

**EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS
DISTRICT**

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Minutes

May 15, 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 Parish Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 15th day of May 2024 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The public meeting was called to order by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Denicola gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Waites led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

Present: Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Designate Stephen Branscum (by Commissioner Wade Evans), Commissioner Waites, 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, Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), and Todd Campbell (EBRPCD).

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Daniels moved to approve the minutes of the April 17, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Waites 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 March 31, 2024. 25% is the budget watermark. Cash was \$11.88 million and Accounts receivable of \$980,000 which included the Q1 prepaid wireless receivable that should be received in April. Expenses are at or below the watermark. Fund balance is approximately \$13 million. Approximately \$4.2 million is non spendable because it is a prepaid asset or committed to a capital project. Revenues are 28% slightly more than the watermark because the state remits prepaid wireless fees on a quarterly basis and this revenue has not yet been received. Interest income was \$80,930, which is more than double the budgetary watermark. Expenses are at or below the 25% watermark. Interest income is \$118,553. Total revenues are \$2.2 million, total expenses are \$1.6 million with an increase in fund balance of approximately \$600,000.

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

North Tower Project

David Luker (EBRSO) reported on this.

The district is reviewing Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office (APSO) RFPs for tower purchase and piggybacking. Todd Campbell has requested that the vendor supply pricing and this should be available for next meeting.

Todd Campbell reported that he is waiting for word about whether the District will be receiving money from the state. There is a line item in the state budget bill for this funding.

Mr. Olinde advised that he discussed this with the vendor representatives and the tower team should have a proposal for the Board's next meeting. He also advised that the district should be able to piggy-back on the Ascension purchase contract.

CAD Update

Joe Thompson reported on this.

The next CAD upgrade being scheduled is 23.1.3.5. District representatives just returned from a CAD Conference and had good meetings with Central Square. They were able to discuss CAD issues and get help dealing with them. CAD is going well.

911 Upgrade

Joe Thompson reported on this.

Continuing to work with NGA. They are still writing some software and solving some related issues. The agencies that are on 911 are currently running through the West region and district personnel are hoping to transition all of those agencies back to the East region (where the software work has been done) by the end of the month.

Commissioner McDavid had some questions about problems in Zachary with NGA. There was a power failure and the Zachary 911 system went down for several minutes ZPD Chief Lawrence confirmed this issue. Mr. Thompson stated that district personnel are looking into this because the Zachary system went down between the time the power went out and its generator starting. This should not have happened if the battery back-up had been working properly.

Commissioner Waites also expressed his concern and wants to make sure these things do not occur. The district needs to make sure and try to get information that will prevent these issues before they occur.

Messrs. Thompson and Verlander reported to the Board that these issues were reported to NGA and they have a technician working on them. He also stated that the recent storms wreaked havoc and he reported to the Board on all issues.

All parties expressed concerns about the upcoming hurricane season.

Commissioner Daniels stated that he has been provided with a list of issues with NGA911. He offered to provide that list to district personnel. Jim Verlander stated that the new personnel at BRPD are doing a good job reporting issues and properly opening tickets on any issues. Those go to NGA and district personnel receive notice when a ticket is opened.

911 Staffing Committee

Major Ricky Klug (EBRSO) reported on this.

He provided the APCO project report to the Board members. He went through the report and the information that was input into the report. Based on the information that was input into the report, the report recommends that 1 supervisor be added and that 6 911 telecommunicators be added: 1 per shift and then 1 floater for each 2 shifts. Those numbers are based on the number of people that EMS (and not the district or committee) has determined should man each shift.

Commissioner Waites asked how one can tell whether the calls listed in the report are emergency or non-emergency calls. Major Klug went through report. The total number of calls was 342,504. The number of 911 calls (as opposed to administrative calls) was 316,803. The number of calls that were dispatched by EMS was 69,875 (15.9%). Tammy Armand also provided some explanation.

Major Klug directed the Board's attention to hours at the end of the report and advised the Board that these hours are based on averages. He pointed out that the 418 hours that 911 call takers are unavailable (due to vacation, leave etc.) is just an average and it is not unique to EMS, but is a result of City Parish policies that govern all City Parish employees. Ms. Armand echoed this point.

Director Verlander also pointed out that these hour figures are averages. He also noted that the 418 average hours that 911 call takers are unavailable equates to 34.8 working days (at 12-hour shifts) that 911 call takers have (on average) available to take off. Call takers generally work 16 days per month so they have just over 2 months per year available to take off. The number of additional employees recommended by the APCO report is based on this amount of time being taken off by 911 call takers. The more available time off per employee that is input into the APCO system, the more additional employees the APCO report will recommend.

Commissioner Kimble pointed out this is an average and reflects an accrual rate, and not actually what each employee takes off.

Commissioner Branscum stated that these numbers are based on the accrual rate and do not reflect the time off that 911 call-takers may already have on the books.

Major Klug pointed out that the employees that have more time accrued on the books will likely be the type of employees that don't take as much time off.

A discussion of these points ensued with Commissioner Kimble and Major Klug.

In response to Commissioner Waites, Major Klug stated that based on the APCO report the recommendation is 1 additional employee per shift and 1 additional employee per rotation for a total of 6 employees. Also 1 additional supervisor. Commissioner Waites asked that this addition be translated into dollars. Major Klug stated that was beyond the committee's scope.

Jim Verlander stated that the addition of the employees would cost the district over \$800,000 more per year based on the costs previously calculated by Faulk & Winkler. Scott Lazarone confirmed that call taker employee cost has been previously calculated at approximately \$114,000 on average per employee (including all benefits and related costs).

Commissioner Waites stated that there are some factors the district cannot control. Major Klug again pointed out that the 24-employee manning number is the number that EMS has determined is appropriate and the district does not make that decision or determination.

Commissioner Kimble stated that the committee was formed to provide a non-biased recommendation on the number of personnel needed in the communications center to provide 911 service. The committee has done this.

Mr. Olinde pointed out that Faul & Winkler has calculated that the average cost of an EMS employee is \$114,000 per year and that the average cost of an employee directly hired by the Board would be \$66,000 per year. From a legal perspective both of these options are available to the Board. Chairman Gautreaux asked about the Board's option to hire employees directly. Mr. Olinde confirmed that the Board can legally do this.

Commissioner Kimble stated that Director Verlander had previously stated that he does not want these direct employees. Director Verlander confirmed that he had previously stated this, but advised he was willing to do whatever is best for the district.

Mr. Lazarone said the questions before the Board should be: What are the call-takers supposed to be doing? And, what is the market rate for that task?

Commissioner McDavid asked whether the district is the only one in the state that does not have a consolidated communications center and whether the district needs to have everyone in a single area? The district needs to consolidate in one area and pull the separate PSAPs back to a single consolidated area.

Commissioner Kimble moved that the Board allow Commissioner Denicola a month to calculate the cost of adding the proposed additional employees and bring that cost back to the Board. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion. Discussion was had: Commissioner Kimble stated that the district needed to have everybody in one place. Jim Verlander stated that even if the district directly hired the additional call takers, they could be located at Harding.

Commissioner Branscum stated that the District should put the provision of call-takers out for RFP. The idea would be to replace EMS call takers with less expensive ones as the EMS call takers retire or otherwise fall off the books.

Commissioner Denicola stated that the district pays 73% for the call takers' costs and this needs to be considered. Director Verlander and Mr. Lazarone responded that the district pays 73% of 30 call takers, 67% of 8 supervisors and .5% of the commander, which is 39 total employees. This equates to 100% of 27.8 employees or "FTEs". FTEs are what is used in the IGA between City Parish Government and the District.

Commissioner Kimble asked for a vote on his motion. Mr. Lazarone advised that the per employee average cost for EMS call takers is currently \$119,181 per employee per year per the intergovernmental agreement. This number is “all in” and includes all costs that the district pays under the IGA. The Chairman held a vote on Commissioner Kimble’s motion and the motion unanimously passed.

Chairman Gautreaux commented that the Board needs to like at every option. His opinion is that there should be a single center for all call-takers. He also stated that the Board should wait until it has all information before it acts on additional employees.

Commissioner McDavid asked Mt. Lazarone to quantify the additional revenue from the fee increase, He stated that the projection is \$2.2 million additional revenue.

Chairman Gautreaux stated that the formation of the City of St. George will have some impact on the district going forward and the Board will need to consider that impact.

NEW BUSINESS

Recent Developments

Jim Verlander reported no recent developments.

Commissioner Daniels updated the Board on BRPD’s new RMS. He reported that there have been no reports filed with LIBRS regarding BRPD, EBRSO and other agency arrests. Amber Guidry (ZPD) advised that this is a LIBRS problem and is not unusual.

Administrative Matters

Director Verlander had no matters to present.

Legal Updates

Henry Olinde had nothing further to report.

Chairman Gautreaux reiterated that the Board will need to take the new City of St. George into account.

Adjournment

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