charged with the greatest asset and one of the major operating expenses of the club. Green committeemen should have great pride in serving, in the challenge, and in the rewards they can bring to their fellow members.

The Green Chairman and His Committee

The green committee should be one of the most important and most active in the club. Selection of a proper chairman is most important, and considerable emphasis should be placed on the position. The committee chairman

should be a member of the Board of Directors. This has certain advantages for all concerned; i.e., it will be easier to keep the Board more informed and more authoritative in justifying the budget. The chairman should be an active golfer (not necessarily a low handicapper), with a working knowledge of the Rules of Golf. He must serve at least three to five years in this capacity in order to carry out planned policies and assure progress. He is not expected to be an agronomist, but he should help the superintendent in every possible way. Many green chairmen and committee members may be quite knowledgeable about lawn grasses, but they should guard against becoming "professional agronomists" on the committee.

(Opposite page) Authority to close the golf course during adverse weather by green chairman and/or superintendent can prevent loss of grass.

(Below) The superintendent should take the green chairman to turfgrass educational meetings.



This can be dangerous. They should be mature and flexible enough to recognize and support the superintendent as the turfgrass expert on the course. After all, that's the job they hired him for.

Green committee members should be selected by the chairman, and they should have similar or basically the same aims for the turf management effort at the club. If he does not choose them, the chairman should at least approve the committee. Members should have an appreciation of maintenance problems or be willing to learn about them. Many members will serve only if they are spared the unpleasantness of dealing with member complaints. Be sure to select committeemen who are willing to serve indefinitely. It's a bad policy to have a constant turnover of committee members. Short-term committees do not always significantly contribute to long-range goals.

The larger the committee, the greater the possibility of confusion. A small committee of three to four is usually more satisfactory. The group, including the superintendent, should have frequent meetings, and inspection tours of the course provide an opportunity for first-hand observation. Questions can be asked and problems clarified on the

spot. The green chairman should be the liaison person between the golf course superintendent, the club members, and the Board of Directors. The superintendent should report directly to the green chairman.

The green chairman should also handle complaints, communication between the committee, the superintendent, and the membership. It is best not to overlook any complaint, because it can become a major problem overnight. The club newsletter is an excellent means of keeping the membership informed and keeping complaints to a minimum. It can be a real boost for public relations. The committee should keep the Board well informed. "No surprises" is a good philosophy.

Tournaments are a pressing problem at many clubs, and the green chairman must have a voice in their scheduling. Equally essential is keeping the superintendent informed of these events. Indeed, the chairman and the superintendent should be a team. Nothing can be more important when dealing with budgets, policies, fringe benefits, salaries, and retirements. The chairman should delegate authority to the superintendent to close the course when necessary. This authority would include the control of golf carts when weather conditions justify.

The committee should have a portfolio containing maps of the entire course. Many courses have scale maps showing detailed outlines of each hole. Aerial photos are most helpful and give permanent records of all areas of the golf course.

Budgeting

Budgeting is another area where the committee can aid the golf maintenance program. The committee needs to establish certain standards, certain expectations and then provide an adequate budget to achieve those goals. Keeping a close record of each piece of equipment can be extremely helpful in determining when it would be best to replace it.

Once a budget item is presented and accepted, it shouldn't be taken away later. The budget, however, should be kept in estimated cost. Any budget has to be flexible enough to make changes for emergencies or price fluctuations.

When renovation of a golf course is undertaken, outside help should be brought in whenever it is needed. An architect, or any other person with needed expertise, will provide invaluable assistance to the green committee and the superintendent. Experts will also save money in the long run. The super-

intendent should be encouraged to voice an opinion of progress and the type of job the outside agency is doing, such as weaknesses or omissions in construction. The lowest bidder often is not the best choice to rebuild or remodel the golf course.

When planning, take advantage of an outside agency such as the USGA Green Section. It has the latest information on every subject pertaining to turfgrass management on the golf course.

Superintendent Qualifications and Duties

The best decision any green committee can make is to hire a competent superintendent. He should be knowledgeable in fields such as entomology, pathology, herbicides, nutrition, irrigation, and other specialties. The superintendent today must keep the course at a higher standard than in years past. He can keep abreast of new developments by attending turfgrass conferences, local and national, and should be a member of the superintendents' organizations.

The course itself will benefit from a well-informed and educated superintendent. Most today are attending two- to three-year turf management courses, and many of them finish with a college degree. The superintendent should be encouraged to attend meetings — national, state, and local — and the chairman should accompany him whenever it is possible. The Team — the superintendent and green committee chairman — should play golf together, and the superintendent should be encouraged to play and know the game.

As to contracts, a written one has certain advantages over an oral agreement. Club officials change frequently, and the superintendent is not always recognized for what he has accomplished under other club officials.

The fastest way a superintendent can lose control of his employees is to have other people giving them orders. Where the general manager concept is not in force, the superintendent should answer to the green chairman only. A superintendent or chairman cannot be an appeaser to past criticism. He cannot be thin-skinned and allow petty statements to upset him. The golfer thinks of today's play; the committee and superintendent have to concentrate on having better turf for the many tomorrows.

Members of the green committee should have pride in their course, because it is a reflection on the entire club operation if the course is not in good condition. The green committee should not be green.