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STATE OF NEBRASKA

STATE ELECTRICAL BOARD
Craig Thelen
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STATE ELECTRICAL BOARD MEETING October 9, 2020

ATTENDEES: John Hiller, Cory Mueller, Ed Bergstraesser, Dave Hunter, Jim Brummer, George Morrissey, Mike Hunsberger, Mike Bouwens and Craig Thelen

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 9:02AM. Introductions of all attendees and formal welcoming of Craig Thelen as new State Electrical Division Executive Director.

OLD BUSINESS

Amendment to previous Board minutes was added by Ed Bergstraesser stating there was no formal ending of the executive session actions and the beginning of the public meeting. Also, reflected in minutes completed by Melissa Hamilton, in the second paragraph, she stated the number of applicants was described as, "there was a lot". Edit was changed from the words "a lot" to "two applicants."

Previous executive meeting minutes were approved by Cory Mueller and seconded by Mike Hunsberger; Voting aye; all. Approved. The correction to the regular Board meeting minutes was motioned by Dave Hunter and Jim Brummer seconded the motion to approve the minutes. Voting aye; all.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Cash flow statement for August was reviewed. \$104,000 revenue against \$103,000 for a profit of \$847 and cash balance of \$1,329,000. Page 3 was reviewed for missing the correct budgeted amount under "budgeted revenue" A listed misprint of \$0. Board is looking into this anomaly within the program reporting. Craig Thelen will investigate this issue and report back at the next meeting.

DIRECTOR REPORT

Craig Thelen stated interviews were hosted for District 2 Electrical Inspector position and an applicant accepted the position. He will begin, Tuesday, October 13, 2020. Training will begin in a few other Districts to get oriented. He does not have his inspector's certificate but will sit for the exam soon. He currently holds an Electrical Contractor's license.

Successfully hired an SOS employee to help fill in since Linda Henke is still out and as contract renewal begins next week. Additional help in this area will be beneficial to the workflow in the office.

Inspectors meeting was held in Grand Island on October 1st and 2nd and was a success. Discussion included top priorities for issues, challenges and changes to be made soon. Monitoring of events and more frequent contact will be made with all inspectors and staff through online communications, WebEx. The WebEx meetings will be working with inspectors to get everyone on the same page regarding code interpretation. Therefore, inspectors can move from district to district and everyone has consistency amongst each other.

Major topics covered at the annual meeting in Grand Island included:

- **Wages** – requesting an overall compensation increase for both new hires and current State Inspectors. With new hires starting at \$21/hour, how does this affect the negotiations for current inspectors? Michael Hunsberger stated that in July 2021, pay should fall within the \$21/hour range for new hires. The Union is currently negotiating a step-plan to increase base wages for State inspectors. With the difficulty of hiring new inspectors, the Board is in favor of higher wages of \$25-\$27 to start depending on experience. Craig Thelen will draft a letter to the Electrical Union reflecting the Board's support of the noted wage increase for new hires and implementation of a step-increase for current State Inspectors due to the difficulty of hiring new positions at the lower wage. Union letter will be directed to Sean Davis.
- **Software issues** with limited space for comments was also discussed. Joel from Fourware is working on a software upgrade so additional comments may be added by the Inspector upon a re-inspection. Currently, the inspectors must access a previous inspection by permit number to access any notes made on the job from the original inspection.
- **Power companies** for proper timing regarding energizing. A better communication path must be in place, so the power companies know

when there is an open permit in place.

- **Mileage** was another concern, but this should be remedied with the hiring of new personnel to cover areas closer to their home base.
- **Specials** were discussed regarding signage process of LB1174. No resolve yet through the legislature. No mention of technology. Ed Bergstraesser stated Industry wants more clear direction on what is expected of them concerning the previous drafting of the low voltage signage and solar bill. The State Electrical Division is paralyzed by legislation and must wait. LB1174 to pass for clear future direction. Suggestion was made to separate the low voltage bill from LB1174. Craig Thelen was asked to communicate with legislators on the best avenue to resolve these issues. (recording of additional discussion found in 30:00-33:45 min block)

NEW BUSINESS

Craig Thelen requested to gain more insight on the adoption of the 2020 NEC Code and will be contacting Senator Blood. Ed Bergstraesser also asked whether it made it to a vote and if not, what was the level of support. There could be potential opposition from the Lincoln Home Builders Association and IBEW. Contacting Sen Blood is the first step in this process.

Potential concessions and homeowners concern with policy eliminating a couple GF1-220V, surge protection, resident A/C GFI outlets and 220V ranges. Board discussion occurred regarding the inspector in Hickman. He is a previous employee who is calling for a utility disconnect when this is not warranted. He will need advisement for future enforcements.

LB1174 stopped at committee and will be determined by previous discussion in minutes.

Openings on the Board for position replacement/reinstatement of Cory Mueller and Ed Bergstraesser. Craig Thelen has been issued a list of candidates and is to decide about the new Board personnel. Craig was seeking feedback from the Board as to who they were interested in serving with at this time. List of names was shared and the Board candidly discussed these candidates. Board support for John Whitmer was expressed.

Joel from Fourware which is our report system was open to the changes for the computer software updates to include: reports to keep permits moving without delay and workload balances per individual to keep the work equitable amongst all inspectors, regardless of State location. Scheduling individual inspectors to streamline permits is the goal to make the process much quicker.

Craig is requesting a list of the power companies from each of his inspectors in order to be in direct contact with them in case of need. Suggestion was made to contact the League of Municipalities for a list of all utility companies. Joel shared the software upgrade should be operational and ready for implementation in January 2021.

Craig Thelen has scheduled a consultation with NFPA Fire Marshall's office and will be discussing any questions or concerns. Communication is key and Craig will be working with Chris Cantrell for legislative support of the bills.

Discussion from Michael Bouwens was concerning Tom Hamre and his lack of contact with the Electrical Division while on probation. A letter will be sent out from Director, Craig Thelen regarding his lack of cooperation with the Board's requirements. Tom's Journey's license is now in jeopardy and he is moving towards complete resolve of his licenses. If there is no employment report received by the Board in the next 30 days, Tom will be required to appear before the Board regarding his violations and before he would be allowed to practice.

Meeting was motioned to adjourn at 10:04AM, by John Hiller



Craig Thelen, Executive Secretary