



## MINUTES BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING May 14, 2020

### Members Present:

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

### Counsel present:

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

### Guests (for open session):

Adam Franco, Director of Operations, OCC  
Kimberly Boyd, General Manager, Minnesota, OCC  
Olivia Jensen, Marketing and Public Awareness Specialist, GSOC  
Barbara Cederberg, Chief Operations Officer, GSOC  
Jon Wolfgram, Engineer Administrative, Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety  
Sam Richert, Senior Operations Manager, Damage Prevention, Xcel Energy

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On May 14, 2020 at 10:00 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 the guests. He hoped the videoconference would be a rare occurrence as getting together in person as a Board is important. A special welcome was extended to new Board members Mark Sellin of Sellin Brothers Excavating, Hawley, Minnesota; Jason Ponciano of Vanguard Partners and Ben Wallace of USIC.

Dave Hunstad noted that today's meeting was primarily to furnish the Board with an opportunity to hear from each other as to what they were seeing in the field, and to receive reports from GSOC staff and OCC regarding notification center operations.



## **Approval of Board Minutes**

Upon motion made and duly seconded, the Board meeting minutes for the meetings on January 8, 2020 and for the special meeting on February 17, 2020 were approved. Dave Hunstad directed that the open session minutes and summary of the special meeting be placed on the GSOC website.

## **Reports from the Field**

Keith Novy noted the substantial increases in locate ticket requests that CenterPoint Energy was experiencing. He and others noted that constraints of the pandemic are making it tough to manage and staff personnel particularly because training has been adversely affected. They are also noting a material increase in damages. Barb Cederberg and Kim Boyd noted that the better weather in April this year might have taken some of the May volume as April was higher and May was lower in ticket volumes than in 2019.

A discussion ensued among the Board members as to how to better manage the volumes. Questions were raised about the desirability of establishing daily or monthly caps on the number of tickets. Encouraging more compliance with the white lining requirements of 216D was also discussed. GSOC will examine the feasibility of placing an additional pop up reminder on the ITIC software as well as providing that reminders be placed in contractor trade association newsletters. It was noted that at least one excavator had received a notice of violation and a substantial proposed fine for failure to white line.

Dan Munthe and Ward Westphal suggested the need for obtaining more precise marking instructions. Others discussed the desirability of having GSOC and/or the Office of Pipeline Safety educate certain excavators when they utilize practices which unnecessarily utilize substantial locate resources.

## **COO Report**

Barb Cederberg noted the significant cooperation from the industry in filing a greater proportion of the tickets online which allowed for other customer service from the notification center. Homeowner tickets have increased up to 16% of the total ticket volume, probably due to more do it yourself projects being done as a result of the pandemic. Online ticket submission by homeowners has dramatically increased to approximately 70% of the homeowner volume.

The call center employee count is down 16 CSRs as training classes were sent home and not hired due to the inability to train in person during the pandemic. However, savings in time due to the increase in online ticket submissions have offset the loss in personnel so call service levels remain on par with 2019. She also discussed that use of virtual meets and greater use of positive response appears to be happening this year. Projects for 2020 include a new format for online ticket submission which should be easier to utilize as well as a project to work with software vendors to



maintain the integrity of the ITIC dig polygon drawn by the excavator all the way through the system so that it may be seen by the locator.

## **PR Awareness and Outreach Report**

Olivia Jensen addressed the Board regarding GSOC's marketing and outreach activities. GSOC had an expanded presence at the Minneapolis Home and Garden Show this year. Thanks were extended to Board member Patrick Warden and his Bachman's landscaping team for assistance in putting together a large GSOC display demonstrating the locating process. In addition, GSOC had a booth staffed which was quite popular with show attendees. Hundreds of Call or Click Before You Dig handout items and brochures were furnished to interested visitors. The booth seems to be growing in popularity each year. The show has developed into a very successful homeowner outreach event.

A few damage prevention meetings were held prior to the onset of significant restrictions due to the pandemic. A blog post recap has been posted on the GSOC website in lieu of the those meetings which could not take place. A new social media specialist has been hired at OCC which is expected to help GSOC more effectively access that channel of communication to stakeholders. The status of planned programs with the St. Paul Saints and Twins this summer is currently unclear due to the pandemic. GSOC has an extensive awareness campaign ending with Star Tribune which is targeting homeowners, professional excavators, Spanish speakers and the Ag industry. Viewership of GSOC messaging is up 100% in Minnesota counties with major pipelines.

The 811 Run will likely be cancelled this year but the hope is that the industry will support Operation WARM with the Minneapolis Fire Department even if the race cannot take place. With respect to Greater Minnesota, GSOC is continuing its messages on the Linder Farm Radio Network. Olivia Jensen will be interviewed shortly. GSOC is again continuing its sideboard messaging on box trucks in various rural communities in Minnesota.

In response to a question from Keith Novy, Olivia Jensen advised there was no plan B for the State Fair, Big Iron and Farm Fest if they are not held this year. Barbara Cederberg stated there is no real substitute for those events but that GSOC does have substantial print and radio outreach planned in any event.

## **OCC Report**

Kimberly Boyd, general manager of the notification center, advised that the "work from home" model was fully adopted by the notification center early in the pandemic. She said the only disadvantage being experienced by the customer service representatives (CSRs) is the lack of ability for a supervisor to come over and work side by side with them. This could not be done while maintaining social distancing, even if the notification center offices were being fully utilized. Fortunately, this lack of side by side supervision is not missed much as most of the existing staff is experienced.



So far there has been great attendance and productivity and really good morale amongst the CSR staff. Several training classes for brand new CSRs were cancelled at an early stage of the pandemic. The intent is to have a small training class that is socially distanced when that is more practicable.

There have been very busy days this year. In the past, there was only one 6,000 ticket day in April. This year there were five days of 6,000+ tickets in April and one day of 7,000+. There already have been as many 6,000+ ticket days year-to-date as there was in the entire year of 2019.

Notification center operations have remained smooth because online ticket submission through ITIC has experienced very high volumes. There is a huge increase in homeowner utilization in particular. It is believed this is a result of the addition of a request to the initial call recording to use online ticket submission and the willingness of homeowners to cooperate with that request. This has saved substantial time because homeowner calls frequently take between 9 and 12 minutes. For those stakeholders who are calling in tickets, the wait times have been minimal so far. The average call time is a little less than normal due to the fact that most of the CSRs are quite experienced.

Virtually all online submitted tickets are still reviewed for quality assurance by CSRs. Those review times have increased in part due to the fact there are 1,400 new registrants so far this year using ITIC for the first time. In response to customer requests, the notification center now holds online submitted tickets with problems for 2 hours to allow the stakeholders time to call back and correct the ticket before it is voided.

There are a number of 2020 projects at the notification center. More facility operators were encouraged to participate in the emergency online ticket submission pilot project. The notification center is also continuing to callback high volume telephone ticket submitters to make sure they are aware of the various benefits of utilizing online ticket submission. The notification center continues to continuously update its GIS maps; 7,200 updates were accomplished in the first four months of the year. Finally, there was a system upgrade put in place with new positive response codes for meets and other matters.

## **MnOPS Update**

Jon Wolfgram furnished an update from the Office of Pipeline Safety. Most staff is working remotely now, some inspections are occurring remotely, social distancing and masks for inspections and investigators in the field as everyone adapts to new conditions required by the pandemic.

MnOPS acknowledges that the lack of compliance with the requirement excavators white mark the perimeter of excavations is a significant concern. He also noted the early damage prevention meetings were well received and it was unfortunate they could not continue through the full Spring schedule. He advised that the dispute with CenturyLink has been settled and also noted that there have been no changes made to the MS216D Statute so far, but that stakeholder



meetings will be scheduled during the summer to determine what consensus might be reached on possible changes.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business coming before the Board, upon motion made and duly seconded, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dean E. Parker  
Recording Secretary

## **Next Meeting Dates:**

November 11, 2020 [date to be confirmed]  
January 6, 2021  
April \_\_, 2021 [date to be confirmed]  
August 11, 2021