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**NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Board Conference Call**

**July 17, 2014**

*Minutes*

Attendance – David Norman, Don Ryder, Damon DeVito, Mike Hatch, Rick Rounsaville, Glen Byrnes, Bob Swiger, Joe Hills

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 pm.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the June 12, 2014 meeting were approved.

**Treasurer’s Report and Partner Program Update**

Byrnes gave the Treasurer’s report, highlighting the completion of a budget based on conservative forecasts. Swiger asked about the Auction revenue line item, and Norman explained that it is run between Thanksgiving and Christmas, thus 90% of the revenue arrives in December. DeVito asked about the total number of member clubs, and Norman indicated it was approximately 125, noting that all clubs managed by multi-course operators are deemed members.

The Treasurer’s Report was approved.

Norman reviewed the Partner program status, which is improved from 2013 and ahead of budget.

**Update from National Office**

Norman gave the report on behalf of Joe Rice. National Golf Day was held on May 15, and our chapter was represented by Bob Swiger, Keith Miller and David Norman. The group visited the offices of Senators Kaine and Warner and Congressmen Cantor and Wolfe. Work continues to progress on the strategic plan and the online tee time system. Swiger called attention to Mike Hughes’ article in the current issue of *Golf Business*.

**Around the Horn – Industry Performance and Trends**

In this segment, each board member reported on business performance thus far this year. A common theme was that the long winter caused clubs to miss budget in the spring, but there has been some recovery since then, with the majority seeing improved performance for weekend play. Most board members said that outing bookings for the fall are at or above budgeted levels. One board member remarked that for outings, the number of players per group has increased some, reversing a trend. For resorts that feature a variety of amenities for families, golf rounds have declined this summer. There is also a migration toward twilight play at a lower rate for resorts, and there is less focus on golf in marketing promotions.

**Virginia Golf Trail Meeting**

Norman reported on the meeting with Gary Schaal of the Virginia Golf Trail, also attended by Hatch and DeVito via conference call. Schaal is currently doing a test with Golf Now for 60 days in an effort to sell the brand and ancillary items (URLs, database, etc.); however, he wanted to meet with us to see if there might be alternatives, knowing the sensitivity of the third party reseller issue. He shared some financial information on the program, which is still operating at a low level though underfunded presently.

DeVito noted that VGT previously had government support (through Virginia Tourism) and momentum, but that does not exist now. Currently no trail members are paying dues – their primary goal is to salvage some value and pay off creditors. Another goal is to salvage reputation in the market. One option available to us is to either buy it outright, or seek to steer it into friendly hands. It could even be morphed into our current footprint (“Mid-Atlantic Golf Trail”). It appears the asking price is $30K, which is what Schaal is proposing to Golf Now.

Hatch noted that he is simply soliciting a buyout. We do not know what the potential might be. Swiger asked what is being sold – basically it is the brand, several URLs, the database (8,000 email addresses) and relationships with trail members.

DeVito cautioned that even if the Golf Now test fails, a danger would be giving them the idea to create various golf trails around the country. If we got involved, a goal would be to generate out-of-state business, rather than just moving area course around to different courses.

Swiger indicated that it is worthwhile to investigate the value of the brand. He suggested a meeting to discuss it. He would like to know the pros and cons. Hatch suggested we consider reaching out to Mike Hughes. Hatch also mentioned that Golf Now has a new venture, “Golf Advisor” (like Trip Advisor). He related how it is easy to post a bad review, and investigated one that was registered for one of his courses, and he was able to trace it back to a rival operator, not a consumer.

A decision was made to discuss the VGT issue with Mike Bennett, then at his recommendation, we could consider a meeting or conference call with Mike Hughes.

**Virginia Nutrient Management Planning and Maryland BMPs**

Norman reported that matching grants for Nutrient Management Planning for Virginia courses in the Chesapeake Bay watershed are available until August 30, valued in the $1,000-1,500 range. He said another round of grants for any course in VA will be available soon. He also noted that in Maryland, the Middle Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents is looking into establishment of a Best Management Practices manual.

**Annual Meeting & Awards Program**

Norman reported that Bob Swiger will host our annual meeting at Bull Run GC in Haymarket on Wednesday, September 24th. He said he would begin working on the press release soliciting nominations for the various awards.

**Webinar Program**

Norman cited the upcoming webinar at 2 pm on Wednesday, July 30th focusing on Membership Sales and Marketing.

**Old / New Business**

Norman gave a report on his meeting with Congressional candidate David Brat, who defeated Eric Cantor in the primary. He indicated that his views lean in favor of the golf industry.

The next board meeting was set for 2 pm, Thursday, August 28th.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 pm.