

## HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR IRRIGATION CONSULTANT

An irrigation system is a major investment. Before choosing your irrigation consultant, make sure you know their qualifications and what kind of services they will provide for each phase of the project.

### Background & Experience

- Education/experience in turf industry?
- Knowledge of Agronomy? (Will the consultant understand your maintenance practices and how you will use your system?)
- Check references.
- Call *at least* the last four projects the consultant has completed. (It is too easy for a consultant to give hand-picked references; check recent projects.) Ask them questions such as the points that follow.

### Studies & Masterplans

- Educating (not selling) the Owner or Membership about issues and problems with your existing system (i.e. Why the existing system limits the superintendent's ability to perform certain maintenance practices).
- How many meetings (green committee, board, general membership) are included in the Agreement?
- How detailed are the consultant's reports? Ask to see a copy from a similar project.
- Conceptual drawings:
  - Will the consultant provide an accurate GPS base map to generate their drawings from?
  - How many conceptual drawings and estimates are they willing to generate for the club or owner?
  - How involved is the superintendent with the initial design?
  - Ensure the design is customized to your golf course and not a "cookie cutter" design from an employee who has never stepped foot onsite.
  - How accurate are their estimates compared to actual construction costs?

### Construction Drawings & Bidding

- Is the superintendent educated about the approved layout and operation of the proposed system?

- Hydraulic modeling software:
  - How much experience does the consultant have with hydraulic modeling software?
  - Has the consultant used hydraulic modeling software to ensure piping is sized sufficiently?
  - Is the consultant comfortable with any scenario the superintendent might encounter during the system's lifespan?
- How detailed are the construction drawings and specifications? (Look at a past project.)
- Is the consultant educated in all manufacturer products?
- Is the consultant truly independent, or does he or she prefer one manufacturer over another?
- What manufacturers typically bid their projects?
- How many quality irrigation contractors typically bid the consultant's projects?
- Does the owner or club get more of a system than what they paid for?

#### ✚ Observation of Construction

- How often is consultant onsite? (Should be determined by stage of construction; minimum of seven to ten days.)
- How well does the consultant work with the irrigation contractor? (Ask the contractor!)
- How well does the consultant coordinate/communicate the installation with the membership?
- Does the consultant get involved with decisions throughout the installation, or let the contractor decide?
- Who does the sprinkler staking (the consultant that designed the system, or someone else)?
- Is the superintendent involved in the staking process?

#### ✚ As-Built Documentation & Software Programming

- Is the as-built drawing generated using GPS equipment?
- Is the GPS work completed throughout the installation, or at the end of the project?

- What is the accuracy of the GPS equipment?
- What is included in the as-built documentation?
- When will the consultant provide the completed GPS as-built drawing? (Should be immediately after project completion.)
- Will the consultant program the software database?
- Will the consultant educate the superintendent on the new software and operation of the new system?
- How long will the consultant be available after the installation to provide support to the superintendent?

This may seem like a bit much when choosing an irrigation consultant, but issues will arise during every project that can and will interrupt the progress of your irrigation installation. Considering all of the factors above will help ensure you've made the right decision when hiring your irrigation consultant.