

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Regular Meeting Minutes — September 16, 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 16th day of September 2026 for a duly noticed regular public meeting. The public meeting was called to order by Chairman Sid Gautreaux at 2:00 p.m. Commissioner designate Jeff LeDuff gave the Invocation. Commissioner Kimble led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chairman called roll:

Commissioner Name	Status
Chairman Sid Gautreaux	Present
Commissioner Darnell Waites	Present (Arrived Late)
Fire Chief Gordon Lipscomb (designated for Commissioner David McDavid)	Present
Commissioner Wade Evans	Present
Commissioner Michael Kimble	Present
Commissioner Chris Landry	Present
Commissioner Myron Daniels	Present
Jeff LeDuff (designated for Commissioner Clay Rives)	Present
Commissioner Chad Roberson	Present

Others Present Included the Following: Director Jim Verlander, Joe Thompson, Scott Lazarone CPA, and Legal Counsel Henry Olinde.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Daniels moved to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2026 meeting. Commissioner Kimble seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

Note on Agenda Order: Upon motion duly made by Commissioner Evans and seconded by Commissioner Kimble and unanimously passed, the Board adjusted the agenda order to consider the 911 and CAD Systems and Desk Project reports first, pending the arrival of Commissioner Waites for the Act 947 fee discussion.

Financial Status Report

The financial report was presented by Scott Lazarone, CPA. The presented financials were through July 31, 2026, representing seven months (58%) of the fiscal year. Mr. Lazarone reported a total cash position in the bank of just under \$12.0 million. Accounts receivable from carriers totaled \$620,000, and prepaid software subscriptions and maintenance agreements totaled \$620,000, bringing total assets to \$13.2 million. On the liability side, accounts payable totaled \$470,000, leaving an ending fund balance of \$12.7 million as of July 31, 2026.

Regarding revenues and expenditures versus budget, Mr. Lazarone reported that total fee revenue sat at 54% of budget (4% behind the 58% watermark). This shortfall continues to be driven by state prepaid wireless remittances, which yielded only 30% of their annual budget through seven months. Interest earnings remained strong at just under \$200,000, reaching 100% of the annual \$200,000 budget. Expenditures were well controlled: salaries and benefits tracked at 52% of budget (6% below watermark), contractual services stood at 47% (10% below watermark), and supplies were well under budget because the \$250,000 allocated for the desk project remains unspent. Capital outlay stood at \$40,000 on a \$250,000 budget, resulting in a year-to-date net increase in fund balance of \$587,000.

Commissioner Evans moved to approve the financial status report. Commissioner Roberson seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

911 and CAD Systems

Joe Thompson and Director Jim Verlander presented the status report on the 911 phone system and CAD Rebuild. Mr. Thompson reported that data preparation and cleanup are underway for the CAD Rebuild project, specifically evaluating and standardizing over 30,000 premise entries across the parish (such as establishing master aliases for duplicate listings) so that response zones and dispatch workflows are built on modern data standards without disrupting ongoing live operations.

On the 911 Vertex phone system, Mr. Thompson reported that CentralSquare and InDigital are configuring the User Acceptance Testing (UAT) environment for the dedicated test tenant. CentralSquare also has a list of open trouble tickets and is meeting with District personnel, along with agencies that use the 911 system, to review and update the tickets. CentralSquare recently deployed a major software sprint/patch that resolved several critical issues, such as, significantly improved Instant Recall Recorder (IRR) response speeds, and integrated multi-pod server resiliency, so that system load automatically fails over between pods if an issue arises. In response to questions by Commissioner Kimble regarding temporary switchovers to backup MEVO phone units, Mr. Thompson clarified that switchovers are executed selectively and proactively by system administrators out of an abundance of caution when updates are planned.

Desk Project at Harding

Director Jim Verlander and Commissioner Landry reported on the progress of the Harding Center console desk project. Commissioner Landry announced that he created an inter-agency email group and sent out calendar invitations for the Desk Subcommittee kick-off meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at MOSEP.

Discussion of Implementation of 2026 La. Legislature Act 947 (911 Fee Increase)

Director Jim Verlander presented a comprehensive justification and financial analysis regarding Act 947, which authorizes communications districts in Louisiana to increase monthly wireless 911 fees from \$1.25 up to \$2.00, and business lines from \$1.99 up to \$2.50. Director Verlander detailed a looming \$1.19 million annual revenue deficit for fiscal year 2027, driven by a 67.9% (\$729,000/year) drop in state

prepaid wireless fee remittances since 2020, an \$184,000 decline in sweep account interest earnings, and a \$276,000 increase in cloud-based software and infrastructure costs.

Director Verlander recommended increasing the monthly wireless subscriber fee to the maximum authorized rate of \$2.00 and business lines to \$2.50. A \$2.00 wireless fee would generate \$3.3 million in gross new revenue. Under the District's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), 45% (\$1.6 million) of all fee revenue is distributed directly to primary PSAPs (EMS and St. George) to support dispatcher salaries. The District retains 55% (\$1.99 million), yielding a net new revenue increase to the District of approximately \$800,000 per year after fully offsetting the \$1.19 million deficit.

Director Verlander outlined the proposed expenditure of the net \$800,000: \$240,000 annually for three critical administrative staffing positions (Network System Specialist, Technical Specialist, and GIS Specialist) to support over 3,000 public safety personnel across 26 agencies; \$30,000 for two student workers to manage GIS premise data; and the remainder dedicated to cyber security firewalls, CAD cloud infrastructure, and Vertex maintenance.

Director Verlander reported that communications districts across Louisiana—including Orleans, Vermilion, Webster, Livingston, Evangeline, Union, Caddo, Lincoln, Tangipahoa, Natchitoches, East Feliciana, Allen, Calcasieu, and Iberia are actively adopting wireless fee rate increases, with most being set at the new \$2.00 amount.

Scott Lazarone, CPA, presented a high-level supplemental financial analysis, providing a detailed reconciliation between cash balances and audited fund balances under Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) guidelines. Mr. Lazarone clarified the technical distinction between Director Jim Verlander's operational financial summary and the audited fund balance statement.

Mr. Lazarone reviewed the trajectory of the audited fund balance over the past 4.5 years. Mr. Lazarone emphasized that the June 30, 2026 audited balance includes \$716,000 in prepaid expenses (software subscriptions and maintenance contracts). Under GASB rules, prepaids are recognized as assets, but because the cash has already been disbursed, they represent non-spendable fund balance. Deducting the \$716,000 in non-spendable prepaids results in a real spendable fund balance of \$11.9 million. Consequently, over the 4.5-year period from December 31, 2021 to June 30, 2026, the District's actual spendable reserves decreased by approximately \$300,000.

Mr. Lazarone presented critical context regarding the role of interest earnings in sustaining the District's fund balance. Over the 4.5-year period, the District generated approximately \$1.4 million in cumulative interest earnings due to elevated interest rates. Mr. Lazarone warned that interest income is non-operating revenue that cannot be relied upon permanently. Had interest earnings been zero over the last 4.5 years, the district's spendable fund balance would have dropped by \$1.7 million, demonstrating that operating 911 fee revenues alone are failing to cover ongoing operating expenditures.

Commissioner Landry asked Director Verlander if all of the district's positions actually filled. Mr. Verlander responded that they were filled except for 2 student worker positions.

In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Kimble regarding why cash balances jumped from \$4.0 million in June 2022 to nearly \$11.0 million in July 2022, Mr. Lazarone provided historical background on the District's financial independence transition. When the District brought its financial management in-house on January 1, 2022, City-Parish finance estimated the total fund balance at approximately \$10.0 million. City-Parish advanced \$5.0 million up front in January 2022. City-Parish held back the remaining fund balance and capital outlay reserves until the final 2021 audit was completed in June 2022,

disbursing the remaining fund balance and capital outlay reserves in July 2022, causing the observed cash jump.

An extensive Board discussion ensued regarding financial stewardship, reserve levels, and public optics.

Commissioner Evans questioned whether the district's expenses in light of current fund balances required a fee increase. He expressed concern that revenues and PSAP payments need to be expressed in gross numbers for accuracy and not a net number. He warned of the negative optics of increasing fees while holding a \$12.7 million fund balance, advocating that fee adjustments should directly replace lost revenues without over-collecting solely to accumulate unencumbered reserves.

Commissioner Landry stated that any expenses related to 911 need to be partially borne by the district. The staff and Board need to look at all expenses and quantify them to determine whether a fee increase is necessary.

Commissioner Daniels expressed his concern about the need for increasing fees in light of current fund balances. He noted that the district is not for profit, and the people pay for it. He expressed that his primary concern was for the people that the district serves.

Commissioner Kimble and Commissioner Landry emphasized that their primary concern was ensuring sufficient resources for major capital upgrades at the 22-year-old Harding facility, including technology infrastructure, and related facility improvements needed to support reliable public safety operations.

Commissioner Evans and Commissioner Waites recommended establishing a predictable fee review schedule (every 3–5 years) and developing a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) with the City-Parish to formally share capital improvement costs at the Harding facility. Mr. Olinde clarified that expending Communications District funds to improve City-Parish real estate (Harding Center) requires a formal Intergovernmental Agreement / CEA establishing clear co-funding terms.

Mr. LeDuff explained that the Mayor's Office is attempting to identify funding sources for the needed improvements, whether through grants or other available funding mechanisms, but has not received the level of support necessary to make that happen. Mr. LeDuff made clear that he understands the district's technology systems require significant improvements and that those upgrades will require substantial funding to complete. Mr. LeDuff recommended that the district's funding needs and expenses should be evaluated on a predictable schedule. He also suggested a phase in for any fee increases.

Commissioner Kimble stated that the Board has not had time to review and digest the materials received from Director Verlander and needs more time to do this.

Chairman Gautreaux stated that the district is not trying to make money. Instead, the District just needs to provide the best equipment and service possible. He suggested that the Board consider the increase and also evaluate the continuing need for it every year.

Mr. Verlander stated that the proposed budget will depend on the Board's decision on the fee increase. Commissioner Daniels suggested that Mr. Verlander prepare versions of the proposed budget based on different fee increase scenarios so the board can consider the different options.

To ensure full public transparency and satisfy statutory requirements, the Board reached a consensus to publish the required notification for a Public Hearing prior to the October Board meeting. That notice will

state that the Board will consider a rate adjustment up to \$2.00 for wireless lines, allowing the Board full flexibility to evaluate public comments and select the final rate structure (i.e. no increase from \$1.25/month, full increase to \$2.00/month or an amount between \$1.25 and \$2.00/month) during the 2027 budget introduction in October and final adoption in November.

NEW BUSINESS:

Other Recent Developments

No new business items or recent developments were brought before the Board.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Report on Operations of the District

Director Jim Verlander reported no new items.

Legal Updates

Legal Counsel Henry Olinde provided legal guidance regarding historical desk purchase reimbursements. Mr. Olinde reported that following a review of Louisiana Attorney General opinions and consultation with Scott Lazarone, reimbursements to individual agencies (such as Zachary, Central, and Baker) can legally extend back only to January 1, 2024—the date when funds were first formally appropriated and budgeted by the Communications District for the desk project—and cannot cover purchases made prior to 2024.

ADJOURNMENT:

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