



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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Bruce Rauner, Governor

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MINUTES OF MEETING
OF
ILLINOIS STATE MINING BOARD
REND LAKE COLLEGE
INA, ILLINOIS
OCTOBER 20, 2016

The following State Mining Board members were present:

John Duty
Larry Jones
Randy Lewis
Tom Smith
Jim Steiner
Steve Willis
Jim Hafliger, Executive Officer

The meeting was called to order by Executive Officer Jim Hafliger and a roll call of board members was made with all members present. Having a quorum, Mr. Hafliger proceeded with the meeting.

The minutes from the August 10, 2016 State Mining Board meeting was reviewed and accepted as presented.

Executive Officer Hafliger stated the first item on the agenda was a continuation of the action taken by the Mining Board at its October 22, 2015 wherein the Board indicated the temporary suspension of mine examiner certification for Timothy Groff would be for one year and would be reinstated upon his appearance at the end of this period.

Following a short series of questions by the Board to Mr. Groff, Board member Steiner made a motion to reinstate Mr. Groff's mine examiner certification with a second by Board member Willis and motion passed.

The next item on the agenda was Hamilton County Coal's request for approval to extend cross cut centers to 250 feet. Ezra French, general mine superintendent, addressed the board and asked the Board if they had any questions concerning their request.

Board member Duty asked how many fans the company would have on the section and Mr. French responded there would be one and if this fan went down the company would use line curtain and go back to 150 foot cross cut centers until the fan was returned to service. Board members Smith and Jones asked if there would be sufficient air ventilating the face with only line curtain and if it would be sufficient to mine coal or only to maintain the face areas. Mr. French indicated they would have a minimum of 35,000 feet of air to prevent recirculation, thus enabling them to mine coal.

Board member Jones asked for a clarification that this request was for 250 feet in the gate entries, bleeder entries and main, so basically for the entire mine and the response was yes.

Executive Officer Hafliger again reminded the Board its role was to determine if Hamilton County's proposal is equally as safe as or safer than the original mining plan. He asked Mr. French to explain how it is as safe or safer.

Mr. French stated the combination of going to 250 feet plus having staggered cross cuts, therefore no longer have 4-way cross cuts would improve roof stability. He said the bigger the pillar the better protection is provided to the tailgate entries, especially #2 entry, which provides ventilation to the bleeder system.

Board member Willis indicated his concern that he had stated at the last meeting that if you have a heavy cave that pulls air out by sometimes it will pull methane. He did feel that with more support the extended cross cut distance is doable. Mr. French said they are using pumpable cribs and will continue with the new distance. Board member Willis asked if they ever had it cave tight that the air had to come out and answer was no.

Board member Steiner indicated the approval for 200 feet was given in 2015 and he read a list of ventilation violations since the approval was given. He asked why they had extended up to 500 foot blocks when not approved for that length. The company responded that the long blocks were only in the middle entries and were actually in compliance as instead of 4-way intersections they were using 3-way and there were 200 foot blocks on either side of the longer blocks. Other violations were discussed. Board member Steiner was afraid that if problems were to continue concerning tubing being torn down or fan operation disrupted there could be a methane buildup. He was all for providing additional roof support and reducing the risk of roof falls and he likes

staggered cross cuts. He asked if incorporating the staggered cross cuts with the current 200 foot approval would work just as good.

Mr. French described the studies they conducted to determine the existing fans and tubing would work. The company is reducing number of entries from 8 to six on the mains. They would be going to a split air system therefore use two fans with three entries on each fan.

Mr. French stressed the greatest need for the longer pillars was in the gate and bleeder entries.

State Mine Inspector Jenkel was asked to give his observations regarding the company's request and he stated the mine produced minimal methane. It is looking the best overall since the first opened.

State Mine Inspector at Large Bill Patterson was asked if he any questions or comments. He asked if there is a distance 375 foot or greater it would be difficult to ventilate with a line curtain. If there was a fan stoppage due to a power outage, setting up the required 1,000 to 1,300 feet of line curtain would be almost impossible to achieve in the 15 minutes before evacuating the mine. A big issue to him is the exposure to mine personnel from the movement of coal haulers and where will mine personnel get if standing in one of the extended pillars. Also, miner cable being exposed to coal hauler traffic and could be run over. Even turning the corners with shuttle cars could prove difficult unless they are slabbed. While he has no problem with staggered cross cuts he does see difficulty in shuttle cars making corners unless that are slabbed off.

Board member Willis asked how much line curtain do they visualize needing and is Bill right on the footage. The company said the farthest line curtain would extend up an entry is 350 feet and would only see two of the three entries driven at any one time so there would only be a need for 700 – 800 feet of line curtain.

Bill Patterson asked that the company provide the agency a copy of their cut sequence plan.

Inspector Jenkel asked if they anticipate having to cut the corners to make the turn. It was agreed by the company there would be some cutting of the corners to make a turn.

Tony Mayville, Enforcement and Safety Supervisor, expressed his concern of an individual being trapped in by a roof fall due to the extended distance to the closest cross cut. He feels the increased distance will place miners at a greater risk.

Executive Officer Hafliger said that prior to entertaining a motion for Hamilton County's request, the Board should look at item #5, clarification of Article 17, Section 17.01, as it relates to staggered cross cuts. Mr. French addressed the board on this issue stating that even with the request for longer pillar length the company is still maintaining a cross cut between entries every 200 feet. This being done with 3-way intersections and not 4-way intersections. They feel the company was complying with the previously approved plan. The company was asking for a clarification as to whether they must have 4-way intersection to comply with the law?

It was a consensus of the Board that the use of 3-way intersections at 200 foot intervals would be in compliance with 17.01.

Mr. Hafliger stressed this would again be an experimental process and a timeframe will need to be considered before final approval will be given.

Board member Lewis asked if it was possible to take a section or unit and do what they propose then come back to the Board after a pre-determined period of time, showing the Board the results from this area. Board member Jones agreed with Mr. Lewis as to doing this on a smaller scale and not mine wide.

Chief Clerk Art Rice explained to the Board the previous experimental timeframe was one year with a requirement to come in after 6 months to give a status update. The Board discussed different lengths of time.

The company asked to be given three months to prove the merits of the proposed extended cross cuts distance. After this period the company would appear before the Board to determine if further time should be given for the experimental use of extended cross cuts or the request be granted as permanent. Board member Steiner made a motion to this request, with second by Board member Willis and motion passed.

The final item on the agenda was an overview of the Mine Safety and Training Division's inspections, violation and mine accidents for the first 9 months of 2016. Chief Clerk Rice briefly outlined those areas to the Board.

Having no further business Board member Smith made a motion to adjourn, second by Board member Willis and motion passed.