

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes of Special Meeting
May 31, 2023 – 1:00 p.m. CDT**

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

The East Baton Rouge Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 31st day of May 2023 for a duly noticed special public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Waites gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Kimble 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), and members of the local media.

Consideration of Increasing 911 fees/Rates Set in 2005

At the Chairman's request, Mr. Olinde presented a brief history of the 911 fee legislation and the imposition of 911 fees by the Board and District.

Director Verlander re-presented his proposal to raise fees as set forth in the May 17, 2023 meeting.

Commissioner McDavid asked where the District rates in terms of its present fees. Director Verlander stated that the District is currently at the lowest end in the state. If his proposal is adopted the District will be in the middle one-third of all districts.

Commissioner Evans inquired about the use of funds and his desire to see the District to focus on technology moving forward and run as lean as possible in the future. Any personnel that would be hired should be cross trained to do as much as possible.

Commissioner Kimble stated that his concern was for the low coverage areas in the parish and the equipment. He stated that he believes that the District should focus on service. He is concerned about the proposed use of \$500,000 + for new personnel instead of using it for emergency service partners. The District is sitting on a fund balance and that needs to be used before any increase.

Commissioner Waites stated that he understands Commissioner Kimble's concerns but would like to vote on the increase on this date and vote on the use of funds at a later time.

The Chairman explained that this meeting is to consider the increase. The District's needs exist and the Board should decide exactly what needs come first at a later meeting.

Commissioner Waites pointed out that Baker is losing \$200,000/year at his current funding level and that need hole needs to be filled. He also pointed out that it will be a year or more before the revenue increase is realized.

Commissioner Kimble stated that his preference would be to wait to do the increase until the Board has decided how to use it.

Commissioner Denicola echoed Commissioner Kimble's concerns. He related a CAD problem that occurred yesterday and pointed out that there are equipment needs that should be focused on.

Commissioner Evans asked Director Verlander about redundancy and whether it exists. Joe Thompson indicated that there is redundancy and this will also be part of what's done with the BUCC. Mr. Thompson also noted that the current CAD system is five years old, a massive amount of data has been accumulating and new equipment will be

necessary. In response to Commissioner Evans' question, Mr. Thompson also described the cause of yesterday's CAD problem and what was done about it. He stated that the problem may be related to the recent "hot" update.

Commissioner Daniels stated that the Board's job is to determine whether the increase is necessary. Commissioner Daniels also stated that he understood Commissioner Waites' concerns. Commissioner Daniels stated that he has difficulty with a fee increase when the District has a \$12 million fund balance. Commissioner Daniels stated that he has questions: it was his understanding that the District would not need more employees when the Director was hired and under the Director's proposal there will be more than \$1 million spent on direct employees. There are also questions as to what the new employees will do. He cited the absence of a study on where the proposed revenue increase would be spent. Commissioner Daniels believes that the Board should know exactly where the funds are going to be spent before any increase.

Commissioner Evans stated that he agrees with Commissioner Daniels. He cited the fact that the District has \$8 million in an interest-bearing account. He stated that he wanted to closely scrutinize any spending of funds and would like to look at outsourcing like the City of Central does.

Director Verlander responded to the concerns of Commissioners Daniels and Evans and stated that the District has outsourced some functions and is spending less on employees than it was spending in previous years. He believes that in some cases direct employees would provide the District with better service and results. He stated that the equipment and personnel are drastically needed. Finally, if the District spends its fund balance it will be in an extremely bad position in the event of any catastrophic failure.

Commissioner Kimble asked what the cost of IT services was when the City-Parish was providing the service. Director Verlander responded that he was unable to determine what that cost was despite asking for this information. He also pointed out that the District had consultants study its fee structure and costs and that they supported the increase request.

Commissioner Waites reiterated Baker's need for additional funds and it is top priority. Baker is providing service for the entire Parish. This is why he is considering voting for the rate increase.

Commissioner Kimble stated that he agreed with Commissioner Waites.

Commissioner Evans stated that he agreed with Commissioner Waites. He also asked whether there can be embedded employees from contractors. Director Verlander stated that the District has already been doing this to the extent practicable.

Chairman Gautreaux recounted the history of the Board, how far the Board has come since he became a member and the fact that it is moving in the right direction. He also noted that there will be issues in the future as to how the District's funds are spent, but his view is that the Board needs to consider the increase because it is minimal, foreseeable needs exist and the unforeseen needs or disasters could be catastrophic without sufficient funds. He ended by stating that the Board will have to work out the exact allocation of the any increased revenues in the future.

Commissioner Evans moved that the Board adopt the proposed resolution raising 911 fees as follows with the understanding that the Board carefully scrutinize and discuss future spending and allocation of funds:

Service Type	Monthly Rates as of May 31, 2023	Increased Monthly Rates Effective June 1, 2023
Commercial/Business (Legacy and VoIP)	\$1.50	\$1.99
Residential (Legacy and VoIP)	\$0.63	\$0.99
Wireless	\$0.85	\$1.25

Commissioner Daniels reiterated his belief that the spending needs should be specified before the fee increase. Commissioner Waites seconded Commissioner Evans' motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 5-1. Commissioner Daniels voted Nay.

ADJOURNMENT

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