

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes November 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 November 2023 for a duly noticed public budget hearing and regular public meeting.

I. PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2024 BUDGET AND 2230 BUDGET AMENDMENTS

The public hearing was opened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Evans gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Kimble led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Wade Evans, Commissioner Designate Andy Murphy (by Commissioner Darnell Waites), Commissioner Designate Amber Guidry (by Commissioner David McDavid), Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Michael Denicola, and Commissioner Myron Daniels

Absent: None

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA, Joe Thompson (EBRPCD), Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), and Larry Powinski.

Presentation and Hearing of Proposed 2024 Budget and 2023 Budget Amendments

Director Verlander provided the proposed 2024 budget and his budget message.

Scott Lazarone, CPA reviewed, explained, and commented upon, the proposed 2024 Budget and 2023 Budget Amendments.

An opportunity for comments by the Public and Board members was provided. There were no public or Board comments.

Commissioner Kimble inquired as to why “Assistance to Other Gvt Ag” under the “Contractual Services” category has doubled from last year. Director Verlander advised the money was for the Baker and Zachary PSAPs.

Commissioner Kimble inquired what the \$250,000 amount for “furniture” under the “Supplies” category was for. Director Verlander confirmed that this was for updating items in the communications center. Mr. Lazarone explained that because the total cost of the updating the communications center could be in the \$1.2 million range, the plan was to budget \$250,000 per year for the next six years to do this.

Commissioner Kimble inquired as to why “Other Contractual Services” item in the “Contractual Services” category went from \$5,000 to \$53,000 and wanted to know if this increase was associated with Todd Campbell. Mr. Lazarone explained that Mr. Campbell’s compensation is listed as a salary item and this “other contractual services” item is something else. Mr. Lazarone would provide the answer as soon as he had computer access.

Commissioner Evans requested a summary of each line item in the presented budget. Mr. Lazarone advised that he would provide this.

Commissioner Designate Guidry asked when the 365 Labs would expire. Mr. Olinde advised that it was his recollection that the contract was for 6 years from the date the contract was executed.

Commissioner Evans moved that the Public Hearing be closed. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Chairman Gautreaux declared the public hearing closed.

II. REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Daniels moved to dispense with the preliminary matters covered in the public hearing. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Denicola moved to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Daniels seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Financial Report

The financial report was presented by Scott Lazarone, CPA.

The presented financials are through September 30, 2023. Cash is \$11.2 million and fund balance is at \$12.3 million. At 9 months, the watermark for revenues and expenses should, thus, be 75% of budget. Expenses are in line with the budget watermark. Revenues, however, are at 80%. This 5% difference is a result of the fee increase. There will be increased expenditures for the BUCC through the years' end.

Commissioner Kimble inquired as to the status of Fire RMS. Director Verlander advised that he is still waiting for signed MOU's from BRFD and Chaneyville fire protection district.

North Power Project

Todd Campbell reported that the geotechnical engineers had been contracted and should be onsite and doing soil borings within the next 3 weeks.

911 Upgrade

Joe Thompson presented on this.

NGA911 is releasing a large upgrade to software. AWS is scheduled to test its regional back-up capability during the next 2 weeks. The district is waiting until both the upgrade and the regional testing are successfully completed before starting the process of migrating the remaining 2 agencies (BRPD and EMS) to NGA911.

Commissioner Denicola asked Mr. Thompson if he had a timetable for the agency migration. Mr. Thompson advised that it would be sometime after the AWS regional testing occurs. He hoped to shortly have a date for the migration.

The Chairman advised that he was moving the noticed executive session to the end of the meeting for the convenience of the public. There was no objection to this administrative action.

NEW BUSINESS:

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Proposed 2024 Budget and Amendments to the 2023 Budget

Scott Lazarone, CPA presented the proposed 2024 Budget and the adjustments to the 2023 Budget. He offered to answer questions from Board members on these items but there were none.

Commissioner Evans moved that the proposed 2024 budget and 2023 budget amendments be adopted.

Commissioner Kimble asked whether new personnel positions were contained in the proposed 2024 budget. Messrs. Lazarone and Verlander confirmed that appropriations for the new positions were in the proposed 2024 budget. Commissioner Kimble expressed his view that the positions had not yet formally been approved by the Board and the funding for them should not be appropriated until the positions are approved.

The Chairman suggested that the Board adopt the budget but reserve the right to approve any new positions before appropriated funds can be expended for them.

Commissioner Evans amended his motion as follows: he moved that the proposed 2023 budget amendments be adopted and that the proposed 2024 be adopted with the proviso that the Director must obtain Board approval of the four new positions for which funds are appropriated before the Director can hire an employee in that position. Commissioner Denicola seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Report on Operations

Director Verlander presented the proposed meeting calendar for 2024. There was discussion regarding meeting times. Commissioner Evans moved to approve the proposed meeting calendar. Commissioner Daniels seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

EBR Sheriff's Office Major Ricky Klug spoke on the 911 Staffing Committee. Major Klug reported that the committee is still collecting data.

The Board publicly recognized and thanked Larry Powinski and his wife for providing the property for the new tower site. The Board and members of the public applauded Mr. Powinski and his wife.

Executive Session

Commissioner Evans moved that they go into executive session (as set forth on the public notice of the Board meeting) pursuant to La. R.S. 42:17(3), 42:17(10) and La. Code Evid. art. 506 to receive confidential and privileged legal advice from counsel.

Commissioner Kimble asked if City-Parish agencies could be involved in the executive session. Mr. Olinde advised against this because it might affect the validity of the attorney-client privilege. It could also affect security and confidentiality.

Commissioner Evans restated his motion. Commissioner Designate Murphy seconded Commissioner Evans' motion. The motion passed with a 4-3 vote. Commissioners Kimble, Daniels and Denicola voted against the motion.

The Board entered executive sessions at 3:08 p.m. CST.

The Board came out of executive session at 4:04 p.m. CST.

Commissioner Evans moved the Board return to Open Session. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

ADJOURNMENT

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