

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
June 24, 2020

Due to technical difficulties some participants had joining, the June 24, 2020 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened virtually at 1:19 p.m. via the Zoom videoconference service. GHC 9-1-1 is located at 10220 Fairbanks N. Houston Rd., Houston, Texas 77064.

Board Members Bill Anders, Mark Denman, Dennis Storemski, Russell Rau, Vergil Ratliff, Shawn Thompson, and legal counsel Harris County Assistant Attorney Tommy Ramsey were present for the virtual Board meeting; 25 people were in attendance. (Board Members Storemski and Thompson experienced video difficulties, but remained connected on the meeting via audio.)

Agenda Item 1—“Pledges of Allegiance.” The U.S. and Texas pledges of allegiance were recited.

Agenda Item 2—“Approval of Minutes.” The minutes of the Board meeting of May 27, 2020 were approved with a motion by Board Member Ratliff and seconded by Board Secretary Anders. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 3—“Citizens Appearances.” There were no citizens wishing to appear before the Board.

Board Member Storemski’s video connected at 1:28 p.m.

Agenda Item 8—The Board agreed to take Item 8 out of order: “Chief Art Acevedo, Houston Police Department, Request to Address the Board regarding the Houston Emergency Center (HEC).” Chief Acevedo presented his request for funding for console furniture at the HEC, adding that the furniture is 17 years old and the cost for replacement is approximately \$470,000. He stated it is critical to have workstations that are fully functional to insure a healthy workforce and to fully be able to handle the millions of calls the center receives. Board Member Denman asked if GHC 9-1-1 ordinarily funded equipment needs for PSAPs. To answer his question, Chairman Rau provided a brief history on GHC 9-1-1’s funding of neutral answering points, for both the City of Houston and Harris County, to handle 9-1-1 calls to be transferred on to the requested emergency service: police/fire/EMS. Then, there was some discussion on what GHC 9-1-1 could fund. Chief Acevedo again expressed the need and importance of his request.

Chairman Rau asked, from a standpoint of general interest, what GHC 9-1-1 could do to help pursue grant dollars for all the 9-1-1 entities in the GHC 9-1-1 region. City of Houston Public Safety and Homeland Security Director, George Buenik briefly explained they have received funding for a five county region, highlighting that the use of the grant funding has to be related to terrorist nexus in order to be eligible. At the moment there's no grant funding that fits the need for dispatch or 9-1-1. Board Secretary Anders thanked Chief Acevedo for his service. He reiterated the history of the GHC 9-1-1 funding model and reminded everyone of GHC 9-1-1's core mission. Adding that what happens downstream from the 9-1-1 call is up to those departments, and he would like to take a more in depth look the options. Chairman Rau reminded everyone that Chief Acevedo's request was not an action item on the Agenda, and therefore no action would be taken.

Agenda Item 9—The Board agreed to take Item 9 out of order: “Transmittal and Discussion of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network’s Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ending December 31, 2019.” Chief Financial Officer Tino Fonseca introduced Auditor Lupe Garcia with the auditing firm WhitelyPenn LLP. Mr. Fonseca highlighted the following documents included in the annual audit of GHC 9-1-1’s financial statements for the year ending 2019: the Independent Auditor’s Report, Management’s Discussion and Analysis, Financial Statements and Footnotes, and the Required Auditor Communication Letter. Mr. Garcia advised that a clean and unmodified opinion of the audit was issued. Mr. Garcia added that this year the audit was performed remotely, Mr. Fonseca and the GHC 9-1-1 team cooperated and appropriately communicated electronically to complete audit procedures. There being no further questions, Mr. Garcia concluded the audit report.

(Board Member Thompson appeared on Video at 2:05p.m.)

Agenda Item 4—“Financial Report.” Chief Financial Officer Tino Fonseca reported the monthly financial totals ending May 31, 2020 as follows:

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 15.5 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$ 6.9 million
- Liabilities \$ 7.3 million
- Receipts \$ 19.3 million
- Disbursements \$ 14.4 million

Mr. Fonseca provided a brief overview of the remaining budget balance report and the receipts and disbursements report. Board Member Storemski pointed out that “where the money came from” pie chart has a 63% wireless in revenue vs the class of service pie chart providing 89% in wireless. Mr. Fonseca explained that that's one

of the main reasons GHC 9-1-1 is pursuing legislation for a wireless fee increase, to increase revenue. Board Member Storemski asked Mr. Fonseca what was the amount of money carried over from last year's budget. Mr. Fonseca said he would email the amount of last year's budget carry overs. Mr. Fonseca continued with an overview of the 9-1-1 Service Fee Revenue and Expenses by type and the cash expenditures trend-line charts. Without any further questions, Mr. Fonseca concluded his report.

Agenda Item 5—"Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters." Executive Director Lavergne Schwender provided brief updates on the following from the FCC's "Keep Americans Connected" report: FCC granted temporary authority to wireless companies to use additional spectrum to meet increased customer demand for broadband during the coronavirus pandemic; FCC issued a temporary waiver of its access arbitrage rules to Inteliquent, whom carries traffic for the two largest conference calling providers, Zoom Video Communications and Cisco WebEx; FCC provided a temporary waiver to Relay service providers so American Sign Language interpreters could work from home in order to maintain video relay service for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and with speech disabilities; and FCC Chairman Pai thanked radio and television broadcasters for reporting on and running public service announcements in regards to COVID-19.

Next, Ms. Schwender provided an update on the proposed reliability and sustainability legislation. She stated that per the Board's direction at the May, 2020 Board meeting, GHC 9-1-1 prepared its own legislation. GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison, Anya McInnis added that after the May Board meeting; Lavergne, Stan, Tino, and she discussed the concerns the Board expressed regarding the proposed 90 cents statewide flat-fee that was set in cooperation with the other 9-1-1 districts. She explained that, because of GHC 9-1-1's uniqueness and its size, the only other option is to go with a stand-alone bill asking for local control, with the hope that GHC 9-1-1 will be able to persuade its legislative delegation. Ms. McInnis stated she has been working with Lavergne and Texas 9-1-1 Alliance attorney, Mike Tomsu, with Vinson & Elkins, to draft some legislation to help support GHC 9-1-1's stand-alone proposal. Ms. McInnis recommended that GHC 9-1-1 move forward with the stand-alone fee bill and support the Alliance flat fee bill, with a GHC 9-1-1 carve out as a fail-safe in-case GHC 9-1-1's stand-alone bill isn't successful. There was a lengthy discussion about both bills, and the many options for setting dollar amount cap increase. Chairman Rau requested to see the draft stand-alone fee bill before it's sent to the Legislative Council. Ms. McInnis and Ms. Schwender agreed to send the draft fee bill to the Board. Without any further questions, Ms. McInnis concluded her report.

Lastly, Ms. Schwender added that the GHC 9-1-1 staff continues to work remotely and come to the office on an as-needed basis. Board Secretary Anders asked if there are any employees known to have contracted COVID-19. Ms. Schwender answered no. Board Member Ratliff said, with work productivity still being maintained and the mission is being accomplished, she advised Ms. Schwender to continue doing what she's doing to monitor the situation and do what's best for the safety and health of the organization.

Agenda Item 6—"Operations Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Operational Matters." Chief Operations Officer Stan Heffernan reported there were no internal/external P1 service issue tickets during the month of May, 2020. Mr. Heffernan stated he will provide a report regarding the T-Mobile outage at the next Board meeting. He continued with a brief overview of the Network Utilization, PSAP 9-1-1 call sessions report and the PSAP 9-1-1 trending charts. Next, he presented the call statistics for Houston Emergency Center (HEC), Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) provided by those agencies, and the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs. Mr. Heffernan continued with the training update, the GIS/Database metrics, and the network operations center (NOC) monthly case load and response stats. Mr. Heffernan announced that GHC 9-1-1 has completed the install of 9-1-1 call-taking equipment at the High School for Law and Justice. He mentioned that Mr. Valgene Holmes, Co-op Coordinator at the High School for Law and Justice would like to personally thank GHC 9-1-1 at an in-person Board meeting. Board Secretary Anders requested updates on the program's success in PSAPs who hire those high school students. Mr. Heffernan said GHC 9-1-1 will keep track and report back to the Board.

Mr. Heffernan proceeded with an update on the completion of the installation of twenty 9-1-1 calling-taking positions in the separation/isolation area on the second floor at the HCSO communication center. These twenty positions were previously located in a portable shelter in the HCSO parking lot. This area will allow different operational options such as, isolation of call-takers or to move call-takers from the floor for deep cleaning. Lastly, Mr. Heffernan provided a report on the history of GHC 9-1-1 ALI Resource Sharing effort in the state of Texas. Board Member Denman expressed his appreciation with GHC 9-1-1's efforts. Mr. Heffernan asked about the platform for the July Board meeting. Chairman Rau stated that an in-person Board meeting may not be likely for an extended period of time, unless allowed by the Governor Gregg Abbott. Mr. Tommy Ramsey added that the Governor signed the renewal order for disaster declaration on July 11, and this may continue for the foreseeable future.

Agenda Item 7—“Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts.” Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson announced that GHC 9-1-1 website page was updated to include helpful COVID-19 resources for agencies within Harris and Fort Bend Counties. Next, Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 has not been distributing education materials due to COVID-19, but continues to educate the community by providing online printed literature for young children through 911.org, in the public education section. She mentioned she is working with the Texas Public Educators on new 9-1-1 literature to provide to the community in the near future. Ms. Clauson proceeded with an update on the public awareness media campaign. She presented a sample of a billboard with the message “9-1-1 is only for emergencies,” noting there are seven billboards that will display on major freeways in the GHC 9-1-1 area. Next, she reported that radio recordings and video ads with various 9-1-1 messages will be advertised (depending on the form of media) starting June, 2020 through the beginning of September, 2020. Ms. Clauson concluded her report with examples of GHC 9-1-1’s social media pages and shared posts from partner agencies related to COVID-19 and 9-1-1 tips. Board Secretary Anders asked the other Board members if they had seen GHC’s 9-1-1 Facebook posts. Board Member Ratliff stated she has seen the 9-1-1 ads on TV and a billboard, adding that she is very pleased about the material. Ms. Clauson stated the ads are also advertised through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, noting a boost in public engagement through the ad content.

Agenda Item 10—“Announcements—Next Board Meeting, Upcoming Events.” Chairman Rau advised of the following: 1) The next meeting of the Board of Managers is scheduled for Wednesday, July 22, 2020; 2) Cancelled: Texas Public Safety Conference: August 30 – September 2, 2020, Galveston, TX; 3) Cancelled: National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Conference: September 26–28, 2020, Long Beach, CA.

There being no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Minutes approve unanimously. Signatures pending.

Russell S. Rau, Chairman

William B. Anders, Secretary/Treasurer

Motioned: <u>Bill Anders</u>
Seconded: <u>Dennis Storemski</u>
Vote: Yes <u>5</u> No <u>0</u>
Date: <u>7/22/2020</u>

Meeting held virtually due to health/safety concerns related to COVID-19.