

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
September 2, 2020

The September 2, 2020 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened virtually at 1:04 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, and legal counsel Tommy Ramsey, Harris County Assistant Attorney, were present for the virtual Board meeting; 30 people were in attendance. The September 2, 2020 Board meeting was a rescheduled meeting from the August 26, 2020 due to Hurricane Laura.

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

Agenda Item 2—“Approval of Minutes.” Board Member Storemski requested that corrections be made to the July 22, 2020 Board meeting minutes regarding his comments on agenda item 9. GHC 9-1-1 staff will make the corrections and confirm with Board Member Storemski for approval. The minutes of the Board meeting of July 22, 2020 were approved with a motion by Board Member Storemski and seconded by Board Secretary Anders. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Executive Director Lavergne Schwender introduced two new GHC 9-1-1 employees: 9-1-1 Technician, Sharita Walker and Systems Administrator, Leif Peter Larsson.

Taken out of order: Agenda Item 10—Recognition of Retirement—“Kimberly “KC” Rodgers, Information Services Supervisor, Friendswood Police Department, 22 years of Service in 9-1-1 Communications.” Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson introduced KC Rodgers to the Board. Ms. Clauson noted that KC began her employment with Friendswood Police Department in May, 1998. She added that KC has always been a great supporter of GHC 9-1-1 efforts, and GHC 9-1-1 is very grateful for her dedication to emergency communications. Ms. Rodgers thanked GHC 9-1-1 for all the support she received throughout her career. Chairman Rau invited Ms. Rodgers to a future in-person GHC 9-1-1 Board meeting/lunch.

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

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 16.8 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$ 6.9 million
- Liabilities \$ 6.4 million
- Receipts \$ 25.3 million
- Disbursements \$ 18.9 million

Mr. Fonseca provided a brief overview of the remaining budget balance report. He highlighted that the “Network and Connectivity Services” is \$2.3 million under budget due to temporary suspension of monthly NG9-1-1 router payments. Board Member Storemski asked if the \$2.3 million might still be spent this year. Mr. Fonseca stated yes, depending on the timing of the NG911 project, the anticipated funds have been accounted for and rolled over to next year’s budget. Mr. Fonseca closed the financial report with a brief overview of the receipts and disbursements report, the 9-1-1 service fee revenue by type and cash expenditures trend-line charts.

Agenda Item 5—“Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters.” Executive Director Lavergne Schwender reported that on July 16, 2020 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted a 6th report and order that affirms the April, 2021 and April, 2023 Z-axis requirements wireless providers must meet. The FCC added a new requirement that wireless providers must deploy Z-axis technology nationwide by April, 2025. Ms. Schwender mentioned that the Z-axis is supposed to be ready in the Houston area on April 3, 2021.

Chairman Rau asked how the Z-axis would affect the 9-1-1 technology, telecommunicators and first responders. Mr. Heffernan stated that whether or not the providers are able meet the April 3, 2021 date, GHC 9-1-1 is prepared and ready to receive the Z-axis information and if needed, tweak the system to make the information as simple as possible for the PSAPs. Information Technology Officer Mike Hayes added that the wireless providers will provide the “height above ellipsoid,” which is a scientific value that is not useful to the call-taker or first responder, so GHC 9-1-1 is working to provide a simple value “height above ground” measurement in feet to the call-taker. Chairman Rau inquired how the information measured in feet could be passed on downstream to the first responder. Mr. Heffernan stated the information would be in the GHC 9-1-1’s automatic location identification (ALI) system, but the PSAPs would determine how their CAD delivers the information to the first responder. Chairman Rau asked if the height above ground

measured in feet provided to the first responder would determine exactly what floor the caller is in. Mr. Heffernan stated that it would depend on the structure of the building; he added that height above ground is a good start and the system would be tweaked as the technology matures. GHC 9-1-1 will continue to work with the PSAP Ops group for further testing. Both, Houston Emergency Center (HEC), Director David Cutler and Harris County Sheriff's Office, Director of Communications Kathi Yost agreed that "height above ground" measured in feet is a good starting point.

Next, Ms. Schwender provided an update on the proposed reliability and sustainability legislation. She reported that the GHC 9-1-1 stand-alone draft bill that the Board reviewed was sent to the Texas Legislative Council. Once a satisfactory draft fee bill is received back from legislative council, meetings will be scheduled with GHC 9-1-1 Board Members, Staff, and legislative delegation members to review and finalize who will sponsor the bill.

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 July, 2020. He noted a high peak point on the daily average bandwidth graph due to call volume increasing from February through July, 2020. He proceeded with a brief overview of the PSAP 9-1-1 call sessions report, noting that the 9-1-1 wireless calls are close to 90% of all calls received. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the PSAP 9-1-1 trending charts, the call statistics for Houston Emergency Center (HEC) and Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) provided by those agencies. Mr. Heffernan continued with the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs. He mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 staff continues to work closely with PSAPs that have a decrease in service level by providing them with weekly reports. Board Secretary Anders asked if GHC 9-1-1 provides training to PSAPs on the reports. Mr. Heffernan stated GHC 9-1-1 provides training on the 9-1-1 equipment PSAPs utilize and training on the reports they receive and how they can pull those reports. 9-1-1 Service Officer Roger Hauck added, GHC 9-1-1 is working with all PSAPs on the training, especially those whose service levels are in the yellow. GHC 9-1-1 met with those PSAPs to do re-training and provide them shift reports. GHC 9-1-1 will continue to work with them to improve their service levels Board Secretary Anders inquired about the PSAPs feedback on the training provided by GHC 9-1-1. Mr. Hauck mentioned the PSAPs are very pleased and appreciative about the trainings provided to them. One PSAPs hired a new Supervisor, whom GHC 9-1-1 has met and is working closely to improve their service level.

Mr. Heffernan continued to report on the training report for the month of July, 2020. GHC 9-1-1 hosted two professional growth courses via Zoom—these were the first Zoom classes that TCOLE allowed GHC 9-1-1 to report under the GHC 9-1-1 Training Center. Mr. Heffernan thanked GHC 9-1-1 staff and PSAPs for supporting the continuation of training. Next, Mr. Heffernan reported that the Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) would be available to PSAPs who choose to use the MMS service. This new feature has been tested at HCSO and Ft. Bend County SO for a couple of months. Mr. Hauck thanked both call centers for participating in testing the new feature. Mr. Hauck explained that with the new MMS, during a 9-1-1 voice or text, the call-taker can request for the citizen to send back a picture or video. Mr. Hauck mentioned that HCSO and Ft. Bend County SO wrote procedures and policies on how the MMS will be utilized in their call centers, which will be shared with other PSAPs. Chairman Rau asked if there is a unique number for each PSAP for the citizen to send their picture or video. Mr. Hauck stated display numbers will be only for a particular PSAP and the current incident and the number cannot be dialed back. The citizen can attach a picture or video that must be under 60 seconds. Ms. Yost added that HCSO has received positive feedback from patrol deputies who tested the new feature. She stated there were no issues with receiving/viewing pictures and videos in different formats. Chairman Rau asked what policies would be followed when the public requests to access pictures and videos, and how long the content will be retained. Mr. Hauck said the content will be stored in a very secure environment. Each agency will have access to only their data, and follow their own policy for public information requests. There was a small discussion about the retention time-frame of pictures and videos. Mr. Heffernan stated GHC 9-1-1 would follow each PSAP's policy regarding the retention of the content.

Lastly, Mr. Heffernan provided a brief overview of the GIS/Database metrics, and the network operations center (NOC) monthly case-load and response stats. Chairman Rau asked if the system would allow a citizen to record a video with more than 60 seconds. Mr. Heffernan responded that if the video were more than 60 seconds it would not go through to the call-taker. Chairman Rau expressed his concern about the video not going through because it was 2 seconds longer. He asked if the system will allow the first 60 seconds, or will the system automatically reject the video. Mr. Hauck stated the sender would receive a bounce back message if the video is more than 60 seconds. He said GHC 9-1-1 will look into the technology to see if the system can accept the senders first 60 seconds of video. Mr. Heffernan added that GHC 9-1-1 would work with the vendor on a solution. There being no further questions, Mr. Heffernan closed his report.

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, the community outreach events throughout the GHC 9-1-1 territory remain very low. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the 9-1-1 Public Educators of Texas (PETs) meeting was held on July 28th via Zoom along with other 9-1-1 educators who confirmed that their community outreach efforts are slow. GHC 9-1-1 continues to remind partner agencies that GHC 9-1-1 is ready to provide education materials when requested. GHC 9-1-1 is making plans for the annual back-to-school outreach and remind the schools about the education resources available.

Ms. Clauson announced that the Texas National Emergency Number Association (TX NENA) recognized 9-1-1 communication professionals at their August Board meeting via Zoom. Every year awards are presented at the annual 9-1-1 banquet following the Texas Public Safety Conference in April, but it was cancelled this year due to COVID-19. Christina Salinas from City of Rosenberg P.D was presented with the training professional of the year award. Ms. Clauson presented a list of recipients from other agencies that were awarded with the silent hero award. She mentioned that she would provide a more detailed report at the next Board meeting. She also referred the Board to check out the NENA social media Facebook page for a slide show presentation.

Ms. Clauson proceeded with an update on the public awareness media campaign, reporting that the summer media campaign is progressing very well. The media ads are generating an increase in views to the 9-1-1.org website and the GHC 9-1-1 Facebook page. She highlighted that the 9-1-1.org website has a tremendous user increase since last year, and the GHC 9-1-1 Facebook page has gained a great number of followers. Ms. Clauson presented examples of the digital ads as they appear on Facebook, Instagram, and Network banner ads on third party mobile apps and websites.

Next, Ms. Clauson provided a brief overview of the GHC 9-1-1 social media sites. During the month of July, 2020 the social media messages included shared partner agencies and jurisdictions’ related to COVID-19, PSAP training opportunities, and 9-1-1 tips. Ms. Clauson added that Texas NENA and Texas APCO want to help anyone in Louisiana who were affected by Hurricane Laura. HCSO would also like to help those affected by Hurricane Laura. GHC 9-1-1 will get in touch with Texas NENA and Texas APCO. Lastly, she added that the broadcast (radio and TV) part of the media campaign has ended, the digital ads and build board ads will continue throughout September, 2020.

Agenda Item 8—Action Item—“Consideration of Approval of the Board of Managers’ Subcommittee Recommendation to Fund HPD New Dispatch Workstation Furniture at the Houston Emergency Center (HEC).” At the July Board meeting, Chairman Rau appointed members to the subcommittee to include Board Member Storemski and Board Member Denman, and GHC 9-1-1 staff member Stan Heffernan to discuss what funding is available and evaluate the request.

Mr. Rau asked the committee members to provide an overview of the item. Mr. Heffernan deferred to Board Member Storemski and Board Member Denman on the sub-committee’s findings and recommendations. Chairman Rau asked Mr. Ramsey to clarify if there were any concerns regarding the Board Members submission of questions to the subcommittee before the Board meeting that could be constituting a walking quorum. Mr. Ramsey explained that he was being cautious about keeping any discussion and decision making entirely within the open meeting to avoid any discussion outside a posted meeting. Mr. Ramsey stated he had no further concerns. Chairman Rau stated that the information in the packet was interesting and advised Board members that the questions and answers packet was sent to them just before the meeting. Board Member Storemski advised that the subcommittee carefully reviewed and discussed the questions and concerns that were raised before making a final recommendation. Board Member Storemski made the motion to approve to fund HPD new dispatch workstation furniture at the HEC at an amount not to exceed \$470,500. (Board Member Denman lost connection via mobile.) Board Member Ratliff seconded. Chairman Rau noted that there was motion and a second, then opened the floor for discussion.

Board Secretary Anders inquired if the Board had the authority to make a decision on the funding of the expenditure. Mr. Ramsey stated that according to the Texas Health and Safety Code 772.117, allowable expenses are costs attributable to designing a 9-1-1 system, all equipment and personnel necessary to establish and operate a public safety answering point, and other related answering points—if the Board considers workstations necessary, it is allowable. Board Secretary Anders stated that his questions were for education purposes and clarity on the issue, and his comments were not an attack on anyone or any agency. Secretary Anders had several questions/comments regarding the subcommittee’s findings and recommendations report—he stated while the statements in the report may be true, how was it relative to buying dispatch furniture, which is downstream from GHC 9-1-1’s service of delivery of calls. He said that he particularly wanted to know, in the report, what was meant by a one-time non-precedent setting act—did it mean GHC 9-1-1 is only going to buy their furniture one time or furniture will not be purchased for any other agency or are we going back to the core mission of the delivery of calls opposed to the delivery of service. Secretary Anders noted that while he respects what the Chief

(Acevedo) and the City of Houston has done in regards to the protest and the pandemic, and he understood that the department (Houston Police) is underfunded; he questions whether it's the responsibility of GHC 9-1-1 to fund this requests. He added that his vote is not a reflection on the Chief, the City of Houston nor the dispatchers; it is a call for all governmental entities to have a plan and make preparations, setting funds aside for the unexpected and not look to GHC 9-1-1 as a funding mechanism. Chairman Rau stated that there was not a Board policy that detailed funding; it's been more of a practice as to what GHC 9-1-1 has funded for 30 plus years. Chairman Rau echoed what Secretary Anders said in regards to appreciating what Chief Acevedo has done in the City of Houston and how he has represented Houston on a national stage. The Chairman noted, as the board representative for Harris County (the County), he was in a difficult position as the County recently purchased dispatch furniture for their new call center. Chairman Rau said, when there isn't a specific issue pending before the Board, he hoped the Board would have discussions on these types of financial requests, because GHC 9-1-1 can't afford to fund them all and is entering into its own budget-tightening phase. Board Member Storemski addressed what was meant by one-time non-precedent setting act; he stated if other agencies have an issue, the Board would review it on a case-by-case basis. He added that in regards to the County's recent purchase of dispatch furniture, the City also purchased the dispatch when they build the HEC. Board Member Storemski noted, in regards to policies, every sitting Board has the ability to set its own policies. Board Member Mark Denman commented that he was satisfied with the information from the committee review and didn't feel the request was out of the scope of what has been done in the past. Board Member Denman stated Houston is a huge influence for all surrounding cities. The actions taken by Chief Acevedo and the City during protests and the pandemic has saved surrounding cities and Fort Bend County thousands of dollars, which was one of the primary reasons for his support of this request. After the discussion, Chairman Rau said he wasn't sure what the solution was for the future, but it would be good to have a discussion during the next budget session. There being no further discussion, the Board voted 3 in favor and 2 against. Motion passed. (Board Members Storemski, Denman, and Ratliff voted yes. Chairman Rau and Board Secretary Anders voted no.)

Agenda Item 9—GHC 9-1-1 Budget—“Transmittal and Discussion of the Proposed 2021 Budget.” Mr. Fonseca stated the purpose of the proposed budget presentation is to gather the Board's input before final approval is requested during the September, 2020 Board meeting. No official Board action will be required.

Mr. Fonseca proceeded to review the details outlined in the proposed budget: I. Five year projection 2021-2025; II. Summary Projected Receipts and Operational /Capital Budget 2021; III. Operational and Capital budget 2021; IV Graph for 2021 Budget;

V. Exhibits. Board Member Denman inquired about the five-year projection, noting that the beginning capital fund for year 2021 is a higher dollar amount than the amount budgeted for years 2022-2025. Mr. Fonseca explained there are some projects that are not yet complete this year due to scheduling, timing, and product availability. Those projects have been rolled over to 2021 resulting in a higher amount.

Mr. Fonseca continued with an overview of the five-year budget plan. He pointed out that a projected 10% service fee increase on wirelines is included for the year 2022. The projected monthly new rates reflected are \$0.88 residential, \$1.54 business lines and trunks. Board Member Storemski noted a decrease in service fees projected for the years 2023-2025. Mr. Fonseca explained that he is being cautious with the projected numbers due to the uncertainty and potential impact related to COVID-19.

He also advised that financing proceeds, in the amount of \$8,000,000, were included in the budget for the years 2023 and 2024 to give GHC 9-1-1 flexibility. He stated that if the financing proceeds were needed, the request would be presented to the Board for approval. Lastly, Mr. Fonseca provided an overview of the Summary Projected Receipts and Operational/Capital Budget 2021. Mr. Fonseca requested for the Board's input on the percentage amount to be included in the budget for the merit increases ranging from 1% to 3%. The Board suggested budgeting 3% for the Board to consider approval at the next Board meeting. Chairman Rau explained to Board Member Denman that GHC 9-1-1 provides budget for HEC and HCSO related to line item 20 and 21. Every year Mr. Fonseca meets with HEC and HCSO for their budget request. Both call centers have the opportunity to present their portion of the budget request to the Board.

Mr. Cutler presented HEC's portion of the budget and explained HEC's budget requests in detail. He highlighted that HEC hired students who went through HEC's co-op program causing an increase of \$45,000 a year. Chairman Rau requested that Mr. Fonseca send copies of HEC and HCSO budget request presentation to the Board Members before the next Board meeting. Mr. Cutler concluded his presentation, then answered a few questions.

Next, Ms. Yost presented the HCSO budget request. Her presentation covered call volume, staffing, and pending projects at the new dispatch center (AV walls). Ms. Yost stated that HCSO continues to work on improving interoperability amongst agencies within the GHC 9-1-1 territory and developing contingency plans for future hurricane events. She highlighted the completed training room at the new dispatch center, and the successful addition of ASAP Alarms. Lastly, Ms. Yost mentioned that Sheriff Gonzales presented to Commissioners Court a salary increase for the entire staff at the HCSO, which is included in the 2021 budget request. Mr. Fonseca

continued with the overview proposed budget. Chairman Rau inquired about the interoperability between the HCSO and HEC—if something were to happen that interrupted service at the HEC, would HCSO’s new dispatch center be able to handle HEC’s call volume. Mr. Cutler stated yes, if HCSO has the personnel to receive the overflow calls until HEC’s personnel could get to the HCSO call center. Mr. Heffernan added that the technology available at all call centers is very flexible. Chairman Rau asked about the efforts to create an emergency pool of people who could be available to take calls during an emergency event. Mr. Heffernan stated GHC 9-1-1 had looked into it, but there were some restrictions with TCOLE certifications. Ms. Yost added that in the event that there’s a large call volume incident, the new NG911 system handles abandoned calls, which helps the call-taker handle live calls. Mr. Fonseca concluded the overview of the proposed budget.

Board Member Denman asked Ms. Clauson if any follow-up had been to gauge if the media advertising is getting any recognition recall. Ms. Clauson stated that the media consultant is currently collecting the campaign data and would be providing a summary soon. She mentioned she will provide the media analytics at a future Board meeting.

Mr. Fonseca reminded the Board that the 3% maximum option for merit increases would be included in the final budget for the Board to consider during the approval process at the next meeting, scheduled September 23, 2020.

Agenda Item 11—“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, September 23, 2020 virtually via Zoom; 2) NENA Ignite Virtual Conference and Expo, September 22 – 24, 2020.

Chairman Rau inquired about who can attend the virtual NENA conference. Office Manager Daveda Hughes stated it is free for all and anybody can register. Ms. Clauson stated there will be many sessions available throughout September 22 – 24, 2020.

There being no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 3:26 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>9/23/2020</u>

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