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EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Public Hearing and Regular Meeting Minutes — October 21, 2026 — 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 21st day of October 2026 for a duly noticed public hearing and regular public meeting. The public hearing was called to order by Chairman Sid Gautreaux. Fire Chief Stephen Branscum gave the Invocation. Commissioner T.J. Morse led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chairman called roll:

Commissioner Name	Status / Representing
Chairman Sid Gautreaux	Present
Commissioner Darnell Waites	Present (Assistant Police Chief Chris Becnel designated)
Commissioner David McDavid	Present
Commissioner Wade Evans	Present (Fire Chief Stephen Branscum designated)
Commissioner Michael Kimble	Present
Commissioner Chris Landry	Present
Commissioner Myron Daniels	Present (Police Chief T.J. Morse designated)
Commissioner Clay Rives	Present
Commissioner Chad Roberson	Present

Others Present Included The Following: EBRPCD Director Jim Verlander, EBRPCD Projects Manager Joe Thompson, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Jennifer Kimble, and Louann LeBlanc.

I. PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION INCREASING THE EMERGENCY TELEPHONE SERVICE CHARGE

The public hearing was called to order by Chairman Gautreaux pursuant to statutory public notice and Louisiana Legislative Act 947 of the 2026 Regular Session. Chairman Gautreaux introduced the item regarding the proposed adoption of a resolution increasing the monthly emergency telephone service charge on all commercial mobile radio service (CMRS) wireless connections within East Baton Rouge

Parish from $1.25 per month up to, and including, $2.00 per month, and business lines from $1.99 to $2.50 per month.

Presentation on Proposed Resolution: Director Jim Verlander delivered the presentation on behalf of the District. Director Verlander presented the justification for the proposed fee adjustment under Act 947 (House Bill 463). Director Verlander provided the Board of Commissioners with documents from previous Board meetings, including Justification for 911 Emergency Telephone Service Fee Surcharge Increase in East Baton Rouge Parish and Executive Summary of Projected Additional Expenditures for FY 2027. The Board was also provided with FY 2027 Budget Summary — Fee Scenarios, prepared by Scott Lazarone, who was not present for the meeting. That document detailed projected 2027 Budget scenarios for no fee increase, a partial fee increase or a full fee increase. Director Verlander explained that Federal Communications Commission (FCC) mandates require carriers to deliver Next Generation 911 (NG911) data to local Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs), and state legislation empowers communications districts to adjust fee rates up to $2.00 to help fund the implementation of that technology.

Board Discussion on Harding Facility Investments & Operational Infrastructure: An extensive Board discussion ensued regarding capital allocation and primary PSAP facility improvements. Commissioner McDavid asked if there were plans to use any of the additional funds to upgrade Harding Blvd. Director Verlander explained that upgrades to Harding Blvd. are planned as part of the budget, which includes improvements to the infrastructure for 911 (NG911), CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) and computer networks, the replacement of computers, along with other funding already set aside for the Desk Project.

Commissioner Kimble asked about the stability of NG911 services in East Baton Rouge Parish. Director Verlander explained that the transition to NG911 was completed in early 2026 and that only two very brief incidents involving the Next Generation core services provided by INdigital had occurred since then.

Commissioner Rives presented that Metro Council Rowdy Gaudet emailed the Board of Commissioners and commented on the fee increase.

Commissioner Landry and Commissioner Rives emphasized that while the Backup Unified Communication Center (BUCC) provides excellent redundancy, 100% of parish emergency calls filter through the primary PSAP at the Harding Boulevard facility (Melvin 'Kip' Holden Building). They stated that Harding Boulevard must be prioritized for complete infrastructure overhauls before allocating rate increase revenues elsewhere.

Itemized Accounting of Harding Boulevard Work by Joe Thompson: In response to Commissioners' inquiries, EBRPCD Projects Manager Joe Thompson provided a detailed, itemized accounting of physical, network, display, and security infrastructure work completed by the District at the Harding Boulevard facility over the past 2 to 3 years:

1. Demolished and removed thousands of feet of old Cat 5 cabling and abandoned 20-year wire runs under the access floor, pulling brand-new Cat 6 Ethernet cabling to every dispatch desk on the floor and installing extra dark cabling for future growth.
2. Rebuilt dispatch workstation PCs and installed new high-performance graphics cards across all positions to meet CentralSquare hardware requirements.
3. Purchased and deployed over 45 brand-new computer workstations and monitors dedicated specifically to the CentralSquare Vertex 911 call-handling system within the last year.
4. Added a new dedicated Communications District equipment rack in the Harding server room and contracted Buffalo Electric to run dedicated power lines to the rack.
5. Decommissioned a legacy 8 to 9 year old server storage array and replaced it with a new high-capacity storage array, representing a $300,000 capital investment.
6. Installed new Palo Alto firewalls at the network edge, Fortinet firewalls for 911 core services, and two

new Aruba network switches on the call floor, replacing a 20+ year-old core architecture.
7. Shifted CAD and 911 Services (CHS) to cloud-based architecture.
8. Contracted two primary ISPs for 911 core services, deployed a dedicated satellite backup link, and integrated two secondary ISPs for multi-path network redundancy.
9. Established a secondary 911 fallback system on isolated switches and deployed MEVO fallback emergency phones at every desk.
10. Deployed ThreatLocker, SentinelOne, and PDQ endpoint security, engaged a 3rd-party firm for 24/7 network traffic monitoring, and initiated virtual environment migration from VMware to Hyper-V/VME.

Commissioner Rives discussed the long-term financial sustainability of BUCC facility rent versus City-Parish ownership of the Harding facility, advocated for taxpayer stewardship, and suggested evaluating partial rate fee scenarios ($1.75 vs. $2.00). Director Verlander addressed the BUCC location rationale (proximity to the Tier 3 Data Center housing backup servers) and clarified that a $1.75 partial fee represents a break-even point, while a $2.00 fee provides a necessary technology reserve for rising software and hardware costs.

Discussion continued between Commissioners and Director Verlander regarding the potential fee increase and the current fund balance, including consideration of whether a fee increase is needed.

Commissioner Kimble reviewed the public comment email provided by Metro Councilman Rowdy Gaudet. Director Verlander noted that after receiving the email, to help answer several of the questions, he provided Metro Councilman Rowdy Gaudet with the documents that had previously been provided to the Commissioners.

Public Comments & Hearing Adjournment: Chairman Gautreaux opened the floor for public comment, limiting remarks to two minutes per speaker. St. George Police Chief Todd Morris spoke in favor of the fee increase, emphasizing that dispatch personnel and technical staff require adequate funding and resources to maintain high-quality emergency communications. Hearing no further public comments, Chairman Gautreaux called for a motion to adjourn. Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Kimble and seconded by Commissioner Stephen Branscum, the public hearing was unanimously adjourned.

II. REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING

Immediately following the adjournment of the public hearing, Chairman Gautreaux called the regular public meeting of the East Baton Rouge Parish Communications District Board of Commissioners to order. In light of the preliminaries conducted during the public hearing, Chairman Gautreaux elected to dispense with the agenda preliminaries without objection, noting that a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Roberson moved to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2026 regular meeting as presented. Commissioner Kimble seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Committee Reports:

• **CAD Admin Team:** Jennifer Kimble (Baton Rouge Fire Department) presented on behalf of the committee. She reported that fire department representatives have been meeting weekly to standardize all shared dispatch data, response zones, and master premise aliases across 20+ fire agencies for the upcoming CAD Rebuild project and that they were excited to get the project underway.

Lt. Travis Snyder (EBR Sheriff's Office) also presented on behalf of the committee. He reported that the CAD Admin Team is looking at the last 7 years of CentralSquare CAD use holistically and identifying what needs to be changed and updated. They are reviewing tens of thousands of premises data, along with flags and caution notes that are used for first responders' safety. They have been looking at what other agencies are doing, and finding that other agencies are coming to East Baton Rouge to see how we are doing things, because we are leading the way on a lot of great ideas on how things should operate. CentralSquare (CAD provider) meets with the CAD Admin Team multiple times a week to discuss new technology advancements and request the team's guidance on how best to implement them.

• **Desk Project / Subcommittee:** Louann LeBlanc (EMS) presented the Desk Project Subcommittee report. She reported that the subcommittee met with dispatch personnel and vendors. The subcommittee is evaluating floor layouts and power draw requirements with DPW and Buffalo Electric.

Director Verlander asked whether there was any progress on relocating 311. Commissioner Rives reported that he has begun talks and that 311 can operate on laptops and be relocated out of the call room, freeing up 10 console spaces.

Joe Thompson (EBRPCD) requested that Commissioner Rives locate the floor grid drawings to identify wiring access requirements.

Financial Status Report: Director Jim Verlander presented the August 31, 2026 balance sheet on behalf of Scott Lazarone, CPA, who was absent. Director Verlander noted that detailed financial accounting and line-item reviews could be presented at the next meeting when Mr. Lazarone is present.

Consideration of Adoption of Resolution Increasing Emergency Telephone Service Charge (Act 947) & Motion to Defer: Director Jim Verlander presented a resolution for increasing fees under Act 947. Chief Morse asked for clarification on the legal process of the fee approval. Legal Counsel Henry Olinde confirmed that the Communications District is a separate political subdivision from the City-Parish and Metro Council, and the Board of Commissioners possesses sole governing authority to adopt the rate resolution. Once approved, the Communications District would then notify the phone carriers to start remitting the new amount.

Commissioner Rives raised concerns about the public optics of budgetary line items, such as vehicle allowances and reserve and contingency line items. Commissioner Rives moved to defer consideration of the resolution without date to allow further Board review and financial analysis. Commissioner Landry seconded the motion. Chairman Gautreaux called for a vote, and the motion to defer unanimously passed.

Action to Fund Three New Administrative Staff Positions (Fund Balance Transfer): Following the deferral of the rate resolution, an extensive discussion occurred regarding the critical need to immediately hire three administrative staff positions (Network System Specialist, Technical Specialist, and GIS Specialist) to assist technical personnel (Joe Thompson, Scott Anderson, and Lisa McDonald). Legal Counsel Henry Olinde advised that to take action on an item not on the published agenda, the Board must first amend the agenda by unanimous vote. Commissioner McDavid moved to amend the agenda to consider funding the three staff positions immediately from existing reserves. Commissioner Landry seconded the motion. Chairman Gautreaux called for a vote to amend the agenda, a role call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Commissioner McDavid then moved to approve a budget supplement to transfer necessary funds from the fund balance to cover the salaries, benefits, and vehicle allowances for the three new administrative positions. Commissioner Landry seconded the motion. Chairman Gautreaux called for a vote, and the motion unanimously passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

2027 Budget Draft Discussion: Director Jim Verlander reviewed the preliminary 2027 draft budget included in the Board packets. He stated that he would schedule individual meetings with Commissioners over the next month to address questions and refine expenditure projections prior to formal budget introduction in November.

Discussion of Director's Employment Contract Addendum (Agenda Amendment Withdrawn): Commissioner Rives raised the topic of Director Jim Verlander's employment contract (which comes due in January and annually renews). Legal Counsel Henry Olinde reminded the Board that to take action on an item not on the published agenda, the Board must first amend the agenda by unanimous vote. Commissioner Rives moved to amend the agenda to consider amending Director Verlander's employment contract. Fire Chief Stephen Branscum (designated for Commissioner Evans) stated that as a proxy representative, he was uncomfortable voting on a contract amendment without consulting Mayor Evans. Following discussion, Commissioner Rives withdrew his motion to amend the agenda and requested that the Director's employment contract item be placed on the regular agenda for the Board's next meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Report on Operations of the District: Director Jim Verlander thanked the CAD Admin Team and the Desk Subcommittee for their detailed reports and ongoing work.

Legal Updates: Legal Counsel Henry Olinde confirmed that the deferral of the Act 947 rate resolution was without prejudice, allowing the Board full legal authority to bring the item back for consideration at any future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Kimble moved that the meeting be adjourned. Commissioner Landry seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed, and the meeting adjourned.