



MINUTES BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING August 12, 2020

Members Present:

Jodi Corrow	Jason Ponciano
Chris Fry	Sam Richert
Tom Hoffman	Mark Sellin
Dave Hunstad, Chair	Jim Smith
Phil Lesnar	Ray Starr
Dan Munthe	Ben Wallace
Keith Novy	Patrick Warden
	Ward Westphal

Counsel present:

Dean E. Parker, Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP
Kevin J. Moore, Hinshaw & Culbertson, LLP

Guests (for open session):

Mike Ahern, Dorsey & Whitney LLP
Hawthorn Bjorback, Premier Locating, Inc.
Kimberly Boyd, General Manager, Minnesota, OCC
Barbara Cederberg, Chief Operations Officer, GSOC
Adam Franco, Director of Operations, OCC
Olivia Jensen, Marketing and Public Awareness Specialist, GSOC
Amy Koch, Premier Locating, Inc.
Mark Macchia, Manager, Comcast
Mike Mendiola, Engineer Principal, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety
Grania McKiernan, Manager, Minnesota State Government Affairs Department, Xcel Energy

On August 12, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. by Zoom videoconference, the Board of Directors meeting was called to order by Chair, Dave Hunstad. Roll call was taken and a quorum was determined to be present. Dean Parker was asked to act as recording secretary.

Chair's Report

Dave Hunstad welcomed the Board and noted his appreciation to everyone for making time to attend the Board meeting. He expressed hope we would be meeting again in person soon. He introduced new Board member Sam Richert, Senior Operations Manager at Xcel Energy. He also welcomed and introduced the guests. He indicated that the chief topic for the Board was to hear



about experiences in the field and to hear staff reports and the update from the Office of Pipeline Safety.

Approval of Board Minutes

Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Board meeting minutes for the meeting on May 14, 2020 and for the special meeting on June 3, 2020 were approved. Dave Hunstad directed that the open session minutes and summary of the special meeting be placed on the GSOC website.

Legislative Report

Dean Parker gave a brief legislative report summarizing legislative activity of the previous session. It resulted in no new legislation, but the Office of Pipeline Safety intends to submit suggested changes to the law which were similar to its proposals last Spring. It is also expected that other stakeholder groups may submit proposals. Finally, no infrastructure bonding bill has been passed and it is not clear whether any bill will be passed during any of the special sessions this Fall.

Open Forum

Guest Hawthorn Bjorback addressed the Board. He noted his family's long history in Minnesota's utility locate industry and voiced his concern that safety in the underground damage prevention industry may be eroding as a whole. He asked that the Board work with the industry to raise the bar for compliance and safety. He suggested that Minnesota should have an entity that audits tickets for compliance with the one call law. This generated an extensive discussion by the Board concerning the possibility and challenges created by audits. A variety of opinions were expressed. A number of Board members disagreed with the premise that safety was eroding. Ticket compliance audits are already performed on the gas side of the industry. Mike Mendiola noted that extending that kind of QA/QC program from gas to the remainder of the utilities would require an extensive discussion. The complexities and extent of the undertaking would be significant. Many different views were expressed regarding potential changes to the one call processes. A consensus was gradually formed by the Board that GSOC ought to take a closer look at the one call process and determine whether any process changes need to be made.

Board Discussion: Reports from the Field

The Board continued to engage in a wide discussion of experiences from the field. Phil Lesnar noted that he believed there were still apparently not enough locators. He believes a significant portion of the problems he is experiencing are due to the pandemic. Several utility operators and locators noted that training of new locators was adversely affected, particularly early on in the pandemic. The loss of relationship building between facility operators and excavators due to cancelled damage prevention meetings has also had an effect.



Various questions were raised about whether GSOC should examine the possibility of having different types of tickets, particularly for large projects, and whether ticket volume caps of some kind should be discussed. Phil Lesnar noted that it would be helpful to obtain more information from government designers as to what projects are planned to come online to help locators plan staffing. Jodi Corrow noted that there is a group in the Brainerd area that invites all engineering firms in the area each year and helps the parties understand what is coming online. Ben Wallace noted this would be helpful in rural areas. A separate question was also raised as to whether GSOC can expand the pilot project for submission of emergency tickets online.

The Board concluded the discussion by forming a consensus that: (1) Barbara Cederberg should be encouraged to consider whether an independent study should be undertaken to review the entire one call process; (2) GSOC should work with MnOPS to continue to add more outreach to municipalities and townships concerning MS216D requirements – this is to make sure pre-design and pre-construction provisions are complied with so stakeholders are aware of projects coming online; and (3) Barbara Cederberg was directed to form a subcommittee to look at the overall one call process and whether any process changes should be made. The subcommittee will consist of Barbara Cederberg, Phil Lesnar, Jason Ponciano, Sam Richert, Jim Smith and Todd Stansbury of the Office of Pipeline Safety.

COO Report

Barbara Cederberg reviewed 2020 ticket volumes. Through July tickets are up over 11% versus the same time in 2019. Increases have varied widely month to month and even included one month where ticket numbers decreased (May). The percentage of tickets submitted online continues to increase and is over 82% for the year. Homeowner tickets have also increased and now constitute 14% of all tickets. The proportion of web ticket submissions by homeowners has soared to almost 70%.

Several projects are in process. The new user interface is a significant success with most commercial users having switched over to the new format when submitting online tickets. GSOC has also embarked on an initiative to preserve the integrity of the dig polygon drawn by the excavator so that the locator is able to see what the excavator drew even if they are using proprietary ticket management software developed by other companies. She indicated that Irth is now ready and Koterra is almost ready to implement this capability.

GSOC continues to explore reduction of the size of the buffer on online submitted tickets from 500 feet to 300 feet. She suggested that the Board consider this reduction as of January 1, 2021. Very few tickets submitted are off by more than 200 feet. This adjustment should not compromise safety, will reduce over notification modestly and better preserve locate resources for where they are needed.

The Board advised Barb to create a communications plan to make sure all facility operators are noted well in advance of any change which is made. No change is being suggested as this time



for tickets submitted by telephone call due to the complexity of reprogramming the system and the continuing reduction in call volumes meaning there would be less benefit for the effort.

GSOC continues to review the possibility of direct release tickets. No changes are proposed at the current time for the policy of reviewing virtually all new normal tickets submitted online. GSOC believes that the current process avoids the need for corrections in the field and saves locators and excavators time.

The augmented reality pilot projects are currently on pause. Technology improvements in speed may required in order to make this technology useful for locators. GSOC is participating in 2 new projects. A pilot project has been initiated with the cooperation of several equipment vendors for utilizing electromagnetic locators enabled with highly accurate GPS systems. Barbara Cederberg will also act as chair of the Underground Utility Mapping workgroup which serves as a subgroup of the Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Minnesota Geospatial Advisory Council. The intent is to explore and publicize promising technologies and encourage their adoption where appropriate to improve the quality of underground utility maps and improve the quality, accuracy and timeliness of locates.

MnOPS Update

Mike Mendiola indicated the 216D Stakeholder meetings were in process and a number of subgroup meetings were held the previous week. Further discussion will take place concerning proposed changes this Fall.

He then reviewed recent damage information. Gas damages incidents are roughly on par with 2019. Utility damages per 1,000 locates has continued to trend below national statistics in Minnesota according to the information they have.

The Office of Pipeline Safety is looking to obtain better damage reporting as the data they have is only based on what is supplied and only gas utilities are required to report at this time.

Board discussion: Additional metrics

Keith Novy led a discussion concerning the role that GSOC might play in providing additional metric information for stakeholders. It was acknowledged that data mining takes a lot of work but may help facility operators and others with damage prevention. For example, reports could be developed to furnish locate requests by property type, excavator type or work type whether or not any legislation is passed to require additional reporting. If damage reporting legislation is enacted, additional reports could be prepared depicting damage data which may then be used to allocate resources for damage prevention. This endeavor will likely start small and then expand as feedback from users demonstrates what is useful and what is not.



Outreach and PR Report

Olivia Jensen advised the Board that more outreach on radio is being provided this year due to the cancellation of so many events, including Farm Fest and the State Fair. The 811 Run itself was cancelled. However, sponsors continued to support the virtual run and over \$18,000 was raised for Operation WARM to provide coats for needy kids. The new sponsorship of the St. Paul Saints baseball team continues. The first game was held in early August with a 1,500 fan limit for social distancing.

Additional social media engagement this year has included blog posts for decoding utility markings. Grace Carlson has been hired as new social media coordinator at OCC. She is expected to provide an additional resource for creating damage prevention awareness through social media.

The Twins sponsorship has been deferred until 2021. The Big Iron Show in Fargo is going forward. GSOC will provide materials and Ryan Shultz from North Dakota One Call will provide staffing for the booth. GSOC staff will not attend this year due to the pandemic. GSOC has continued to provide signage on box trucks which travel on various rural routes throughout greater Minnesota carrying the damage prevention message. The extensive work with the Star Tribune's online program continues to focus awareness messaging to the agriculture industry, home owners and Spanish speakers.

OCC Report

Kimberly Boyd advised the work from home initiative continues at the notification center and has been a great success. Currently, 56 CSRs are working from home with 17 well-spaced in the office for a total of 73.

Adam Franco noted wide differences nationally in ticket volumes. In general, metro areas and hot spots have had significant decreases while rural states experience increases. Minnesota appears to be unique in that both Metro and Greater Minnesota are experiencing increased activity. The volume count of the increase in Minnesota over 2019 is the largest increase he is aware of.

OCC is experimenting with remote training. The notification center intends to continue primarily with the work from home model as long as mask restrictions remain in place. He believed that was unlikely to change until Spring of 2021.

It was noted that across the country, homeowner volume is up by 23%. In Minnesota the increase is approximately 37%. Getting many of these homeowners to cooperate by submitting tickets online instead of over the phone has been one of the keys to maintaining a very high level of responsiveness during the pandemic. The recorded phone message conceived by Barbara Cederberg seems to have been key in the transition. OCC has now adopted this technique in other states and has seen similar positive results.



There were record numbers of 6,000+ ticket days in May and June. Peak volumes have dropped off now. The highest volume day in August was approximately 5,400.

The emergency online ticket pilot project continues. Over 725 tickets have been submitted to date. The new user interface for online ticket submission has already gained wide acceptance. There will be another communication regarding use of the extended start time feature. Various system upgrades and service alerts were also discussed.

Finance Committee Report

Tom Hoffman advised the Board that the Finance Committee has not met over the summer due to the pandemic. However, the audit of the 2019 financial statements has been successfully completed. Further, the notification center operating loss has been slightly less than expected due to a reduction in expenses.

The Finance Committee plans to meet concerning development of the 2021 financial projections within the next month. He also noted that some reserves set aside in 2018 will need to be reviewed and reallocated. The Finance Committee will likely suggest some reserves be set aside to promote investigation and adoption by of useful technologies by the industry.

Concluding Discussions

Jim Smith asked that a subcommittee be created to review new processes for the industry. After a brief additional discussion, a Board consensus was formed and Barbara Cederberg will lead the subcommittee composed of Sam Richert, Jason Ponciano, Jim Smith, Phil Lesnar and Todd Stansbury from the Office of Pipeline Safety. Barbara Cederberg will schedule the initial meeting shortly. The goal of the group will be to broadly review the one call process and make suggestions for changes to processes for consideration by the Board.

Adjournment

There being no further business coming before the Board, upon motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean E. Parker
Recording Secretary

Next Meeting Dates:

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November 11, 2020

January 13, 2021

April __, 2021 [to be scheduled to coincide with MnOPS safety conference or safety summit]

August 11, 2021