

# EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes May 17, 2023 – 2:00 p.m. CDT

East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office  
8900 Jimmy Wedell Drive, Building B  
Baton Rouge, LA 70807

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The East Baton Rouge Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 17th day of May 2023 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Waites gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Daniels led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

**Present:** Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Wade Evans, Commissioner Darnell Waites, Commissioner Michael Kimble, Commissioner Michael Denicola, Commissioner Myron Daniels, and Commissioner David McDavid

**Absent:** None

The Chairman found that a quorum existed.

### **Others Present at Meeting Included The Following:**

Director Jim Verlander, Legal Counsel Henry Olinde, Scott Lazarone CPA, Joe Thompson (EBRPCD), Brenda Welch (EBRPCD), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), Fire Chief Dan Kimble (ZFD), Fire Chief Gerry Tarleton (SGFPD), Fire Chief Stephen Branscum (CFPD), Eric Romero (CPIS), Tammy Armand (CPIS), Chance Delome (Motorola), and Ricky Klug (EBRSO), Chief Randy Pies (Baker FD) and Kenny Loup (BRPD).

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Evans moved to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Daniels seconded that motion. The motion unanimously passed.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **Back-Up Unified Communications Center (BUCC)**

Director Verlander reported on this item.

The Landlord has approved the District's antennae placement at the BUCC and the Lease has been executed.

### **Financial Status**

Scott Lazarone, CPA reported on this item.

As of 3/31/23, the District had: approximately \$10.6 million in cash on hand; AR \$435 prepaid receipts and billings to other agencies for RMS. The district received approximately \$1.5 million in revenues for the 2023 year; had prepaid expenses (primarily subscriptions) in the amount of approximately \$700,00. Fund of balance of approximately \$12.3 million as of 3/31/23.

\$750,000 in collected revenues for March 2023. Total revenues are \$1.5 million year to date. Interest earnings are \$14,000 and should increase due to the movement of funds to a high interest account.

The year's planned capital expenses have not started yet due to the BUCC work not starting yet. Expenses are presently behind budget, but this is largely due to timing and expenses will catch up.

Commissioner Kimble requested an itemized breakdown of expenses for each month. Scott Lazarone asked for clarification and was advised that he should provide a check register to any commissioner that wants one. Mr. Lazarone stated that this would be large, but that he could send it to the commissioners that want it.

### **911 Phone System Upgrade**

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

NGA911 equipment is coming in, including computers. Installation of computers started at Harding, EMS, BRFD and other agencies. Thomson had a meeting with NGA911 today and they are working on switching providers over to NGA911. District personnel

will be setting up meetings with each department to go over the system and make necessary customizations. The project is moving forward.

Chief Pies asked if Baker FPD would be included in this NGA911 set-up, and Mr. Thompson advised him that Baker is included.

### **Zachary Tower Project**

Todd reported on this item.

Testing was done last week using a state portable tower. The portable tower issues were fixed and he is meeting with Tammy Armand and David Luker to present options to the Board.

David Luker stated that they are going to look at construction on one site and leasing the site across from the school. The intent is to present the Board with both options.

Commissioner McDavid pointed out the communications needs for Zachary and the northern end of the Parish. Although he is new to the Board, he urged that the tower get done as soon as possible: something needs to be done quickly. David Luker stated that they are presenting the two options to the Board next month. He also reported to the Board on the wi-fi flash system that will help alleviate the communications problem until the tower is up and running.

Commissioner Waites questioned whether the Tower would work for the whole northern part of the parish. Chance Delome stated that as long as the agencies are on the state LWIN system, the proposed tower should have coverage.

Commissioner Denicola inquired about the problems with the original test tower. Todd Campbell explained the problem with the test tower and that it was fixed before the retest.

The Chairman assured Commissioner McDavid that the Board has been working on the tower diligently.

In response to inquiries by Commissioner McDavid, David Luker stated that the cost of the wi-fi service is \$9.00/radio/month. David Luker stated that he is researching the wi-fi service option.

Commissioner Daniels moved that the District absorb the cost of the wi-fi flash system until the tower comes online. Commissioner McDavid seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **Other Recent Developments**

Commissioner McDavid requested that Mr. Olinde and Director Verlander check and make sure that all of the PSAP payments owed to the City of Zachary have been paid.

Thompson reported.

Starting Monday there was a large CAD update from Central Square. It was a “hot” update so the system was not shut down. Mr. Thompson explained that it was very involved but that it looks like the update worked and the system is working relatively well. There was some issue with the mobile CADS, but this was caused by laptops that did not have updated OS software at the time the CAD update was installed. The District is now up to date on its software.

Commissioner Kimble inquired about the CAD-to-CAD issues that the District has been experiencing and what the main cause of that has been. Mr. Thompson stated that they have reported the problem to Central Square. Central Square believes that the updating may have caused the problems. Central Square also believes that the problems may be solved. Mr. Thompson stated that he is monitoring the system closely.

BRPD Kenny Loup posed questions regarding the CAD updates and related issues. Mr. Thompson responded.

### **911 Fee Rate**

Director Verlander reported on this item.

He met with each one of the Commissioners regarding the proposed rate increase. He presented the informational paperwork that he intends to make available to the media and the public and the information contained in that paperwork. Based on increased call volumes, new federally mandated services, inflation, increased costs and the fact that there has been no increase in 18 years, his proposal is that the Board consider raising residential line fee from 63¢ to 99¢ per month; business lines from \$1.50 to \$1.99 per month; and, wireless lines from 85¢ to \$1.25 per month. That is less than a \$6.00 per year increase for users.

Director Verlander also provided what he believes are the needs for the District including equipment maintenance and replacement, new employees, training, etc.

Director Verlander also provided information and graphs showing the fees imposed by all communications districts in the state. The District is currently at the bottom with some of the lowest fees in the state. The proposed increase would bring the District into the middle of all districts in the state in terms of fees charged.

Jim Verlander proposed that the PSAP payments for both Baker and Zachary be the same as EMS on a per employee basis which he believes is approximately \$83,000 per

employee. Commissioner Denicola inquired as to how the Director calculated the \$83,000. Commissioner Denicola pointed out that the Director's \$83,000 number included more items than just the actual salaries of EMS employees.

Commissioner Waites stated that Baker needs more money than Baker is presently getting for PSAP in order to fully fund Baker's PSAP.

Commissioner Evans questioned Mr. Lazarone as to exactly what is included in the \$3.2 million that the District is paying to EMS. He stated that each PSAP ought to get paid the same amount for each PSAP employee "slot."

The Chairman recounted the history of PSAP payments to Baker.

Commissioner Evans pointed out that the District's only mission is to answer 911 calls and transfer them to the appropriate agency.

Commissioner McDavid pointed out that EBR is the only parish in the state that has 911 calls answering in more than one location. He stated his belief that the District should look at eventually moving the PSAPs to one location.

Commissioners Kimble and Denicola pointed out that employees have to be paid for even when they call in sick or are on leave.

The Chairman requested that Mr. Lazarone calculate the average individual cost of employees being paid by the District and verify the number of employees being provided by EMS as well as the number of persons the District is paying for.

Commissioner Daniels stated that he believes that all agencies ought to get the same amount for their employees. He stated, however, that the issue is the amount being paid and how it is calculated.

Jim Verlander requested that the District be allowed to switch payroll service contractors from PMI to Paychex. Paychex is much cheaper and some of the services that PMI provides are no longer needed. Commissioner Daniels moved to approve this switch. Commissioner McDavid seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

Mr. Olinde reported on the legislation that was submitted regarding the Board designee resolution. The legislation will be amended tomorrow.

The Chairman suggested that the Board call a special meeting to consider the rate increase. Commissioner Kimble moved to schedule a special meeting to consider the proposed 911 fee increases. Commissioner Waites seconded the motion.

After consultation with the Board, the Chairman scheduled the special meeting to consider the rate increase on May 31, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner McDavid moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.