CAUTION! NOMINATING COMMITTEE AT WORK
Your Club's Future is in Their Hands
By Richard Kopplin

Have you ever thought about which committee in your club has the most power and influence? The answer may surprise you but I truly believe it is the small group of individuals whose only function is to select the slate of nominees destined to become the future leaders of the club. Usually this is an "ad-hoc" committee, appointed once a year with the singular objective of presenting appropriate candidates for election to the board.

The composition of this committee will vary widely from club to club, but I would suggest there is a logical formula in appointing members to this ad-hoc group. Begin with the chairperson, whose support in the club should run wide and deep. He or she should command the respect of the board and will be viewed as a methodical and rational decision maker. Often this individual is a past president or past committee chairperson familiar with the dynamics of the board and management team. Once selected, the Nominating Committee Chairperson should carefully select some "solid club citizens" to assist in the nominating process. Club members who have led the Men's Golf Committee or Lady's Golf Association are logical choices. Other viable candidates would include previous club presidents or committee members. Three to five members is the ideal size.

Everyone who belongs to a private club has heard the lament, "We can't find anyone who wants to run for the board." This common refrain is understandable with the seemingly endless demands on everyone's time and the notorious reputation some club boards have earned of conducting lengthy and unfocused meetings. While some members will also decline service because of what they perceive is a liability issue, appropriate Directors and Officers Liability Insurance should mitigate any concern regarding litigation.

In working with private club boards I always ask how much input is given to the nominating committee from the general manager and other department heads. Usually the response is "very little." A lamentable and unfortunate fact that should be changed. The club general manager and department heads have years of experience in working with a variety of club members. They will know which members could potentially contribute their talents and time in a productive manner, without pursuing hidden agendas. Often vocal and "single issue" candidates will persistently lobby a nominating committee and are often successful in their election to the board because objective and legitimate candidates are not surfaced by the committee. The likelihood of this happening decreases significantly if the key managers in the club are allowed to provide the committee with their views and recommendations.

Some club presidents have expressed concern about their general manager "manipulating" the political process of the club by suggesting candidates to the nominating committee. Baloney! The general manager of a private club works in a very political environment and should have every opportunity to participate in the direction of the club and that direction is determined by the quality of candidates elected to the board. Too often a club manager struggles to satisfy the demands of a board member whose single issue agenda is divisive for the entire board and can seriously jeopardize the progress of the club. The solution is to carefully review the nominating process in your club and select a chairperson and committee members whose qualifications will be above reproach. The future of your club is in their hands!