

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes August 16, 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 16th day of August 2023 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Acting Chairman Waites.

Commissioner Kimble gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Evans led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Commissioner Darnell Waites (Acting Chair), Commissioner Wade Evans, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Michael Denicola, Commissioner Myron Daniels, and Commissioner David McDavid.

Absent: Chairman Gautreaux (arrived later).

The Acting Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present at Meeting Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Joe Thompson (EBRPCD), Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), Fire Chief Dan Kimble (ZFD), Fire Chief Gerry Tarleton (SGFD), Fire Chief Stephen Branscum (CFD), Eric Romero (CPIS), Tammy Armand (CPIS), Ricky Klug (EBRSO), Chief Keith Pease (Baker FD) and Kenny Loup (BRPD).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner McDavid moved to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2023 regular meeting. Commissioner Daniels seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Financial Status

Scott Lazarone, CPA presented the financial report.

As of June 30, 2023 the District had a cash balance of approximately \$11.2 million. Mr. Lazarone pointed out revenue highlights including prepaid wireless revenues in the last month of the quarter is the reason that revenues appear high for the month. He also pointed out that there was approximately \$28,000 in interest earnings.

Salaries and other expenses are in line with the budget.

Fee collection revenues are slightly behind budget.

Capital Outlay expenditures are lagging slightly behind budget, but this will catch up to the budget as the year goes on.

Mr. Lazarone stated that there is a sweep service available that may increase interest earnings. Commissioner Evans warned that the District needed to make sure its funds remained easily accessible.

Commissioner Daniels moved to accept the financial report. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

911 Phone System Upgrade

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

Training and system build-out are continuing. Classes will be held this month on the new NGA911 system. There was a meeting with all agencies on August 10, 2023 to discuss rolling over to NGA911 and related issues. The District is still waiting for a new ISD to be installed at St. Louis. Data from the existing system is still being cleaned up before being uploaded into the new system. Another email will be sent out to all users regarding usernames and other information to ensure that everybody is ready for Go Live. The District just received GIS data to establish PSAP boundaries and this should be put into the new system.

Commissioner Denicola asked Mr. Thompson whether the new system would split up calls to between Parish and the City. Mr. Thompson stated that this would only happen in an overflow situation. Presently all overflow (City and Parish) goes to the BRPD. Under the new system, if the EBR Primary PSAP / EMS is tied up, overflow City 911 calls first go to the BRPD, and overflow Parish 911 calls go to the EBRSO. If the Zachary PSAP / EBRSO was tied up, the calls would overflow to Baker PSAP. If Baker PSAP were tied up, they would roll over to EMS. This was discussed in the August 10, 2023 meeting with agencies. Messrs. Thompson and Verlander discussed various overflow scenarios under the new system.

Commissioner Kimble stated that the August 10, 2023 meeting was the first time he was informed that BRFD would get overflow. Director Verlander advised that BRFD was a rollover recipient under the current system and it would be a fourth-tier overflow on the new system.

Commissioner Daniels questioned whether BRPD would be doing a 911 function under this overflow arrangement and whether the calls would be coming into BRPD administrative lines. Director Verlander and Mr. Thompson explained that the calls would not be coming into BRPD administrative lines.

Commissioner Evans stated that overflow brings up the question of whether the District needs more call takers. He asked the question of how many more call-takers does the District need to handle its call load.

Commissioners Denicola and Kimble put forward call volumes and employee counts from other communications districts and pointed out that the number of call takers was set years ago and needs to be re-examined.

Commissioner Waites suggested that the District staff should do a comparison with other communications districts and provide the Board with that information. Director Verlander stated that the Board had to be careful to make sure that any comparison was an "apples-to-apples" comparison.

North Tower Project

David Luker reported on this item.

He contacted KAY radio regarding the cost of the tower. They developed a proposal based on working with Motorola. KAY radio will not share this proposal if the District has to use a bid process in order to build the tower.

Mr. Olinde reported on his meeting with the owners of the proposed tower site. They are very cooperative and agreeable to a lease under generous terms. He also stated that the RFP/bid process would have to be used to build the tower.

Commissioner Evans moved to amend the agenda to consider authorizing a bid/RFP process for the tower, Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

Commissioner Evans moved to approve moving forward with an RFP/Bid. Commissioner McDavid seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Call Center Staffing- Increase in EMS employee benefits

Director Verlander presented on this item.

Director Verlander stated that he received notice from City-Parish Finance that employee benefit costs will increase by approximately \$124,000 in 2024.

Commissioner McDavid asked questions about beginning salaries. Director Denicola answered these questions.

Commissioner Evans went through the cost numbers and suggested adding more call takers. Commissioner Evans requested contacts from other communications districts so he could determine what they are doing in terms of numbers of calls and employees answering them. Commissioner Denicola provided Commissioner Evans with a NENA survey of communications districts across the country containing relevant data.

A discussion of costs and revenues ensued. Mr. Lazarone commented that the District needs to look at total employee costs instead of individual salaries.

Commissioner Waites thought that ten more call takers would be sufficient.

Commissioner Evans stated that the District needs to hire as many call takers as the District can afford.

Commissioner Daniels stated that the focus needs to be on safety (as opposed to money) and service. Because people are paying for the call-taking service, the District needs to consider increasing staff if it will make service better.

Commissioner Kimble moved to establish a committee to investigate these issues. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Other Recent Developments

Director Verlander presented on this item.

Commissioner Daniel asked about a data problem that BRPD is having. Director Verlander explained the problem: apparently an API that has been bringing the CAD data to the BRPD has been missing data for various reasons. Bassam Harb from 365

Labs also helped explain the problem with the API. Director Verlander stated that 365 Labs can fix this problem by adjusting or creating a new API. 365

Labs wants \$3,600 payment for the fix. Director Verlander pointed out that the API is being used uniquely by the agency and the agency should be paying for the fix. Director Verlander passed this information to City-Parish IS Director Romero and also advised him that he could contact Central Square if he wanted Central Square (instead of 365 Labs) to create another API.

City Parish IS Director Romero gave his understanding of the API problem. This issue began in May 2023 when the CAD system was updated. Commissioner Kimble asked why 365 Labs was not maintaining the API. Director Verlander stated the API seems to be working fine and the issue is with the CAD system. The problem is an intermittent problem and this makes it more difficult to deal with.

In response to Commissioner Denicola's questions, Mr. Thompson and Bassam Harb assured the Board that no data is lost if it is not transferred.

Mr. Romero asked that he be given "read only access" only to the data fields that BRPD needs. Commissioner Evans moved to allow this. Commissioner McDavid seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

(Chairman Gautreaux entered the meeting during this discussion.)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Mr. Olinde reported that there were no additional legal matters to be discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

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