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Greetings all,

There is a fiery passion that truly burns in many ATOS members, and for the most part, it is wonderful. Sometimes, however, it can be a source of frustration for the leaders of ATOS. It seems the poorly informed and those who are convinced there is a conspiracy under every ATOS “rock” were stirred up by a recent Facebook posting.

The writer, without consultation from any identified sources who are officials of ATOS, raised a series of questions that started a string of commentary that is so far from truth that we feel there must be a reasonable response.

Officially, ATOS organized a corporate-style retreat, completed during a weekend in September. During this retreat, many, many ideas and issues were discussed, all aimed at reorganizing and restructuring ATOS’ management and operations systems.

The 20 attendees – 10 board members, 5 staff members, and 5 members at large (including staunch critics Richard Neidich and Russ Shaner, who were invited largely because that critical voice needed to be heard during this exercise) – collectively gave ATOS a grade following the first five of eight group evaluation exercises. That overall grade was a ‘D.’ This speaks volumes.

From these exercises came an awareness of our strengths and a solid awareness of our areas for improvement.

Officially, two committees have been formed. The Finance Committee will be studying every aspect of ATOS finances and investments, with recommendations on the path ahead. One recommendation is that ATOS will be best served by having a “full-charge bookkeeper,” the proper identifying term for a professional overseeing the corporation’s finances.

The second committee is Bylaws and Policies. A proper split of governance duties vs. operational duties might demand changes in the bylaws. This committee will conduct a complete review of current bylaws and policies, an exercise that has not happened to this degree in some 20 years.

What is the goal? The retreat facilitator and consultant, Dr. William Weary, used the term “mature non-profit organization” as the goal for which we should strive. Thus, we need to strategically move away from the current structure that served us well for many years, but is clearly outdated in this age and environment. We face new challenges, and must make the appropriate changes in order to ensure the sustainability of our great organization.

What are some of the “wish list” items coming out of the retreat?

- A stronger financial structure that better capitalizes on our assets, and can help balance the budget and provide greater assistance to our chapters
- A look at the makeup of the board, and stronger outreach to the very best in our membership who have background in marketing, business, finance, management, IT and other areas where that experience can prove helpful



- A proper split of the roles of governance and operations, and an operational model that best allows for completing tasks and getting the job done.

What is NOT on the table? Any hint that the next steps ahead will involve appointing the members of the Board of Directors.

There is NO move to restrict anyone from running for the board, with one exception. This involves the concept of “conflict of interest.” Many believe it is important, knowing there are many members who have questioned the inherent conflict of interest in having certain professionals on the board voting on matters that involve their area of interest or profession.

Are we moving the corporation out of the state of California? Not at the present time. Has this idea been discussed? Twice, prior to the retreat. ATOS is still a California non-profit corporation.

The Facebook post, and subsequent posts, hinted that a move to Delaware would allow the board to, in a phrase, “run wild.”

Utter nonsense. There were also hints that the board members are being paid, or will soon be paid. More nonsense. In fact, discussions focus on just the opposite, i.e. asking future board members to pick up more of their expenses.

The retreat was successful. The very first “baby steps” toward improved management are **BEING INVESTIGATED**. After this exercise of great self-inspection, the organization is looking to get stronger, more efficient, and absolutely do a better job for our chapters and our members.

The Mission Statement has not changed. Two committees have been formed based on suggestions coming out of the retreat. The work is ongoing, and the membership will be kept abreast of this work via regular postings on the website (the first posted last week) and in the journal (three such messages in the current issue). The communication on this important subject has begun in earnest and will continue.

Finally, if anyone has a question – simply ask. We are readily available to discuss these topics.

Thank you.

Bob Dilworth, Chairman of the Board  
ATOS

Ken Double, President/CE  
ATOS