

**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS
DISTRICT**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2025 – 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 Parish Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 18th day of February 2025 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The public meeting was called to order 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 David McDavid, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Myron Daniels, and Commissioner Michael Denicola

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

Others Present Included The Following:

Director Jim Verlander, Joe Thompson, Brenda Welch, Todd Campbell, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Waites moved to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2025 public hearing and 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 December 31, 2024. These are preliminary year end numbers.

Cash was a little under 12.1 million. Receivables were 938,000, which represents remittances from carriers for December services that were received in January. Prepaid expenses are 520,000, and total assets just over 13,500,000. On the liability side of the ledger, there were 185,000 in accounts payable to vendors; and, accrued expenses of 337,000 that represent the second half of 2024 PSAP payments that are to be paid out in 2025. This leaves a total fund balance right at 13,000,000. About 2.6 million of that fund balance is restricted for future capital projects

Projected service revenues were \$7.95 million and actual revenues were just under \$8.1 million. Mr. Lazarone noted that prepaid wireless fees from the state have seen a downward trend over the last two to three years. Interest earnings are 500,000 for 2024 on a budget of 400,000. Salaries are at 91% of total budget, benefits are at 94% of total budget, supplies well under budget, but 250,000 of supplies was for the furniture upgrades at Harding that will be carried forward into 2025. Contractual services are about 470,000 under budget. Mr. Lazarone explained the reasons for this lag in expenses.

With respect to capital outlay, expenditures were 1,250,000 on a total budget of 1.6 million, leaving about 348,000 in capital outlay project allocations to move into 2025.

In light of the foregoing, the District had a 2024 surplus of 515,000. This surplus appears to be due to the District high interest earnings in 2024.

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

North Tower Project

Todd Campbell reported on this item.

Environmental studies are on track to be completed by March. There are no apparent delays. Assuming everything goes according to plan, Mr. Campbell may have a groundbreaking date to announce at the next Board meeting.

CAD Update

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

CAD is going well. The District has installed a new version of 25 in the test environment, and the CAD team has started testing it. There was also a CAD system patch upgrade that went well. District staff are also in the middle of several other ongoing projects with CAD.

911 Phone System Transition

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

On the ESINET side, INdigital came in for another in-depth site visit last week, and visited all the locations. ISPs connectivity is being installed at all the sites, and satellite connectivity will be installed for further redundancy.

On the call handling side, Central Square is coming in for a site visit next month. At that time, Central Square will meet with District staff and the 911 team to present Central Square's its planned configuration and implementation.

Commissioner Daniels inquired as to whether the configuration of 911 PSAPs has been finalized. Jim Verlander stated that the PSAP question has not yet been resolved because call volume data, which was not previously available, is being pulled. This data will be presented to the Board in connection with the question of how the PSAPs will be configured.

Mr. Verlander stated that he had provided all Board members with copies of the INdigital and Central Square 911 contracts. He also advised that the District is still negotiating the addendum to the NGA contract. It appears that the District will pay NGA \$20,000 a month to cover NGA's actual cost of the services that it provides during the transition. Once the District transitions away from NGA, that \$20,000 will go to the new vendors who are providing the services that NGA will cease providing.

RMS

Mr. Verlander also reminded the Board and all present that the District would cease paying any portion of RMS/JMS costs at the end of March 2026.

Commissioner Kimble asked for the history of the District RMS payment, Mr. Verlander stated that in the 1999-2000 timeframe the District was looking for a CAD system. When the CAD system was being procured the vendor, ADSI, advised that it had developed what was then a new product: RMS. The District decided to get the CAD system and RMS together as a package from ADSI. Mr. Verlander believes that, based on the statutes, RMS should never have been included in the District's contract with ADSI. He does not believe that RMS fits within the legal purpose of the District.

Commissioner Evans stated that he did not believe that the District should pay for RMS if it is not within the purpose of the District. Commissioners Evans and Waites then asked what exactly the function of RMS is. Mr. Verlander explained that RMS is a report management system. For example, when police go to an incident and a report has to be written, RMS is a database for those reports. The same goes for fire RMS.

Commissioner Evans expressed his concern that, if RMS is beyond the scope of the District's purpose, spending money on it could run afoul of the law.

Commissioner Kimble asked Mr. Verlander about his 3-bucket analogy, and wanted to know if Mr. Verlander is now saying there is only 2 buckets. Mr. Verlander responded that he still believes the 3-bucket analogy is appropriate. 911 and CAD should take priority over everything. The tower is in bucket 2 spilling over into bucket 3.

Commissioner Kimble pointed out that it all has to do with public safety. He also pointed out that RMS is tied into CAD. Mr. Verlander responded that CAD and RMS are still two completely different things.

The discussion and debate regarding RMS and District funding thereof continued. Mr. Verlander pointed out that the District is the only one in the state that pays for RMS. Commissioner Kimble asked Director Verlander what action he was requesting that the Board take. Mr. Verlander responded that he was requesting no action, but just wanted to make sure that all agencies were aware that District funding of RMS would end in March 2026.

Commissioner Kimble asked Mr. Olinde for his opinion on the question of funding RMS. Mr. Olinde responded that the core functions of the District are 911 and GIS, and the further the District gets away from that the less clear the answer is. There are some attorney general opinions that may be relevant. It appears that, if permissible, the funding of RMS might be on the edge of permissibility.

Chairman Gautreaux requested that Mr. Olinde provide the Board with a legal opinion on the limits of what District funds can be spent on. Mr. Olinde advised that he thought that he could present such an opinion at the next Board meeting. The Chairman noted that the Board should place an executive session on the agenda for the next Board meeting to discuss this legal opinion.

NEW BUSINESS

Recent Developments

Jim Verlander reported on this.

The District received a letter from the Mayor of the City of Saint George requesting membership on the Board.

Commissioner Waites asked what the options for adding a St. George member to the Board are. Mr. Olinde responded that the Metro Council can substitute the Saint George member for one of the current members of the board. Or, the Council can elect to go to the legislature and expand the Board. It is the Metro Council's decision to make.

A discussion began about whether the Board should take any action on this matter and, if so, what action would be appropriate. The consensus of the Board was that the addition of a City of St. George representative would be appropriate. Commissioners Kimble and McDavid both expressed their belief that no current Board member should be removed given all of the time and effort that all Board members have invested in the Board. In response to questions from Board members, Mr. Olinde stated that he believed that one or two other jurisdictions in the state may have Boards with more than seven members. Commissioner Daniels pointed out that East Baton Rouge is one of the largest parishes in the state and for that reason, and in light of the fact that there is precedent, the Board should ask that the Metro Council seek legislation to expand the Board.

Todd Morse (BRPD) asked that the Board specifically request that the Metro Council seek legislation adding two more seats to the Board to allow a St. George representative and to keep an odd number to prevent unbreakable ties.

Commissioner Waites moved that the Board, by means of a letter to be issued by the Chairman, request that the Metro Council propose Legislation to add two more seats to the Board to accommodate a representative from the City of St. George and another member from whatever entity the council deems appropriate. Commissioner Kimble seconded the motion. The motion passed 6-1 with Commissioner Evans dissenting.

Administrative Matters

Operations of the District

Jim Verlander reported that there was nothing to report.

Legal Updates

Mr. Olinde reported that there were no other legal matters to discuss.

Adjournment

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