

# **EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT**

## **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes March 15, 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 15th day of March 2023 for a duly noticed public budget hearing and regular public meeting.

The meeting was convened by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Kimble gave the Invocation.

Commissioner McDavid 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), George O'Connor (365 Labs), Chance Delome (Motorola), and Ricky Klug (EBRSO).

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

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

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

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

Director Verlander reported on this item.

Director Verlander presented the proposed BUCC lease to the Board for approval.

Commissioner Kimble asked about back-up power. Director Verlander advised that there is a generator at the premises.

Commissioner Kimble also asked about HVAC. Under the lease, the District is responsible for maintenance and also for repairs up to \$6,000 per year. Commissioner Daniel inquired about the provisions relating to replacement of HVAC units. Director Verlander advised that the units were approximately 20 years old. The District would be responsible for replacing the units up to \$25,000. Commissioner Evans and Commissioner Waites pointed out that replacing the units would save more than \$25,000 in energy costs and maintenance in a short amount of time.

Commissioner Daniel also inquired about inspection of the premises and any issues with wiring. Director Verlander advised that there had been inspection. He also listed the Landlord's obligations under the proposed lease.

Commissioner Kimble noted his concern that the lease might prevent the District from installing and placing the antennae that it may need at the BUCC.

In response to questions by Commissioner McDavid, Director Verlander also described the card entry system planned for the BUCC and security measures.

Commissioner Daniels inquired about the possibility of getting a longer lease term. Director Verlander explained that there are extension options.

Commissioner Kimble inquired about repairs to existing facilities at the ATM. Director Verlander advised that once the BUCC is up and running, agencies can move to the BUCC while they are performing repairs and upgrades at the ATM.

Commissioner Waites moved that the Lease be approved, subject to the Landlord approving the planned installation and placement of antennae. Commissioner Evans seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

## **Financial Status**

Scott Lazarone, CPA reported on this item.

As of 1/31/23, the District had: approximately \$11.25 million in cash on hand; received approximately \$400,000 in revenues for the 2023 year; had prepaid expenses (primarily subscriptions) in the amount of approximately \$700,000; and, interest income of approximately \$11,000; expenses of approximately \$440,000 which are in-line with the 2023 budget; and, an overall decrease in fund balance of approximately \$30,000.

Mr. Lazarone investigated investment options and presented them to the Board. He believes that the J.P Morgan 100% U.S. Treasury Securities Money Market Fund might be the best fit for the District. He recommended that the District keep 2-3 months expenses plus upcoming capital outlays in cash on hand and then invest the remainder of the District cash balance in this fund. The District might want to consider placing \$6 million - \$8 million in this fund and could get significant returns based on the data provided by JP Morgan. Commissioner Evans recommended that the District place its cash balance in the fund but hold in cash 3 months expenses and upcoming capital outlays.

Commissioner Evans moved that the District keep \$1.5 million for expenses and \$1.5 million in cash for BUCC (total \$3 million) and invest the balance of the District's cash in the J.P Morgan 100% U.S. Treasury Securities Money Market Fund. Commissioner Daniels seconded the motion. The motion unanimously passed.

## **911 Phone System Upgrade**

Joe Thompson reported on this item.

Installation of NGA911 at some call positions at the ATM. He has been working with Eatel on a cloud-to-cloud telephone system connection. This is working out well. More information has been downloaded from the Intrado system and is being cleaned up for use on the new NGA911 system. The project is moving forward.

## **Zachary Tower Project**

Todd Campbell reported on this item.

Testing was done last week using a state portable tower. The portable tower did not function properly. The state is repairing this portable tower now. Mr. Campbell reported that there may be other towers available and he intends to use the first available portable tower. Mr. Campbell is hoping that the test can be performed within the next 3-4 weeks.

Commissioner Kimble expressed his belief the radio shop personnel should be involved in this radio tower testing and progress. Mr. Campbell advised that he agrees with this. EBRSO representative David Luker advised that both EBRSO and radio shop personnel have been involved.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **911 Fee Rate**

Director Verlander reported on this item.

The District is 53 of 64 parishes in the amount of revenue that the District is collecting.

2005 is the last time that the District had a rate increase.

Commissioner Evans questioned whether there was a need to collect more money. Director Verlander explained that there is no revenue surplus and that the District currently has to dip into its fund balance anytime it needs anything.

Current rates are: 63¢ per residential land line; 85¢ per wireless line and residential VOIP line; and, \$1.50 per business line.

There are large capital expenses (equipment repairs and replacement at the ATM, etc.) approaching.

Chairman Gautreaux, Commissioner Evans and Commissioner Kimble all expressed the need for information regarding upcoming expenses and information comparing the District to other districts (of similar size and call volume) in the state. Commissioner Waites expressed his concern that the cost of personnel must also be considered.

In response to Commissioner Evans' questions, Director Verlander stated that approximately 80% of calls are for law enforcement. Commissioner Evans questioned the necessity of having an EMS person answering every 911 call. Commissioner Denicola and Commissioner Daniels pointed out that there can be medical aspects to law enforcement calls.

Director Verlander and Mr. Olinde advised that the Board is currently collecting rates that are far lower than they are authorized to collect by statute and election. The Board can, therefore, raise the rates without other action. The Chairman expressed, and there was Board consensus, that it is extremely important that the Board should get the word out to the public in advance if it plans to consider any increase rates.

### **Other Recent Developments**

Director Verlander reported that there were no new developments.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

### **Legal Updates**

Mr. Olinde reported that there were no updates at this time.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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