

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
May 27, 2020

The May 27, 2020 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened virtually at 1:00 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, Vergil Ratliff, Russell Rau and legal counsel Harris County Assistant Attorney Tommy Ramsey were present for the virtual Board meeting, 21 people were in attendance.

Chairman Rau recognized and thanked telecommunicators, first responders, and frontline healthcare workers for their service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 April 29, 2020 were approved with a motion by Board Member Denman and seconded by Board Secretary Anders. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Agenda Item 4—“Financial Report.” Chief Financial Officer Tino Fonseca reported the monthly financial totals ending April 30, 2020 as follows:

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 13.1 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$ 6.9 million
- Liabilities \$ 6.0 million
- Receipts \$ 13.9 million
- Disbursements \$ 11.2 million

Mr. Fonseca provided an overview of the remaining budget balance report and the receipts and disbursements report. Board Member Denman inquired about the percentage of landline fees on the service fee pie chart, asking whether or not the percentage decreases or increases overtime. Mr. Fonseca explained that the landline percentage had been decreasing, but has stabilized due to the increases in IP services

nearly matching the decrease in legacy telephone lines. Board Member Denman mentioned that during this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 outbreak, many home expense budget cuts could possibly lead to a drop in landline phones and GHC 9-1-1 revenue. Mr. Fonseca stated he will continue to closely monitor all of the revenue sources. Chairman Rau asked if VOIP is recorded as landline, Mr. Fonseca stated yes. Mr. Fonseca closed the financial report with a brief overview of the 9-1-1 Service Fee Revenue by type and the cash expenditures trend charts.

Agenda Item 5—“Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters.” (Board Member Storemski experienced camera difficulties at 1:15p.m., but remained connected on the meeting.) Executive Director Lavergne Schwender reported on the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) latest guidelines on the 9-1-1 vertical Z-axis location accuracy. Ms. Schwender mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 does have the technology and mapping system to receive such coordinates. Chief Operations Office Stan Heffernan added that entities that administer 9-1-1 would prefer to receive the raw coordinates and have the technology to determine how to display it to the 9-1-1 call centers. Ms. Schwender highlighted an attached Ex Parte letter that was sent to Marlene Dortch, FCC Secretary, outlining the accuracy requirements and the 105 Cellular Market Areas (CMAs) affected by the FCC ruling. Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown is on the CMA list. The letter also advised that the Z-axis network is scheduled to be completed in advance of the Commission’s April, 2021 deadline.

Next, Ms. Schwender provided an update on the proposed reliability and sustainability legislation. She reported that the proposed draft fee bill was sent to Legislative Council, but there is no word how long it will be before GHC 9-1-1 can get the draft back due to the COVID-19. Ms. Schwender stated the next step is to socialize a Legislative Council draft with Texas House Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee Acting Chair Dennis Paul, R— Southeast Harris County. As soon as there’s a draft bill from Legislative Council, GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison, Anya McInnis will coordinate a meeting with Rep. Paul to meet with Lavergne, Tino, Shayne Woodard, and herself. Ms. McInnis recommends that Board Member Denman join the meeting. Ms. Schwender mentioned that AT&T wants a one fee increase statewide, but other 9-1-1 districts want a higher fee increase. She highlighted that a proposed fee increase of 40 cents was a compromise, which sets the proposed fee at 90 cents statewide. Mr. Fonseca stated that the current proposed 90 cent fee will be for all 9-1-1 entities in the state of Texas. There was a vigorous debate about the proposed legislation and the Board requested that the bill be re-worked.

Lastly, Ms. Schwender added that GHC 9-1-1 continues to provide a safe workplace for staff that is onsite with personal protective equipment (PPE). Chairman Rau

thanked Mr. Heffernan for the weekly operations report provided to the Board. He stated that the updates on what GHC 9-1-1 is doing to keep staff safe and the ways GHC 9-1-1 is assisting the call centers during the COVID-19 pandemic is greatly appreciated.

Agenda Item 6—“Operations Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Operational Matters.” Mr. Heffernan stated that the 9-1-1 call centers follow different PPE protocols, and GHC 9-1-1 staff members going to any of the PSAPs adhere to the protocol for that location. He mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 staff continues to work remotely and when necessary, minimal staff goes into the office. GHC 9-1-1’s main goal is to keep staff and the network operations healthy. Mr. Heffernan noted that the weekly operations report might continue until the end of June, then go to monthly updates. Mr. Heffernan reported there were no internal/external P1 service issue tickets during the month of April, 2020. 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. Mr. Heffernan noted that the 9-1-1 call volume is picking up slowly to a normal level as the stay at home order is being lifted. Mr. Heffernan pointed out that as reported in the class of service pie chart, 9-1-1 wireless calls are reaching close to 90 percent. Chairman Rau inquired about VOIP and landline being reported separately in the 9-1-1 call sessions pie chart, but they were combined in the financial pie chart. Mr. Heffernan stated that service provides identifies these classes of services separately on 9-1-1 calls.

Next, he presented the call statistics for Houston Emergency Center (HEC) and Harris County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) provided by those agencies. Mr. Heffernan proceeded to update on the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs, noting Village Fire had a decrease in their call service level. 9-1-1 Service Officer, Roger Hauck added that Village Fire had two major incidents, which caused their service level to drop. GHC 9-1-1 will continue to work with Village Fire and assist them if needed. Mr. Hauck mentioned that Village Fire has plans to reconstruct their dispatch center and add space for additional personnel. Board Member Denman inquired about the funding source for Village Fire and who pays for their upgrades. Mr. Hauck stated that the agency would provide funding for their construction and facility upgrades, and GHC 9-1-1 would consult with them on any technical designs and technical cabling/power. Board Member Denman asked about the funding mechanism on how Village Fire gets their funding. Board Secretary Anders mention that Village Fire provides service for The Villages, and Chairman Rau advised that funding comes from those cities that make up The Villages. (Board Member Storemski lost video connection at 1:53 p.m., but remained connected via audio.) Mr. Heffernan said GHC 9-1-1 will continue to work with Village Fire and assist them as needed.

Mr. Heffernan continued with the training update, advising that GHC 9-1-1 is looking into training platforms that are TCOLE approved. GHC 9-1-1 held a virtual analytics training course for the municipalities on April 9, 2020 via WebEx, and a beginning 9-1-1 equipment class on April 17, 2020 via Zoom. Mr. Heffernan presented two new reports, “GIS/Database & GIS Metrics Report” and “Network Operations Center (NOC) Monthly Case Load and Response.” Mr. Heffernan and Information Technology Officer Mike Hayes briefly explained to the Board the chart information presented in the new reports. Lastly, Mr. Heffernan added that GHC 9-1-1 is working on a plan to separate the staff into two teams in preparation for a new normal back to work plan. Chairman Rau mentioned hurricane season preparations and what actions GHC 9-1-1 would take in the midst of a pandemic. Mr. Heffernan stated he would provide a hurricane preparation report at the next Board meeting, and he added that GHC 9-1-1 is prepared for hurricane season and ready to assist all other 9-1-1 agencies, if needed.

Agenda Item 7—“Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts.” Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson reported that due to COVID-19, public education materials have not been distributed since the beginning of March, 2020. Ms. Clauson mentioned that surrounding jurisdictions have canceled community outreach events through the month of May, 2020. Next, Ms. Clauson noted that Telecommunicator week was April 12-18, 2020 and the Annual Texas Public Safety Conference, where telecommunicators are recognized, was rescheduled to August, 2020 due to COVID-19. She reported that April was also 9-1-1 education month, and a digital media campaign disseminating COVID-19 related messages, messages about text to 9-1-1 and emergency profile sign up services ran throughout the month. Board Member Ratliff asked Ms. Clauson if there was any information related to COVID-19 testing sites on the GHC 9-1-1’s social media sites. Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 shared messages from other 9-1-1 agencies, which provided COVID-19 information and lists of helpful resources. Ms. Clauson proceeded with an update on the public awareness media campaign. She presented a list of local radio stations that will run the ads, starting June through August, 2020 and the locations of the seven billboards, that will display beginning June through September, 2020. Ms. Clauson said that April was domestic violence awareness month and a new campaign and website (<https://nococovidabuse.org/>) with GHC 9-1-1 listed as a partner, was announced at a City of Houston/Harris County joint press conference. She added there was an increase in domestic violence cases reported during the COVID-19 stay-home periods. She concluded her report with examples of GHC 9-1-1’s social media pages and messages about proper use of 9-1-1 particularly relevant to COVID-19.

Agenda Item 8—Action Item—“Request for Approval to Enter into Resource Interlocal Sharing Agreement with Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission (GCRPC) and Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG).” Mr. Heffernan stated that Golden Crescent Regional Planning Commission and Heart of Texas Council of Governments were requesting to participate in the resource sharing of GHC 9-1-1’s infrastructure. Mr. Heffernan advised the Board that these entities would be responsible for their own connectivity to the system, and no additional funds would be expended by GHC 9-1-1. Mr. Heffernan noted an error in the recommendation section of the memo, stating the correct names are GCRPC and HOTCOG. Board member Denman commented GHC 9-1-1 for utilizing its resources to help other entities around the State, and stated he would like to share this with the Harris County Mayors’ and Councils’ Association (HCMCA). There being no further questions, Board Secretary Anders made the motion to approve the Resource Sharing Agreement with GCRPC and HOTCOG. Board Member Storemski second the motion. Motion passed.

Agenda Item 9—Action Item—“Request for Approval to Enter into Contract with Trico Tower Services Inc. and to Authorize the Executive Director to Execute the Contract.” Mr. Heffernan advised that Pleasant Valley is the final location needed to complete the critical microwave path for NG9-1-1. He noted the current issue was the failure to perform by the current tower provider, Shaffer Tower. To move forward to complete of the project, staff recommended Trico Tower Services. Mr. Fonseca stated that in April, 2020 GHC 9-1-1 terminated the contract with Shaffer Tower. There was some discussion regarding the balance on the existing project with Shaffer Tower and possibly pursuing the performance bond to recover some of the funds. Legal counsel, Tommy Ramsey stated he would work with Tino to close off on the Shaffer contract. Board Member Denman made the motion to approve the request to contract with Trico Tower Services Inc. to complete the Pleasant Valley tower project at a cost not to exceed \$522,012 and authorize the Executive Director to execute the contract. Board Member Storemski amended the motion, adding that GHC 9-1-1 is to pursue the Performance Bond against Shaffer Tower. Board Secretary Anders second the motion. Chairman Rau, advised staff of the following; 1) Get approval from legal counsel, Tommy Ramsey 2) Legal pursuit of the performance bond from the original contractor.

Agenda Item 10—“Announcements—Next Board Meeting, Upcoming Events.” Chairman Rau stated that agenda item 10 was not an action item—with the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) canceling its annual June Conference, the Board agreed to have a June meeting. In compliance with the Stay Safe, Work Safe order, it will be a virtual Board meeting via the Zoom platform.

