

Did Mark Woodward resign? Or was he fired? According to a press release issued by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, Woodward “resigned” from his post as CEO of the organization. But there are a few things worth noting about that press release that make me think the GCSAA’s board of directors may have forced Woodward out.

First, the press release states that Woodward resigned to “pursue other career interests,” which suggests Woodward didn’t have another job to go to. I don’t know about you, but I’m not quitting my job when the unemployment rate is 10 percent, no matter how much severance I get.

Second, Woodward’s resignation was “effective immediately,” according to the release. Most people I know leave a few weeks of notice when they resign. Steve Mona, Woodward’s predecessor at the GCSAA, left several months of notice when he announced he was leaving.

Third, the press release contained no statements from Woodward. Wouldn’t you think Woodward would at least want to acknowledge the people he worked with for two years at the association upon resigning? From what I’ve heard, Woodward was well liked inside the walls of the GCSAA headquarters in Lawrence, Kan. (And none of the GCSAA’s employees saw his “resignation” coming, by the way.)

The press release touted the “solid” job Woodward did at the GCSAA, and how he had “guided the GCSAA through one of the nation’s most severe economic downturns in years.” Yet, by reading between the lines in the press release, it’s easy to get the impression that Woodward may have been shown the door.

I spoke with Woodward shortly after the announcement. Woodward told me he did, indeed, resign. But you know how those things go. General Stanley McChrystal, the former top commander in Afghanistan, “resigned,” too.

I also spoke with GCSAA Vice President Robert Randquist, the certified superintendent of Boca Rio Golf Club, who flew into town and visited Woodward along with GCSAA President Jim Fitzroy the day Woodward “resigned.” Randquist didn’t want to comment

On Woodward’s ‘Resignation’

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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much about the situation. Understood. I’m sure Randquist and Fitzroy want to draw as little attention to the matter as possible.

Now, let me be clear that I’m not out to get the dirt on Woodward. He has my utmost respect. While he was in a difficult gig, it seemed like he was doing his best to make it work. But something tells me that something happened to cause Woodward’s “resignation.” And the GCSAA’s board of directors needs to address this with its members and supporters.

Why? Because people are wondering what’s going on. They’re reading between the lines of the press release, too. They realize there may be more to this story than Woodward just deciding he’d had enough of his job, which is the way the press release tries to make it sound.

I received an e-mail from someone representing a major industry supplier asking what I thought of the “turmoil” within the GCSAA after the announcement was made. You know other people are using similar words to describe the situation.

Randquist says there’s “no upheaval” and “no internal struggles” within the GCSAA. He also said the association can’t control what people think about Woodward’s departure.

But I say Randquist and the GCSAA owe its members an explanation of what happened for the betterment of the association. Do they really want people to think the association is in turmoil?

It has been a tough few years for the GCSAA, mainly because of the troubled economy. Revenues have declined and attendance is down at the Golf Industry Show. The last thing the GCSAA needs is to be perceived as an organization on unstable ground with its leadership. And people will think that if the association’s leaders bury their heads in the bunker sand on this one.

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