



**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS
DISTRICT**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2024 – 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 20th day of November 2024 for a duly noticed public budget hearing and regular public meeting.

**I. PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED 2025 BUDGET AND 2024
BUDGET AMENDMENTS**

The public hearing was opened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Waites gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Daniels led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Darnell Waites, Commissioner David McDavid, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Myron Daniels, and Commissioner Designate Jeremy Torres (designated by Commissioner Michael Denicola)

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA, Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Ricky Klug (EBRSO) and Todd Campbell (EBRPCD)

Presentation and Hearing of Proposed 2025 Budget and 2024 Budget Amendments

Director Verlander provided the proposed 2025 budget with Proposed Amendments to the 2024 budget and his budget message.

Scott Lazarone, CPA reviewed, explained, and commented upon the proposed 2025 Budget and 2024 Budget Amendments. Other than technical adjustments to specific accounts in the budget that had no overall impact on the proposed budget and amendments, the final proposed document is the same as the draft that was presented to the Board at its last meeting.

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

Commissioner Daniels inquired as to whether the proposed 2025 budget included a full RMS payment by BRPD. Mr. Lazarone responded that it is still in the proposed budget. He understands that there are questions about this payment, but the expenditure will be the same whether BRPD pays a full reimbursement or not. Mr. Lazarone advised that the budget can be amended in 2025 for any adjustments. In response to Mr. Lazarone's statement, Commissioner Daniels asked for Mr. Olinde's comments. Mr. Olinde responded, confirming Mr. Lazarone's comments and the fact that BRPD has made its position on the 2025 RMS payment clear on the public record.

Commissioner Waites 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

Immediately after the adjournment of the Public Hearing on the proposed 2025 budget and 2024 budget amendments, Chairman Gautreaux called the regular meeting to order.

In light of the preliminaries conducted during the public hearing, Chairman Gautreaux elected to dispense with the agenda preliminaries without objection.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Kimble moved to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2024, 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, 2024.

Cash was just under \$12 million and accounts receivable of \$915,000. Total assets were \$13.5 million. Non-spendable funds are approximately \$600,000 and restriction funds for capital projects are \$2.7 million. This leaves an unassigned fund balance of approximately \$9 million. Total fund balance is approximately \$13.5 million.

The budget watermark was 75%. Service revenue of 5% ahead of this watermark. Interest earnings of \$400,000 are double the watermark due to high interest rates. This will be addressed by a 2024 budget amendment. Salaries and benefits at 55% and this will be addressed by amendments. Supply expense is at 8% because furniture has not yet been purchased. Contractual expenses are under 60% but a couple of items are coming up that will bring this category in line: PSAP payments and RMS reimbursements. Capital outlay was \$1.2 million on a total budget of \$2.2 million. Some of this will be rolled onto 2025. The overall change in fund balance as of September 31, 2024, was a positive \$985,000. Mr. Lazarone cautioned that the district will probably not end the year with this much surplus.

Commissioner McDavid moved to approve the financial report. Commissioner Designate Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

2025 Budget and 2024 Amendments

Commissioner Kimble moved to amend the agenda to consider adoption of the proposed 2025 budget and 2024 amendments at this point on the agenda. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Mr. Lazarone presented the proposed 2025 budget and 2024 amendments.

Commissioner Waites moved to adopt the proposed 2025 budget and 2024 budget amendments. Commissioner Kimbe seconded the motion. The motion passed with 5 yeas and 1 nay. Commissioner Daniels was the dissenting vote.

North Tower Project

Todd Campbell reported on this item.

Project moving with some issues: tower foundation raising structure due to flood plain.

Director Verlander presented the change order for the installation of these items in the amount of \$159,000. Director Verlander pointed out that there are currently funds in the capital project account to pay for this change order. If there are additional change orders more money may need to be added to the capital project fund at the year's end.

Commissioner Waites advised that the District should closely monitor the capital project fund for this project to make sure funds are adequate.

Chairman Gautreaux asked when the actual tower installation would start. Mr. Campbell believes that this can start in January or February. And, once it starts the installation should take approximately 90 days.

Commissioner McDavid moved to approve the change order. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS

NGA911 Contract

Director Verlander presented on this item.

He advised that other 911 vendors have been identified, and NGA would like to amend the current contract to dovetail NGA's exit with the new vendor's entry. Mr. Olinde advised that NGA is being very cooperative in this process and easy to deal with.

Commissioner Waites inquired about gaps between vendors. Mr. Olinde advised that all contracts and amendments will overlap so there are no gaps. Director Verlander explained the cost and expenses side of the transition.

Commissioner Kimble inquired as to the causation of issues with NGA. Director Verlander addressed this issue. Commissioner Kimble asked whether the District has taken into account these issues when looking at new vendors. Director Verlander assured him that the District has done this.

Mr. Olinde explained that issues seem to occur in the District's system because it is much more complex than small rural 911 systems. Joe Thompson and Director Verlander expounded on this.

Commissioner Daniels inquired about the timeline for implementing a new vendor. Mr. Verlander explained that some of items that were done in connection with the NGA contract will carry over to the new vendor and cut the time associated with them out of the timeline. The minimum timeline will be 6 months. More than likely, the timeline will be 9 months but could be extended to 12 months if there are problems.

Commissioner Kimble inquired regarding the continuation of NGA services during the transition. Director Verlander assured him that this would be the case.

Commissioner Kimble asked whether there was a new vendor selected and moved that the Board consider the new 911 agenda vendor item in connection with the NGA contract amendment. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Director Verlander presented on this item.

Director Verlander explained that there are 2 sides to the 911 system: the ESINET and the call handling system (CHS). NGA currently provides both of these, but other vendors do not. The District, therefore, must get separate vendors for each of these 2 items.

There are 2 major ESINET providers in the US: AT&T and INdigital. AT&T has not gone full 911 Next Generation and is still using some older technology, while INdigital has already fully implemented 911 Next Generation services in the entire state of Alabama, some counties in Florida and are working in 16 other states. District staff met and conferred with 911 personnel from several other states that are using INdigital. They confirmed that other states are very satisfied with services provided by INdigital's ESINET.

Director Verlander advised that the CHS side of the equation is what the 911 call-takers actually see and use.

Joe Thompson explained that the District looked at several different CHS vendors. They did site visits and the vendors were narrowed down to 2: Carbine 911 and CentralSquare. These are both very good systems and other agencies are pleased with

them both. After considering both systems, the 911 team believes that CentralSquare will be the best vendor for the District. There are a number of reasons for this, but the primary reason is that CentralSquare is also the District's CAD vendor, and the 911 system should eventually be able to integrate with our CAD system.

Director Verlander noted that CentralSquare called this week and reduced its price by 50%. CentralSquare went down from approximately \$600,000 per year to approximately \$300,000 per year. Carbine 911 subsequently adjusted its pricing down some, but not comparable to CentralSquare.

Mr. Thompson pointed out that CentralSquare and INdigital are working together in other states, and they are very familiar with each other and the systems work smoothly.

Commissioner Kimble expressed his concern that CentralSquare has given some bad information in the past on CAD to CAD and it caused problems. Director Verlander responded that the CAD to CAD was promised by Tri-Tech which CentralSquare bought. CentralSquare has agreed to give the District a new and much better CAD to CAD connection at the same price as originally promised by Tri-tech. CentralSquare has been very responsive and positive and turned a sour relationship into a positive relationship. Mr. Thompson confirmed this and explained that CentralSquare has dramatically improved.

Commissioner Daniels inquired as to whether CentralSquare is new to cloud 911. Director Verlander stated that all of these cloud systems are new so to some extent they are new to it. Mr. Thompson explained that CentralSquare has had this CHS since 2012.

In response to Commissioner Kimble's inquiry, Director Verlander and Mr. Thompson explained the process they followed to select CentralSquare.

Commissioner Designate Torres wanted to make sure CentralSquare would not balloon the price down the road. Mr. Thompson stated that no one can guarantee the future prices. Mr. Verlander explained that CentralSquare is offering a 5-year contract that has a sliding scale pricing. The first year will be higher and subsequent years will go down and then climb back up.

Commissioner Waites moved to authorize Director Verlander to enter into an ESINET subscription agreement with INdigital. Commissioner Daniels seconded this motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Kimble moved that Director Verlander be authorized to enter into a subscription contract with CentralSquare for the District's CHS. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

Commissioner Kimble moved that Director Verlander be authorized to enter into a change order to amend the current NGA911 contract to end that contract 60 days after the Go Live date with the new 911 vendors. Commissioner Waites seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

PSAP Status

Director Verlander advised the Board that the new 911 vendors will need to know the District's PSAP configuration. He described the current PSAP configuration and related issues: Harding, Zachary (being answered by EBRSO), and Baker (which has staffing problems). Director Verlander explained that he has been looking for a better way to do this. He believes that St. George Fire District, which already has a new building, redundant power supply and plenty of room to expand its communications and 911 answering capabilities, might be a good location for a secondary Parish PSAP. This would replace the Zachary and Baker PSAPs limited scope and limited capabilities. A St. George PSAP could be responsible for answering a large portion of the 911 calls in the parish. It would also serve as an excellent back-up in the event other locations went down. Director Verlander stated that he was not asking for a vote on this issue today but wanted a discussion with the Board on the issue.

Commissioner Waites stated that there are too many moving parts that he believes still need to be considered and he could not support the PSAP arrangement described by Director Verlander at this time. Commissioner Waites expressed his desire to talk with interested parties before making any decision or changing the PSAP arrangement.

Chairman Gautreaux noted that the PSAP arrangement described by Director Verlander would not change the way calls are dispatched, but only the location where 911 calls are answered. He reminded everyone that we need to do what is best for the public. He suggested that the Board have a meeting about this issue only, and that before such a meeting Board members should all sit down with their individual agencies and get their input.

Commissioner McDavid asked what the purpose of the BUCC was if St. George would be used as a back-up. Director Verlander responded that in the event Harding went down, it would take time for 911 call takers to re-locate to the BUCC and get up and running. St. George has its own CAD system and could instantaneously step in the event of other PSAP failures. This would ensure seamless transition while 911 call-taker relocated to the BUCC.

Chairman Gautreaux asked St. George Fire Chief if St. George could handle this. Chief Tarleton responded that St, George could start immediately.

Commissioner Kimble stated that he believes Director Verlander should address issues at Harding that could lead to problems. Director Verlander responded that the ATM

building does not belong to the District and the large projects that need to be done there would have to be done by the owner. Director Verlander also stated that once the BUCC gets full 911 capability, then agencies at Harding can be moved to the BUCC while the items that the District would like to upgrade are accomplished.

Chairman Gautreaux stated that the ATM building is a City-Parish building. Commissioner Kimble stated that the City-Parish needs to be notified of any problems or issues with the building so it can fix them. Mr. Thompson explained that he views it as more than a building issue.

Commissioner Waites stated that because all of these things are issues, he does not want to rush into any changes.

Commissioner McDavid exited the meeting at this point and appointed Amber Guidry as his Commissioner Designate to sit for the remainder of the meeting.

Upon the suggestion of Commissioner Daniels, Commissioner Kimble moved that the Board go into executive session to obtain confidential legal advice from counsel. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed, and the Board went into executive session at 3:55 p.m.

The Board opened the meeting room doors to the public at 4:34 p.m. and Commissioner Waites moved to come out of executive session. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed. Chairman Gautreaux noted that no votes were taken in executive session.

Recent Developments

Jim Verlander reported that there were none.

Administrative Matters

Director Verlander presented the 2025 meeting dates. A motion to approve the dates was made by Commissioner Designate Torres and second by Commissioner Kimble. The motion unanimously passed.

Legal Updates

Mr. Olinde reported there were none.

Adjournment

Commissioner Daniels moved that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Waites seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.