



# Missouri Self Storage Monitor

The MSSOA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2021

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## A Few Thoughts at the End of the Year

By Jeffrey J. Greenberger



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Greenberger & Brewer, LLP

I do not believe anyone will argue with me when I say the last two years have been extremely unusual. Fortunately for self-storage, the industry, as a whole not only survived, but has thrived and grown dramatically in the last two years. Times may not always be as good as they are right now and for that reason it is a great time to look at a few operational issues. Make sure that your occupants are all where you need them to be, compliance wise, and if not, then get your occupants into compliance, or while times are good ask them to go.

Here are a few things I think you ought to be looking at:

**1. Auditing your files.** If you are full and do not have anything else to rent, you should have some time to pull out (literally or digitally) your existing files and make sure that they are in good order. Particularly, make certain that you have what at least appears to be good information, including a good mailing address and email address for your occupant and any alternate contact. If you do not, now is a great time to reach out and try to get that information updated. Remember, your ability to use email for various default functions depends on having a good email address. Also, check and make sure you have good information on the military status of your occupants. If you do not, given that there is a Federal law, the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, which requires you have this information, start rounding it up so that your files are accurate in the event there is a dispute or a default. The Association has more information about Servicemembers Civil Relief Act on its website, if you are unfamiliar with these requirements.

**2. Vehicle Information.** This is also a great time to check and make sure anyone who is storing a vehicle has provided you the necessary vehicle information, and if you require it, insurance information on a vehicle stored. Vehicle storage, particularly outdoor vehicle storage, is a different business than true self-service storage and it requires more information from the occupant: On the vehicle—an ownership of the vehicle; on the insurance, and on lienholders, so you can properly protect yourself and handle defaults properly, but also be covered if there is a loss.

**3. Locks.** This is also a great time to check and make sure occupants are in compliance with whatever policy you have on the use of locks. Many operators require a solid lock, such as a disc/limited hasp lock, or a cylinder lock, while some of you may even be using behind the door electronic lock. If you have a policy requiring or recommending a good solid lock, and some of your occupants are using luggage locks, this is a good time to help avoid future break-ins by requiring your occupants to resolve the situation.

*Continued on Page 7*

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**MSSOA will be working with the SSA to repeal the requirement for newspaper advertisement set forth in Missouri State Law for self storage operators. See the article on page 5 for details.**

**2022 Membership Renewals will be mailed the first week in January. We will also send notifications via email with the link to pay online. Thank you for your continued support.**

**2022 SPRING CONFERENCE**  
April 5th & 6th  
Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet.  
If you are missing events in other corners of the state, don't worry!  
We are working with sites in Branson, Springfield, Columbia, and Kansas City for future events.

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear MSSOA Members,

As we close out 2021, I hope all of you are gearing up to enjoy the holidays and spend as much time as possible with all of your family and friends. Since our last newsletter, we've been on a bit of a rollercoaster- had a return to semi-normal, a return to disruption, and a return to semi-normal. We had to postpone plans for our Fall Conference, but managed to put together a good legal seminar with Stan Masters and hold our first virtual Annual Meeting of Members.

Our board met for the last time for 2021 last month, and we are excited to report an increase in members and a very healthy financial position. We have plans I will share later in this letter, but first I want to thank our members for rolling with the punches of the last two years and being supportive and loyal to our association. We don't exist without your support and we really do have the best members around.

I want to welcome two new members to the Board of Directors; Alex Erbs and Jeff Miller. Alex has been a great support to the association and some of our members for a few years, supplying operational information and management for MSSOA members. Jeff is equally insightful and brings his knowledge and years of experience in self storage to the board. We are grateful to have their expertise added to our board, and we know their contributions will benefit our members.

2022 is looking like a big year for the MSSOA. We are working alongside the SSA on legislation that could repeal the law that requires storage operators to advertise their lien sales and auctions in the newspaper. This has been a concern for many of our members for two main reasons: 1.) newspapers are no longer available in every area of the state 2.) the newspaper ads that are being run are not bringing in a sufficient number of bidders, and sometimes operators have to run the ads multiple times, adding costs onto the tenant's debt, and if ultimately unpaid, onto the operator's cost.

We are asking for your help in communicating with your legislators about the need for this bill to pass. As soon as the bill is finalized and presented to the legislature, Shelly will start communicating with information on when and how to contact your legislators. If you have a close contact in either the state House or Senate, please consider giving Shelly a call to get them looped in as to why this bill is so important for Missouri storage operators.

In many of the states where similar laws have passed, opposition has risen from several sides, and we know this will be no different in Missouri. We know from prior experience that communication and persistence are our only tools, and we hope you will join us in supporting this legislation.

2022 events include a two day conference and tradeshow in the Spring this year. It will be in early April and will be back at the Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet. We will post details on that next month on our website and Facebook. If you aren't in the St. Louis area, don't worry! We are getting back to other areas of the state for the next conference.

As business owners, we often face the challenge of increasing prices for operations, and our association is no different. We have not raised dues in many years, and we hope that a 10% increase to membership dues is understandable. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

If you missed the Legal Update with Stan Masters in September, it is available to view on our website under Events in the Webinar Library.

On behalf of the MSSOA Board, we wish you an incredible Holiday Season.

Sincerely,

Brian Wofford

# We are happy to welcome these new members to the MSSOA Family.

Patriot Storage  
Paul Parson  
Kirkwood

Your Storage Spot  
Nikki Thirkield  
Bates City

Leasburg Self Storage  
David Thomas  
Leasburg

Aaron Morrison  
Rogersville

Lock N Key  
Martha Stark  
Knob Noster

Dixon Storage

Cornerstone Storage

Pack N Stack  
Wes Litton

Steward Self Storage  
Ken Takaidza  
St. Peters

APB Self Storage  
Bill Ruple  
Barnhard

Oak Street Self Storage  
Christine Westwood  
Carthage

Storage Concepts  
Laramie

GJ Grewe, Inc.  
Rich Reiche  
St. Louis

Storage Banks LLC  
Wes Ford  
Carrollton

Westside Storage of Fulton  
Sarah Sparks  
Fulton

Rac-Jac Storage  
Tara Sandlin  
Sedalia

Kelley Self Storage  
Randy Anderson  
West Plains

Xtra Space Self Storage  
Kevin King  
Aurora

Amy Wagner  
Lone Jack

Aaron Weaver  
Buffalo

United Self Storage  
Scott Sacco  
St. Charles

Hometown Storage  
Linda Ann Colbert  
Hawk Point

Kenny Buelterman  
Saint Charles

Katie Brewer  
Linn Creek

Spencer Goodman

North Packer Road Storage

CK Boat and RV Storage  
Robert Carter  
Reeds Spring

Doug Kelly  
Lake Ozark

Sunny Crest Storage  
Randy McMauley  
Brookline

Barnhart Self Storage  
Sean Whatiaker  
Imperial

Smartlock Self Storage -  
Airport Drive  
David Hoover & Jonah Hall  
Garland, TX

Triangle Mini Storages  
Missey Rogers  
Mountain Grove



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**Alex Erbs**

**info@erbsmg.com 314-223-4453**

# LEGISLATIVE NEWS



**Shelly Harris**  
Executive Director  
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A bill in support of repealing the requirement for self storage operators to advertise lien sales in the newspaper will go before state legislators in the upcoming year. MSSOA has heard from many members that advertising in a newspaper is becoming increasingly difficult. Printed newspapers are not as common as they once were, and many operators are not attracting bidders from this type of advertisement. Not only does this become an unnecessary expense as an advertisement, but it also takes the time and resources from the operator and manager, not to mention the cost of lost rent on the unit being sold.

Currently, according to the Missouri Self Storage Statute, operators must meet the following requirement to sell a unit:

*At least seven days before the sale, advertise the time, place and terms of the sale in a newspaper of general circulation in the jurisdiction where the sale is to be held. Such advertisement shall be in the classified section of the newspaper and shall state that the items will be released for sale.*

(Missouri Lien Law Title XXVI Trade and Commerce Chapter 415, Warehouse and Self-Service Storage Facilities 415.410.4) (3)

The MSSOA will work closely with the SSA on communicating timing, the bill's information, any challenges that come up, and the progress and status of the bill as it moves through the legislative process.

In the past, MSSOA members have been essential in supporting legislation affecting the self storage industry in Missouri. We will send more information later, but we would greatly appreciate any efforts you make in writing letters, emailing, or calling their representatives. Once we know timing and specific bill information, we will provide contact information for your legislators. If any member is a state legislator or has knowledge of a representative in our industry, please contact us so that we can reach out.

## How You Can Support this Legislation

- Write to Your Representatives- Emails or Letters.
- Call Your Representatives.
- Communicate with any personal contacts you have in the state Senate or House of Representatives.

# HB 1689

HB 1689 proposes changes to the Missouri Self Storage Statute that require operators to advertise lien sales in newspapers. View the proposed changes and the progress of the bill online.

Search HB 1689 at <https://house.mo.gov/>

**Representative Bill Hardwick is the House Sponsor**



# Rusty Shovels

**Rick Beal**, Co-Founder Atomic Storage Group  
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When I was growing up, my family had two shovels in the garage. They were sunbaked, dull and rusted, and would give you a splinter if you even looked at them wrong. For years I thought shovels must be the most expensive tools created, for us to be using such dilapidated ones. This misconception burst sometime during my high school years when I discovered I could purchase one for \$15! Did the old shovels in my garage do the job? Yes. Were they the best tools for the job? Not even close. When it comes to your self-storage business, you don't want to use rusty shovels. As a facility operator, I constantly seek new ways to solve problems, improve processes and, essentially, perform better in my role. I'd like to share these few ideas to help you save time and streamline your work day.

## Staff Training

Think of the last coaching/training session you participated in at your self-storage business. Now rate that meeting honestly. Was it an in-depth conversation with the potential to improve both parties? Or was it a slimmed-down version because time was short and you were busy?

The irony is what yields the best gains rarely gets the most effort. Staff training is a serious responsibility, but it often doesn't get the time and attention it deserves. Employee development can produce great rewards in the long run, but how much does your company invest in training? The desire to do more may be there, but distance and other responsibilities are often perceived as barriers.

Actually, there's an easy way for you to share and gain knowledge that doesn't require hours of classroom training. I've recently fallen back in love with the vast information found in podcasts. At your fingertips are the greatest experts in human behavior providing lessons in delegation, leadership, culture, time management, motivation and training. Most recordings are available via smartphone, and it's relatively easy to make time during the day to listen, whether it's on the ride to work, or while sweeping the hallways or pulling weeds.

One podcast I recommend is "Coaching for Leaders" by Dave Stachowiak. He has an amazing wealth of knowledge, and he

interviews great leaders on a variety of topics. One of his audios helped a friend of mine who was struggling with employee accountability. In the recording, Stachowiak interviewed author Jonathon Raymond, who offered a five-step method for holding people accountable. The method was easy and immediately helped my friend become a more effective leader.

There's a ton of podcasts available. Look for some on customer service, sales or marketing, and share them with your staff or co-workers. Listen, and then discuss them to see what ideas you can implement to improve your storage business.

## Google Tools

Love it or hate it, Google is the 800-pound gorilla in the room, and we have to get used to it. While we're feeding this gorilla our advertising budget, we might as well take advantage of the tools it offers!

Tired of paying for Microsoft Office every time you buy a new computer? Try Google Docs instead. You'll have access to Google's version of Excel, Word and PowerPoint. Inside each program is a dynamic set of add-ons to for a better experience.

Google Docs gives you the ability to collaborate and share documents as a team. For example, if I'm working on a file, I can give permission to another employee to view and edit. The changes are instantaneous, and there's no need to send the document back and forth via e-mail.

Google Keep is an organization tool that can be visually compared to a computer screen full of sticky notes. It's a great collaborative tool. For example, if I'm working on a project with a facility manager, I'll share a note with him to keep track of what's complete and what still needs to be done. It's a simple, easy way to keep people, projects and tasks organized in a single place. It can be downloaded as a phone app.

The next great tool is Google Voice. Let's say you need to contact a delinquent customer and the usual methods aren't working. You'd like to send him a text, but not from your personal phone number. Google Voice gives you a free number from which to make calls or

send texts. You can download the app to your phone or use it under apps in Google Chrome. (If you choose the latter, you'll find a small phone icon in your bookmarks bar.) Just type in the customer's number and the message, and then press send.

## Truck Rentals

Many self-storage facilities provide free use of the company's moving truck to tenants who are moving into a unit. Potential customers will often call the office to:

- Check truck availability
- Ask questions about using the truck
- Cancel or change a reservation

If you look at all those calls over the course of a year, how much time was spent on them? How much of a disruption are they to your average work day? One way to alleviate this time-sucking task is to offer online reservations. Of course, customers can still call or stop by in person to make reserve the truck if that's what they prefer; but now they have options, even after office hours.

To accept online reservations, you'll need to add a calendar to your website, or link to an outside scheduling website. Most calendar systems can be customized to your needs. You can designate hours, collect required forms, even take a credit card deposit. To reduce no-shows, many systems will even send a text reminder to the customer 24 hours in advance, giving him the option to cancel or reschedule. You can promote your truck-reservation option anywhere you communicate with tenants and prospects.

By adding this type of functionality to your operation, you're not only saving time and energy, you're creating a better experience for customers. You're providing another way for them to interact with you. Though the system is relatively inexpensive to implement, it has the potential to provide a large return.

As you can see, there are more ways to dig holes than by using dull, rusty shovels. Look at the processes you're using and think of better ways to do things. I dare you to try something new!

## A Few Thoughts at the End of the Year

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4. **Insurance.** Review where you stand on contents insurance. Many Operators now have mandatory proof of contents insurance or mandatory enrollment, in lieu, in an insurance or protection plan offered at the Facility. My office has had nine facilities that have had fires since Labor Day. The most we have had in a three month period, ever. The occupants that have insurance receive payment, sign a release and generally, except for some claiming of remaining property, go away relatively quietly, without social media muss or fuss and allow you to rebuild. Those without coverage expect you to pay them, even though they signed the Rental Agreement stating that you are not responsible for providing them insurance. As a matter of fact, at several of the fire cases we have had recently, some occupants are blocking the ability of the Operator to demolish the building, by refusing to vacate because the Operator is not paying them anything. This is a good time to review your occupants insurance compliance, or if you do not have a plan in place, to institute one and begin getting your existing occupants to sign on, or

provide proof of insurance coverage.

The reality is leopards do not change their spots. If you have customers that do not want to cooperate with you now, imagine how they will act after a real disaster such as fire. This is why, now is the time to clean things up. Did you know before merging, the cell phone company, Sprint, use to fire "its 100 worst customers" annually? Sprint figured out that the customers who were the most demanding, screamed the most, and made the most trouble for the customer service representatives were not going to be good long term customers. They cut bait with those customers before there was a serious problem that might have exposed Sprint to a liability. I am not advocating firing a hundred customers, but if you have a few that do not want to get into compliance with you, and while you have a waiting list to get into your facility, this is a good time to enforce compliance or wish them well.

A few small steps taken now (while times are great and your Occupants do not want to cooperate) to move them on is an excellent investment of your time right now, while you may have the free time

and the financial comfort to enforce your rules, so you are best suited and ready for a future potential problem or a decline in occupants in the future.

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## MSSOA Board of Directors 2021-2022



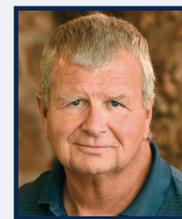
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