

# EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH COMMUNICATIONS DISTRICT

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS Public Hearing and Meeting Minutes March 20, 2024 – 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 Parish Communications District Board of Commissioners met at the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff's Office on the 20th day of March 2024 for a duly noticed regular public meeting.

The public meeting was called to order by Chairman Gautreaux.

Commissioner Denicola gave the Invocation.

Commissioner Kimble led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chairman called roll:

**Present:** Chairman Sid Gautreaux, Commissioner Designate Stephen Branscum (by Commissioner Wade Evans), Commissioner Designate Andy Murphy (by Commissioner Darnell 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), Todd Campbell (EBRPCD), Don Ferguson (NGA911), David Luker (EBRSO), Ricky Klug (EBRSO), George O'Connor (365 Labs), Bassam Harb (General Informatics), Tammy Armand (CPIS), Chief Gerry Tarleton (SGFPD), and Chief Danny Kimble (ZFD).

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Commissioner Denicola moved to approve the minutes of the November 15, 2023 meeting. Commissioner Kimble 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 January 31, 2024. Cash is \$11.5 million and fund balance is at \$12.8 million. Accounts receivable of \$661,000 primarily represent amounts billed to agencies for RMS reimbursements. Expenses are consistent with budget. Contractual expenses are under budget. Primarily due to the timing of prepaid remittances, revenues are slightly behind budget. Interest income was \$40,600 which would project out at more than budget.

### **North Tower Project**

Todd Campbell reported on this.

He has a tower company looking at the project to provide a cost estimate. This company built a tower in Ascension Parish and the District is looking at the possibility of piggybacking on that contract or using a state contract. There may be funds coming from state LWIN to help with the tower. Mr. Campbell is waiting to see how much the state might be able to contribute to the tower and equipment.

### **911 Upgrade**

Don Ferguson, the CEO of NGA911, reported to the Board on the implementation of the new 911 system. Mr. Ferguson is aware of some of the issues and problems that are associated with the transition and wanted to personally address these issues with the Board.

Mr. Ferguson reported that Next Generation 911 is a new technology and there are issues with its implementation because it is new and these are taking some time to resolve.

Commissioner Kimble stated that there are problems involving dropped 911 calls, and asked how much time it will take to resolve these issues and complete the transition. It is taking longer than the District was told it would take. Mr. Ferguson stated that the dropped calls are the result of several issues, but it is his understanding that this is resolved. Mr. Ferguson stated that tickets should be submitted on all incidents and NGA will provide a written report on the resolution of the issue. In response to

Commissioner Kimble's question, Chief O'Neal (BRFD) reported that the last dropped call was on 3/6/24.

Commissioner Kimble asked about when these issues will stop. Mr. Ferguson responded that until EMS gets cut over to NGA and all of the carriers get cut over to NGA most of the issues should be permanently resolved. Commissioner Kimble asked when this would happen. Mr. Ferguson responded that all parties are waiting on a fix for a recording issue that is currently being tested. This fix should be done in a couple of weeks.

Commissioner Kimble inquired as to the status of Livingston Parish's transition. Mr. Ferguson stated that Livingston Parish is 100% on the NGA911 system and all carriers, but one, have been cut over to NGA911. Commissioner Kimble inquired how long this process would take for EBR and Mr. Ferguson replied that it is a short process for NGA, but on the carrier side it can take a long time. One large carrier in particular takes the longest.

Commissioner McDavid asked Mr. Ferguson if NGA experienced the same problems that the District is experiencing when they transitioned Livingston Parish. Mr. Ferguson replied that NGA experienced more problems in Livingston. McDavid asked if there will be training for District personnel to help deal with issues. Mr. Ferguson stated that there are 24/7 availability to report and resolve problems, and NGA is open to any suggestions to improve service and will come and do training here.

Chairman Gautreaux asked about the population difference between Livingston and East Baton Rouge Parishes. Mr. Ferguson and Director Verlander confirmed that the East Baton Rouge population is about double that of Livingston.

Commissioner Kimble asked about training and Chief O'Neal and Director Verlander reported that there had already been NGA911 training. Commissioner Kimble asked when the EMS cutover can take place. Mr. Ferguson responded that the recording fix should be implemented in approximately two weeks and then it will be up to Director Verlander.

Ricky Klug (EBRSO) asked about the incident playback fix and inquired as to whether it has been pushed out to the agencies. Mr. Ferguson said there are 2 issues. The first issue, immediate playback, was configuration problem and this should be resolved and fixed. The second issue is being able to look at 911 calls and play them back. This second issue will be resolved in the fix that should be implemented in a couple of weeks.

Candice Brown (EBRSO) asked whether the recordings of Zachary calls are up and running. Director Verlander stated that there is access to the Zachary calls for 30 days. After that, the calls are archived and the calls must be requested. Mr. Ferguson stated

that there is a login portal that they will open up that will simplify access to the Zachary 911 calls.

Commissioner Denicola asked how long Livingston Parish NextGen 911 system has been installed. Mr. Ferguson replied that it has been up and running for approximately one and one-half years. Commissioner Denicola stated that one of his employees expressed concern that moving to the 911 cloud could result in lost calls in the event of an outage. Mr. Ferguson replied that the District must move to NextGen 911 and NGA is the best option for that. NGA is the only provider that is certified by AWS and is the leader in NextGen cloud technology. Commissioner Denicola expressed concerns about the failures that have been experienced. Mr. Ferguson confirmed that the bugs in the system will not be present once all agencies and carriers have been cut over to NGA911.

Commissioner Kimble advised that personnel have not received written responses to tickets. Mr. Ferguson acknowledged that this was NGA's responsibility and he will audit the tickets to ensure all have been responded to.

Mr. Ferguson added there are more than 21 million people on NGA911's system and the greater size of EBR is not a great concern for them.

Commissioner Daniels asked how long the Livingston System has been deployed. There was a media article in 2019 about Livingston going to cloud 911. Mr. Ferguson, Director Verlander and Todd Campbell pinpointed that the Livingston transition started in January 2023.

Commissioner Daniels expressed his concern about cutting over EMS to NGA911. He believes that the issues should be resolved before moving EMS to the new system. Mr. Ferguson stated that issues are being cataloged and resolved, but that problems will persist as long as the District remains in two systems.

Candice Brown (EBRSO) asked about the rollover situation and whether the rollover flow is in place and occurring. Mr. Ferguson stated that rollovers are happening. Amber Guidry (ZPD) asked about dropped call to Zachary. Mr. Ferguson requested a ticket number so he can provide a full accounting of this problem. Bassam Harb asked whether there is a way to determine if the rollover flow is working. Mr. Ferguson stated that NGA does testing on the rollover flow. He stated that if he gets a ticket number he can track down the problem. He pointed out that tracking issues like this will be much less problematic when the entire system is cut over.

Commissioner Kimble stated that the Board simply wants the best for the citizens. He is concerned about the problems. Citizens will hold the Board responsible if there are problems. He stressed that NGA911 needs to fix the problems. Mr. Ferguson stated that NGA911 is ready to do that but the District will continue to have these problems until it cuts completely over to NGA.

Commissioner Designate Branscum asked how many carriers need to be migrated and how long the migration to NGA will take. Director Verlander said the goal for doing this was six months ago. He reported that they are addressing the problems. Given delays associated with implementation of fixes, soak time and timing issues, it will take a few weeks to transition all agencies to NGA. The part of the transition that will take longer is getting the carriers to transition over to NGA.

Commissioner McDavid asked about the life span and potential obsolescence of NGA911. Mr. Ferguson advised that NGA911 is constantly updating its system and cloud environment. Commissioner McDavid asked about cyber attacks and data security. Mr. Ferguson replied that there is security and firewalls in effect. Plus, NGA is part of the CISA program that constantly tests system security.

Chairman Gautreaux stated that the Board is focused the best interest of the citizens of the Parish and the communication channels with NGA911 should stay open. There will be problems with any new technology but it is key that the problems get fixed quickly. Chairman Gautreaux thanked Mr. Ferguson for appearing before the Board, and urged that the parties' communications channels stay open.

### **911 Staffing Committee**

Ricky Klug (EBRSO) reported on this.

The committee has not come up with an answer for the Board yet.

The committee met several times and decided that Project Retains software would be a good tool to get this answer. This software asks for a lot of information, and the questions change depending on the answers to previous questions. Director Verlander started to get some of this information from EMS but then the flow of information stopped. The committee needs to figure out how to get the Project Retains report done and the information from EMS that is needed. Mr. Klug pointed out that the report shows the data that is put in so the input data is transparent and can be seen by all parties.

Commissioner Denicola asked about the software and inquired as to how the EMS can get access to the system and input the information.

Tammy Armand stated that she is the BRFD representative on the committee and proceeded to read a written statement, setting forth her concerns. Director Verlander responded.

Commissioner Denicola advised that he did not want to turn over all of his excel spreadsheets to the committee. He asked if he could input this information from his desk. CD Branscum confirmed with Mr. Klug that all of the information on the report is visible to all parties and stated that he had no problem with EMS entering the

information. Commissioner Denicola stated that he would enter the information into the Project Retains software and there were no objections to this.

Chairman Gautreaux inquired as to how long it would take for the committee to get its report to the Board. Commissioner Denicola indicated it would be more than a month before all of the data could be entered.

When this process is complete, the software report will be brought back to the committee and they will answer the question of whether more call takers are needed or not.

### **CAD Update**

Director Verlander reported on this.

There was a recent CAD update (v23.1). There were a number of issues that the upgrade caused. The District will not know whether v23.1 solved all of the CAD problems for at least another week.

### **New Business**

None

### **Administrative Matters**

None

### **Adjournment**

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