

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes February 15, 2023 – 2:00 p.m. CDT

**East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office
8900 Jimmy Wedell Drive, Building B
Baton Rouge, LA 70807**

The East Baton Rouge Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 15th day of February 2023 for a duly noticed public budget hearing and regular public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Waites gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Kimball led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Wade Evans, Commissioner Darnell Waites, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Michael Denicola, Commissioner Myron Daniels, and Commissioner David McDavid

Absent: None

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present at Meeting Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA, Joe Thompson (EBRPCD), Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), Fire Chief Dan Kimble (ZFD), Fire Chief Gerry Tarleton (SGFPD), Fire Chief Stephen Branscum (CFPD), Eric Romero (CPIS), Tammy Armand (CPIS), George O'Connor (365 Labs), Chance Delome (Motorola), and Ricky Klug (EBRSO).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Waites moved to approve the minutes of the November 16, 2022 meeting. Commissioner Kimball seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Back-Up Unified Communications Center (BUCC)

Director Verlander reported on this item.

A letter of intent reflecting general terms of the proposed lease at Bonne Carre was presented to the Board. Director Verlander explained the terms of the LOI and advised the Board that the parties are working on the final lease documents. The Board was also presented with the latest draft of the proposed lease document, but advised that negotiations are still ongoing. Mr. Olinde advised that the current draft of the lease was still missing some items, including a nonappropriation clause.

Commissioner Evans inquired as to the timeline for getting the BUCC up and running.

Joe Thompson reported that costs have increased post-Covid and with inflation. There is also quite a bit of lead time to get materials and equipment for the BUCC. Mr. Thompson advised against ordering equipment and starting with construction expenses until the Board gets an approved and signed lease. Mr. Thompson stated that it would be his goal to get the BUCC up and running within six months of a signed lease. Commissioner Evans expressed his concern about unduly delaying the BUCC because it is needed.

Joe Thompson advised that his current estimate to complete the BUCC is \$1.295 million, and there is currently \$1 million in the budget for these costs. Scott Lazarone, CPA reported that in 2002 there was \$100,000 of unused funds that can be carried forward to use on the BUCC project. There may be some savings in the personnel contract with the city-parish that can be used for this project. Finally, there District's fund balance of \$12 million would be sufficient to make up any shortfall in the project.

On motion of Commissioner Waites, seconded by Commissioner Daniels, the Board unanimously voted to defer action on the lease in favor of receiving the final draft of the lease before the next regular Board meeting and approving that lease in its final form at the next Board meeting.

Zachary Tower Project

Todd Campbell reported on this. The best available location for the tower is 6330 Port Hudson Road and the tower will have to be a 300-foot self-supporting tower. The state is coming to test the site on February 23, 2023.

Commissioner Kimble asked about cost and maintenance of the generator. Director Verlander reported that the tower cost is currently estimated to be in the \$1.2 million range. The District currently has \$800,000 budgeted toward the tower. Director Verlander advised the Board that the expectation is that other partners in the tower endeavor would be willing to put up the cost difference and maintain the tower. Towers are not the core mission of the Communications District.

Commissioner Daniels questioned whether certain items (including the location cost) are included in the \$1.2 million estimate.

Chance Delome (Motorola) advised the Board that the 300-foot tower is the best option for this location to provide coverage for Zachary. Commissioner Kimble questioned Director Verlander about the prospect of getting other agencies involved to help bear the cost of the tower.

Director Verlander advised the Board that the District cannot afford to continue doing recurring expenses for towers. Commissioner Kimble expressed his concern that the District has been handling the towers for years and cannot just expect other agencies to suddenly foot the bill for the tower.

Commissioner Denicola pointed out that the District has to pay for other items like the equipment that breaks in the BUCC. Commissioner Denicola questioned why the same rule would not apply to the tower.

Commissioner McDavid expressed concerns about costs of the tower and advised that if the City of Zachary can contribute, he will have to get the approval of the Zachary City Council.

Tammy Armand raised additional questions about the tower and whether the tower will solve the coverage problems in the known problem areas and building. She expressed concerns about whether the planned state testing will yield valid results due to type of radios used. She also raised the question of recurring costs. Mr. Delome stated that because this is a self-supporting tower, the annual maintenance cost should be around \$10,000.

Chairman Gautreaux advised that he wants a tower solution that solves all of the problems for all agencies.

Commissioner Kimble moved that the District administration provide the Board with a report on the cost for the entire tower project and how it will be funded after the testing is completed. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

911 phone System

Joe Thompson reported on the status of the NGA911 transition. The parties are still working on the system. The District is working with agencies to identify solutions for bringing in agency admin lines into the 911 call handling system. Livingston Parish is now online and NGA911 is ironing out the bugs. This should prevent many of those bugs from appearing in the District's system.

Commissioner Kimble questioned when the 911 team would be involved. Mr. Thompson advised that he intends to involve the 911 team and they should be getting this together in 2-3 weeks.

NEW BUSINESS:

Other Recent Developments

There was a 911 issues and AT&T eventually resolved them. All parties cooperated to do this.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Financial Report

The financial report was presented by Scott Lazarone, CPA.

The District finished 2022 with approximately \$12 million in cash. 2022 revenues were only \$6,000 behind projected revenues. Operationally, there were \$380,000 in unused budgeted funds, but \$280,000 will be paid out due to delayed payments. Factoring these delayed payments in, the District finished 2022 with \$100,000 to the good. He is still awaiting the "true-up" on the City-Parish personnel contract.

Commissioner Evans questioned whether some of the District's cash should be invested. Mr. Lazarone pointed out that the fund balance is currently bearing interest. He, however, stated that it may be beneficial to consider investing in a CD.

Report on Operations

Brenda Welch reported on the operations of the District.

Legal Updates

Mr. Olinde reported on the lease and lease negotiations. He also reported on legislative efforts.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Kimble moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.