

cation. But in order to be successful in terms of acquiring the necessary materials and equipment needed in the field, it is essential that you prepare your classroom for instruction each and every day.

Directors routinely rely on the expertise and knowledge of a multitude of areas within the field of Parks and Recreation. Specialties such as aquatic facility operations, park and open space planning, and bicycle and pedestrian trail design to name a few. Turf managers must be at that same level of expertise and knowledge so that Directors feel confident in the information they are receiving to make informed decisions that won't come back to bite them.

In the current climate of tightening municipal budgets and lack of funding for the basic core services of local government, it becomes increasingly more important that turf managers prepare a plan. The plan should include both short term and long-term needs and goals. This plan should be formulated in conjunction with the Director. Whether the Director realizes it or not, he or she is now in your classroom and this is your opportunity to demonstrate how serious you take your profession and to impress upon them, in a tactful way, your knowledge and the foresight you have put into your plan.

This is also the short period of time that you have to educate decision makers on the intricacies of your work. The biggest mistake turf managers can make in making an appeal for a new piece of equipment or large purchases of material during this meeting would be the following statements. If you want to be successful, DO NOT say:

- "Well, so and so School District or Township has one."
- "It would be nice to have."
- "The cab has air conditioning."
- "Although our current machine does the job, our guys don't like it."
- "I realize this piece of equipment is only a couple years old, but the new features on this model are more comfortable."

Although some of these statements may be true and the purchase may in fact increase productivity and produce a happier workforce, you have to understand that Directors must make very difficult budget decisions. These decisions include everything from pool and facility repairs, to programming and special community event obligations that the community expects. A well thought out and presented plan by turf managers must be part of these budgetary considerations in order to be seriously evaluated, and if done correctly, you may just get that new piece of equipment with the bells and whistles.

Here are some tips for success as I see them from the Parks and Recreation Directors perspective.

Plan ahead. If you know you have a big purchase coming up, plan for it, and don't blindsides the Director the year you need it. Look ahead and request it in next year's budget that we will need this piece of equipment. This provides the Director time to contemplate the request and make every effort to make it happen in the confines of all the other capital requests for the department.

Consistently communicate with the Director in terms of

upcoming previously agreed upon purchases of fertilizer, seed and fungicides. This "touching base" approach further increases your credibility of being on top of your job and team approach to keeping your athletic surfaces in premium condition. Show that you are in tune with the budgetary pressures; believe me, it will help you in the long run.

Schedule time to have decision makers out to the parks to provide a first hand account of why you need the things that you have requested. It is a much easier sell on site than from a picture in a catalog. Also, when you encounter turf damage from misuse during wet conditions, or from turf disease, have those individuals come out and look at the situation. Seeing it first hand provides much more of a punch than pictures in an e-mail or written description.

When I started in parks and rec 18 years ago, I knew very little about turf management and the challenges of turf managers. It has become abundantly evident that I have been in our turf manager Bob Piccolo's classroom and didn't even know it. ■

Matt Mandia is the Parks and Recreation Director for Derry Township, PA, which is home to the world famous Hershey Chocolate Company.

What do you need in a utility vehicle?

By Brad Aldridge

In selecting a utility vehicle (UV), you're looking for one machine that "does it all"; the trick is determining how your organization defines "it." By its name of course it offers convenient flexibility, but choosing a UV is about matching the machine to your facility's unique needs.

Start by making a list of primary tasks the UV will need to handle, and then consider which models can best meet those requirements. No need to get something that tows a tractor if that's never going to happen. On the flip side, remember this might be your daily workhorse and you might find that you really need some of the extras.

Distributors can help recommend the right model. In general, sports fields require turf-friendly options such as 6x4 vehicles or turf tires to minimize ground compaction. Additionally, be sure to measure any tight spaces at your facility before you look at specific models; a UV that won't fit through a tunnel can't do its job.

While you can't foresee every future need, considering how a new UV complements your current fleet is important. If another machine goes out for maintenance, can the UV fill in? If another piece of equipment is at the end of its life, could a certain type of UV take its place and do double duty?

Don't forget that that using the vehicle's versatility may require switching between various attachments for different jobs, so take that time into consideration.

Do you need the option of full-time four-wheel drive? What top

speed and cargo box capacities are right for you? Tight turning radiuses an issue? Again, having a clear understanding of the tasks you need to complete will determine your UV needs.

Your mechanics' time is always at a premium, so choose a UV that's easy to service. A machine with sealed bearings and few grease points helps reduce maintenance time. If you have multiple machines, they should share service parts. Consider whether investing in a higher-end machine today might reduce your maintenance costs and downtime in the long run. If cash flow is a concern, leasing options can mean a lower monthly payment.

When choosing a UV, plan for what you want the vehicle to do, and the utility capabilities will support similar-level tasks as they arise. ■

Brad Aldridge is a product manager for John Deere Golf.

Selecting irrigation systems

By Pat Johnston

With so many irrigation products in the market, it's important that turf managers understand what they need before they spend money on a new system. Decide what you expect from a system before you determine a total budget for the project.

The most important decision turf managers can make when considering an irrigation installation or renovation is whether or not to hire a certified irrigation designer, who can ensure that the irrigation plan meets your particular needs.

Whether or not you decide to work with an irrigation designer or directly with a distributor, here the questions you need to ask before making a decision:

- How much does the system cost? What is my return on investment?
- Who is the local distributor representative to contact for service issues?
- What kind of equipment training is included? If something goes wrong with

the system, what parts should I have on-hand for quick replacements?

- Is there a nearby site that has this system installed? Can I visit?
- How long is the system under warranty? What does the warranty cover?

When researching a control system, don't become enamored with all the bells and whistles of a system; it's important to know what features you need for your turf area and then maximize your return on investment by selecting a control system that will get the job done.

Important considerations for a control system include: ease of use; flow management and flow sensing; moisture sensing including integration with an ET-based system; and remote-access control.

Water application

When selecting rotors or sprays, turf managers should consider the following:

- Water window: What gives the best distribution in the shortest window?

• Ease of use: Is the rotor or spray easy to adjust or fix?

• Safety/durability: How will the rotor stand up to everyday wear and tear?

A typical turfgrass system needs 85 psi to operate efficiently. A booster pump is necessary to meet that optimal design requirement. While the upfront price of a booster pump package can seem considerable, the energy savings from a high-efficiency pump can represent thousands of dollars over the life of the pump.

After the irrigation system is installed, it's important to follow the manufacturer-recommended maintenance schedule. A well-designed, properly installed and maintained irrigation system is the best way to keep your turfgrass green and healthy for years to come. ■

Pat Johnston is water management sales resource consultant for Horizon Distributors, Inc.

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