

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes September 27, 2023 – 1:00 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 27th day of September 2023 for a duly noticed regular (rescheduled) public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Waites gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Kimble led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

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

Absent: Commissioner Myron Daniels,

The 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 Waites moved to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2023 regular meeting. Commissioner McDavid seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Denicola asked that the Board be provided with draft minutes earlier than the day before the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Financial Status

Scott Lazarone, CPA presented the financial report.

Mr. Lazarone went over the July 31, 2023 financial statements. As of June 30, 2023 the District had a cash balance of approximately \$11 million. Expenditures are in line with the budget.

Commissioner Evans requested that, if possible, actual numbers as percentages of the budgeted numbers be included in the expense and revenue items in the financial statements. Mr. Lazarone stated that he will provide these going forward.

Mr. Lazarone stated that some of the Capital Outlay budget will be rolled over to next year due to timing of projects.

Commissioner McDavid moved to accept the financial report. Commissioner Denicola seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

911 Phone System Upgrade

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

The District is in the process of moving over all agencies from the old system to NGA911. The agencies that have already been transitioned to NGA911 are St. George Fire Protection District No. 2, Baker Police Department, Baton Rouge Police Department and Baton Rouge Fire Department. Work on moving administrative lines is also underway. The transition of EBRSO and EMS had been delayed due to a pending AT&T work order.

Mr. Thompson described the transition/Go Live process. He explained that there have been minor "hiccups" in the transition process but nothing major. The Chairman asked about the "minor hiccups" and Mr. Thompson gave some examples.

Mr. Thompson explained details of the involved testing process that is being employed during the transition to NGA911. Ricky Klug (EBRSO) asked questions about line testing that Mr. Thompson answered.

Mr. Thompson reported that NGA911 technicians should be on site for approximately 2 more weeks to facilitate this process, but there are no hard deadlines set at this point. He also reported that there are local technicians available as well.

Overall, Mr. Thompson reported that NGA911 has been good to work with.

North Tower Project

Todd Campbell reported on this item. He reported that after the lease is acquired the construction process will begin and soil testing can start.

Mr. Olinde presented the proposed lease with the landowners of the tower site. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the proposed lease. Commissioner McDavid seconded this motion. The motion unanimously passed. The Board and audience recognized the landowners, Larry and Kathleen Powenski, and thanked them for their generosity.

NEW BUSINESS:

2024 Budget Draft Discussion

Director Verlander presented on this item.

Director Verlander advised the Board that the District's administrative team is currently overburdened and two additional employees are immediately necessary. He proposed: (1) hiring a Network System Manager; (2) moving the current administrative assistant to a newly created position of Administrative Manager; and, (3) hiring a new administrative assistant.

Director Verlander asked Mr. Lazarone to investigate whether the District can afford this proposal. Mr. Lazarone presented the Board with his analysis showing that the Board can afford to do this immediately based on its additional interest earnings. Mr. Lazarone reported that there would be an amendment to the 2023 budget to reflect this if the Board were to approve it.

Commissioner Kimble asked questions about the positions that Director Verlander was proposing. Mr. Verlander provided answers to those questions and the details of the new positions. Commissioner Kimble also asked about comparisons with other communications districts. Mr. Verlander and Brenda Welch indicated that districts around the state (including Bossier, Orleans, Jefferson, Caddo, Calcasieu, Terrebonne, Ascension and Livingston) had been contacted to conduct this comparison. Director

Verlander reported that the other communications districts have substantially more administrative positions.

Commissioner Waites moved to approve Director Verlander's proposal. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. The Chairman conducted a roll call vote. The motion unanimously passed.

Other Recent Developments

Commissioner Kimble stated that he wanted to follow-up on the committee to look at 911 call taker staffing that the Board voted to create at the last meeting. After reviewing the appointees and their back-ups, Commissioner Kimble requested that there be some written documentation regarding the creation of the committee and its mission. Mr. Olinde advised the Board that he would prepare a written resolution memorializing the Board's actions on this matter.

Mr. Verlander advised the Board that additional call takers would impact the 2024 budget. Mr. Olinde advised the Board that this could be addressed in an amendment to the 2024 budget if necessary.

Commissioner Kimble further raised the issue of aging and decrepit equipment at the Harding location. He noted that this issue should be given priority. Director Verlander advised that new equipment will be funded by the rate increase and will be included in the proposed 2024 budget. There will be an upgrade of the entire system at all locations that will address these issues.

Commissioner Evans expressed his frustration at not having a single 911 call taking location instead of three.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

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