

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
September 23, 2020

The September 23, 2020 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened virtually at 1:06 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 Tommy Ramsey, Harris County Assistant Attorney, were present for the virtual Board meeting; 27 people were in attendance.

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

Chairman Rau, mentioned that the August 26, 2020 Board meeting was rescheduled to September 2, 2020 due to Hurricane Laura. He inquired about any updates relating to tropical storm Beta. 9-1-1 Service Officer Roger Hauck stated there were no PSAPs effected by tropical storm Beta and all 9-1-1 systems remained operational.

Agenda Item 2—“Approval of Minutes.” The minutes of the Board meeting of September 2, 2020 were approved with a motion by Board Member Denman and seconded by Board Storemski. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Taken out of order: Agenda Item 5—“Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters.” GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison, Anya McInnis provided a brief update on the proposed 9-1-1 reliability and sustainability legislation. She mentioned they were waiting to receive the GHC 9-1-1 stand-alone draft bill back from the Texas Legislative Council. Due to COVID-19, the process of getting the bill reviewed/approved was slower than normal. Ms. McInnis stated that she has been working with Alliance Legislative Consultant Shayne Woodard, and with or without a legislative council draft, they were going to reach out to Rep. Dennis Paul, Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Public Safety, for a meeting early October,

2020. Ms. McInnis invited Board Member Denman to take part in the meeting. Ms. McInnis stated that after the meeting takes place with Vice Chairman Paul, she would start working with other legislators. She highlighted some scenarios to be taken into consideration when selecting an author to carry the bill: the November 2020 elections and the possible new committee chairmanship positions, who will carry the bill through the House and how will it work over in the Senate. Ms. McInnis stated that she would strategize around those scenarios as it moves closer to the legislative session. Board Member Denman asked Ms. McInnis where the meeting with Vice Chairman Paul would be held. Ms. McInnis stated hopefully in Houston, at whichever location or platform is suitable for the meeting. Chairman Rau asked if a member from Harris County should also sponsor the GHC 9-1-1 draft bill. Ms. McInnis stated yes, a Harris County member would be asked to carry the GHC 9-1-1 legislative bill.

Chairman Rau requested for an item titled “Board Member Comments” to be added to the agenda to allow Board Members the opportunity to comment/share updates about functions and/or about the network. Preferably, this item would be after “Citizens Comments” on the agenda. Board Member Denman provided his input and suggested the “Board Member Comments” be limited to a 10-15 seconds. Chairman Rau asked GHC 9-1-1 staff to work with Mr. Ramsey to ensure compliance. There was a brief discussion, then Chairman Rau advised that the Board was not taking any votes or action regarding this matter.

Board Member Denman gave a brief update on the Harris County Mayors and Councils Association (HCMCA) meeting held on September 17, 2020. He stated that at the meeting, he shared how well GHC 9-1-1 maintained their operations, provided great 9-1-1 training and technology. He also mentioned that the wireless 9-1-1 service fee rate of \$.50 (a \$6.00 annual fee rate) had not been changed in twenty-three years, and with the new Next-Gen technology and its advanced features that were being implemented, GHC 9-1-1 would need the HCMCA’s, especially the City of Houston’s, support to enact the proposed funding legislation. Ms. McInnis added, as another step forward she would be reaching out to the government affairs teams of both the City of Houston and Harris County sometime in October, 2020 to let them know GHC 9-1-1’s plans. Chairman Rau requested for Ms. McInnis to work with GHC 9-1-1 staff to draft a Resolution to present to the HCMCA, Harris County Commissioner’s Court and the Houston City Council. Ms. McInnis added Fort Bend County also. Board Member Denman suggested a GHC 9-1-1 staff member or Ms. McInnis to attend the next HCMCA meeting on October 15, 2020 to provide them with an update on GHC 9-1-1 plans regarding the fee legislation. Board Member Denman complimented the staff on the Board report booklet that is prepared and

sent to the Board members for the meetings. Without any further questions, Ms. McInnis ended her report.

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

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 7.2 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$16.9 million
- Liabilities \$ 9.6 million
- Receipts \$ 29.9 million
- Disbursements \$ 23.0 million

Mr. Fonseca noted that in the Overtime Expenses, the dollar amount of \$80,731 for Harris County was not up-to-date due to an unusual lag in invoicing due to Harris County’s new payroll system transition. Mr. Fonseca continued with a brief overview of the remaining budget balance report. Chairman Rau inquired about the dollar amount in service fees in columns 5 & 6. Mr. Fonseca explained that the dollar amount in column 5 represented the annual amount for the entire year that the Board approved last year for 2020. The dollar amount in column 6 represented the balance for the 4 months remaining for this year 2020. Mr. Fonseca proceeded to report on 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 stated there’s nothing new to report, however the FCC had finally settled the Z-axis requirements that wireless providers must meet on April 21, 2021.

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 August, 2020. Mr. Heffernan continued with the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs. He highlighted that the correct percentage for Southside Place PD call service level was 96% for the month of August, 2020. He explained that the GHC 9-1-1 NOC had conducted test calls to Southside Place call center, which were included in there count and caused its percentage to go down. GHC 9-1-1 staff continues to work closely with PSAPs that have a decrease in service level. Next, he provided a brief overview of the GIS/Database metrics, and the network operations center (NOC) monthly case-load and response stats. Mr. Heffernan deferred to Mr. Hauck to explain the increase in the number of ticket incidents for the month of

August, 2020. Mr. Hauck stated that significant upgrades to the Monitoring and Alerting System, along with the ticketing system were made. During the upgrade, the system did not switch to maintenance mode, which triggered a lot of alerts and alarms. The configuration issue was resolved and the number of incident tickets should go down next month. Board Member Denman noted that the Mean Time to Resolution (MTR) average resolve time decreased in the month of August, 2020. Chairman Rau inquired about the scale of the training attendance report for August, 2020. Mr. Heffernan stated the scale measures one attendee. A total of 15 telecommunicators attended the professional growth classes, 2 students were from out of district. Chairman Rau asked what was total number of telecommunicators (in the GHC territory), that could be taking training. Mr. Hauck stated there are 1,200 telecommunicators. He said GHC 9-1-1 does its best to promote and offer all telecommunicators training classes, and the low attendance rate could be due to COVID-19. He added that staffing restraints at the PSAPs could also be a factor. Mr. Heffernan stated working to safely schedule more technical training as well as virtual training. Without any 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 activities throughout the GHC 9-1-1 territory remained low, however GHC 9-1-1 is starting to get a few more public education requests. She stated some jurisdictions were not holding National Night Out events and some are choosing to do virtual events for their cities. Next, Ms. Clauson reported that Harris County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) Director of Communications Kathi Yost previously provided an update on the efforts that HCSO coordinated to provide donations to emergency responders in Louisiana, who were impacted by Hurricane Laura. Ms. Clauson proceeded with an update on the public awareness media campaign. She reported that a final campaign analysis would be provided on all media components to determine effectiveness. The digital social media and billboards would continue through September, 2020. She mentioned that the GHC 9-1-1 social media sites are active with many engagements on the various posts. Ms. Clauson presented the GHC 9-1-1 website trends from August, 2020. She also noted a large increase in visits to the Emergency Profile Sign-Up page of the website. She reminded the Board that all the campaign ads were on the GHC 9-1-1 YouTube page. Ms. Clauson provided the digital marketing trend stats from August, 2020, advising that the marketing group would be sending an overall analytic report. She mentioned the recognition of National 9-1-1 Day, September 11th.

Board Member Denman suggested doing more billboard advertisements on the Emergency Profile Sign-Up Service, adding that Text to 9-1-1 is a great billboard advertisement. Chairman Rau inquired about September 11 being recognized as 9-1-1 Day, a day to recognize the importance of telecommunicators and first responders, now that it is officially designated as Patriot Day. Ms. Clauson stated that both designations are recognized, GHC 9-1-1 does a resolution and shares messages about 9-1-1 Day. Without any further questions Ms. Clauson ended her report.

Action Item—Agenda Item 8—“Discussion and Consideration for Approval of the Order Adopting GHC 9-1-1’s Operational and Capital Budget Including the Adoption of the Service Fee Rates for the Year 2021.” Mr. Fonseca presented the proposed Order for the Board’s approval of the 2021 budget and the 9-1-1 service fee rates. Mr. Fonseca stated the 9-1-1 service fee rates were not changing. Per the Board’s recommendation a 3% for merit salary increases was included in the budget for consideration. Chairman Rau opened the floor for discussion regarding the 3% for merit increases. He asked that anyone share any input they know about salary adjustments that have been approved by other governmental entities. Mr. Fonseca stated that the County gives the department heads a pot of money and their position maximums, and the department heads have the authority to distribute based on the parameters that they’ve set. He said it would be up to the GHC 9-1-1 Executive Director to distribute funds within the guidelines of the salary study (the study was performed and approved by the Board three years ago). Chairman Rau asked what percentage was included last year for merit increases. Mr. Fonseca stated the Board approved a 2% increase. Chairman Rau asked if the 2% was a pot of money, what would be the highest percentage an employee can received in terms of salary adjustment in order to bring them into compliance with the salary study. Ms. Schwender stated GHC 9-1-1 would use the 2% as a guideline, some employees could receive zero and others could receive as much as 4%. Mr. Fonseca added that there was \$20,000 that was not utilized from the 2% that was approved for merit increases in the 2020 budget. Chairman Rau asked Board Member Ratliff, as a salary study committee member, what she thought about GHC 9-1-1’s salary study and what percentage of employees have reached the middle of their range. Board Member Ratliff stated that the committee found that all employees were not at the median range for their particular job position, and there were a few positions that have exceeded the top level. Those positions were identified with Ms. Schwender. Board Member Thompson agreed with Board Member Ratliff, and stated the study showed a small percentage in that particular area. Board Member Storemski commented that the money approved for a position does not mean to spend it all, but a limit to spend. There was a short discussion regarding the salary increases, it was

discussed that a position would be incrementally adjusted by the employee's performance, competitiveness, and progression in their position. Mr. Denman added that other municipalities in the surrounding area that he is in contact with are setting increases between 2.5% to 3%. Board Secretary Anders made the motion to approve the Order adopting GHC 9-1-1 Emergency Network's Operating and Capital Budget including the adoption of the service fee rates for the year 2021. Board Member Ratliff seconded. Chairman Rau advised that the motion did not need to include specifics to the 3% merit increase as it was already figured into the budget. Mr. Fonseca stated yes, the 3% increase is included in the budget.

Chairman Rau stated he would like to further discuss the budget and had three important items he would like to highlight. First item is the importance of hiring a grant coordinator that will locate and apply for grants on behalf of GHC 9-1-1. The grants may be used as funding for a variety of development purposes or for smaller 9-1-1 PSAPs that can benefit from those grants. Board Member Dennis provided his input and explained why he thought it was not necessary to hire a grant coordinator. Chairman Rau stated he would like for GHC 9-1-1 to at least do some research on the availability for grants. There was an in depth discussion regarding the many ways that GHC 9-1-1 can hire, contract or have somebody on staff that can take on the role as a part time grant coordinator. Mr. Fonseca mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 has a point of contact with Harris County that looks out for grants related to 9-1-1. Chairman Rau asked if Harris County does the contracts. Mr. Fonseca explained that Harris County has a group of staff members whose jobs are to search for grants. He mentioned that three years ago GHC 9-1-1 did apply for a grant but GHC 9-1-1 had to withdraw the application due to the project's viability.

Chairman Rau reminded Board Members the importance of having financial discussions before time for budget approval, and encouraged Board Members to ask questions they may have regarding the budget. Mr. Fonseca stated he could insert a dollar amount in the budget for a grant coordinator and bring it back for discussion and approval at next Board meeting. Chairman Rau clarified that he wanted to identify some funds that could be set aside for a future Board discussion. There was short discussion regarding setting aside the dollar amount and moving a certain dollar amount to a new line item. It was agreed that GHC 9-1-1 would pursue grant funding internally and/or contract an expert using existing contract budgeted funds already in the proposed budget. Secondly, Chairman Rau stated he would like for GHC 9-1-1 to offer more enhanced training, including virtual options and a library of content that telecommunicators could take advantage on their own time. Mr. Rau also suggested offering mental health training. Mr. Heffernan mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 had a new training management tool that could be utilized by the

telecommunicators at their workstation. Operations will provide an update on the new training management tool at a future Board meeting. Chairman Rau asked if the training can be offered on demand. Mr. Hauck reported that there is some training on demand on the 9-1-1 workstations, but it's more focused on the technical information displayed on their screen. Mr. Hauck stated that the new Learning Management System (MLS) that is being incorporated can be configured for on demand training and expanded to include mental health/stress training. Chairman Rau inquired about the current year's training budget and what was budgeted next year. Mr. Fonseca stated the amount budgeted for both years is \$290,000, noting no change. Mr. Fonseca stated that \$194,000 is projected to be spent during 2020. Chairman Rau emphasized offering virtual training to telecommunicators and making it accessible for them to do on their own time. He added that he would like to see GHC 9-1-1 in contact with The Harris Center for Mental Health to see what training is available for telecommunications. Board Member Ratliff suggested offering pre-recorded trainings to telecommunicators and having a way they can submit any questions regarding that specific training. Board Member Storemski stated that if telecommunicators are required to attend trainings outside the job, they would have to be compensated for the training, which brings up another budget related issue. There was an in depth discussion about training options, ways to increase attendance and training requirements/earning TCOLE credit.

Lastly, Chairman Rau addressed future furniture/equipment requests from PSAPs. He asked Board Members to think about setting a policy or as part of the budget set aside money for those types of requests in order to better plan for spontaneous requests from PSAPs. Board Member Denman commented that if funds are set aside for such requests, those funds would be spent. His opinion was not to budget the funds and to continue as has been done in the past. Board Member Storemski explained that the Board sets policy for staff and management who are running the organization as administrators. He noted that the Board has the right to change policy not the staff. Board Secretary Anders added that GHC 9-1-1 should stay within the guidelines of the mission and not become a financing agency; noting that at this time GHC 9-1-1 is looking at going to the legislature for additional funding. He stated entities need to take responsibility for what happens downstream at their own agency. Board Member Denman suggested approving the budget and provide guidance and recommendations to staff; those recommendations can be accommodated in the budget for a future budget discussion. Chairman Rau stated he would like to see those suggestions taken into action and know that there are funds for future requests. Board Member Denman asked if Mr. Rau is suggesting moving funds from the reserved and creating a line item on the budget for such requests. Chairman Rau stated yes, he would like to see funds identified in the budget for grant

coordination and research. No action is needed at this time, but it will be identified in the budget for the Board to discuss in the future. Board Member Ratliff asked for clarity on whether the Chairman was requesting that funds be set aside to study the feasibility of contracting with a grant writer. Chairman Rau said he would like an outside source to research and advise the Board if grant funds exist that GHC 9-1-1 could pursue on behalf of the PSAPs. After further discussion on the matter, Board Secretary Anders suggested approving the budget and adding a footnote with the Chairman’s recommendations. Without any further questions, Chairman Rau opened the floor to approve the budget with no changes. Board Member Denman made the motion to approve the order adopting GHC 9-1-1 Emergency Network’s Operating and Capital budget including the adoption of the service fee rates for the year 2021. Board Member Storemski seconded. Motion passed unanimously. In summary, the approved Order adopted the 2021 Operational and Capital Budget totaling \$54,020,000 with the monthly 9-1-1 service fee rates for all landline services (including IP-based services) at \$0.80/residential line, \$1.40/business line and/or trunk line.

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, October 28, 2020 virtually via Zoom; 2) NENA Ignite Virtual Conference and Expo, September 22 – 24, 2020.

Chairman Rau inquired about NENA Ignite Virtual Conference and Expo. Ms. Clauson stated virtual conference was taking place through September 24, 2020. The prerecorded sessions would be available on NENA’s website until the end of October, 2020. Chairman Rau asked if telecommunicators informed about the virtual conference. Ms. Clauson stated yes, they were notified through email and social media. She reminded Board Members that the registration was free.

There being no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

[Minutes approve unanimously—Signatures pending]

Russell S. Rau, Chairman

William B. Anders, Secretary/Treasurer

Motioned: <u>Bill Anders</u>
Seconded: <u>Mark Denman</u>
Vote: Yes <u>5</u> No <u> </u>
Date: <u>10/28/2020</u>

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