

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
October 27, 2021

The October 27, 2021 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened at 1:04 p.m. in the Board Room of the GHC 9-1-1 at 10220 Fairbanks N. Houston Rd., Houston, Texas 77064.

Board Members Bill Anders, Mark Denman, Russell Rau, Dennis Storemski, Shawn Thompson, and legal counsel Tommy Ramsey, Harris County Assistant Attorney were present for the Board meeting. Board Member Vergil Ratliff did not attend the meeting; 21 people were in attendance.

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 on September 22, 2021 were approved with a motion by Board Member Denman and seconded by Board Member Storemski. 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 presented the investment report. He reported that the average yield for the investments was 0.073% for quarter ending June 30, 2021 and 0.065% ending September 30, 2021.

Mr. Fonseca provided an overview of the overtime expenses and the monthly financial report totals ending September 30, 2021 as follows:

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 14.9 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$ 10.0 million
- Liabilities \$ 8.9 million
- Receipts \$ 34.7 million
- Disbursements \$ 29.4 million

Mr. Fonseca gave an overview of the remaining budget balance report, noting that the service fees were over the budget projection and factored into the 2022 budget cash projection. Mr. Fonseca mentioned that some items that are under budget, those funds are rolled over to the 2022 budget. (At 1:11 p.m. Board Member Thompson joined the meeting) Board Member Denman inquired about the suspension of the monthly NG 9-1-1 router service payments. Mr. Fonseca explained that there are some delays on the

NG9-1-1 project due to the technology and infrastructure environment, but there is good progress on the Originating Service Provider (OSP) migration to GHC's NG9-1-1 service, and expenses will start again as the OSP migration progresses. Board Member Denman asked if the surplus would carry over to next year's budget. Mr. Fonseca stated yes, GHC 9-1-1 will continue to budget the funds and once the NG9-1-1 service becomes fully deployed, the funds will be expended.

Mr. Fonseca continued to report on the Receipts and Disbursements report, the 9-1-1 service fee revenue, and cash expenditures trend-line charts. Chairman Rau asked if landline residential and VoIP are in the same category, and is the fee rate the same for both. Mr. Fonseca stated yes, both the landline and VoIP are treated the same. Lastly, Mr. Fonseca presented the list of investments for the quarters ending June 30, 2021 and September 30, 2021.

Mr. Fonseca mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 would be approaching the City and County on GHC 9-1-1's budget approval. Chairman Rau stated he would like the staff to notify the Board on the budget approval meeting dates, and encouraged GHC 9-1-1 executive team and Board Members to attend the meetings. Mr. Fonseca stated GHC would notify the Board.

Agenda Item 5—"Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters." Executive Director, Stan Heffernan reported that the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) approved NENA's NG9-1-1 i3 standard as an official body with the authority to create technical standards in promoting interoperable NG9-1-1 solutions. Next, Mr. Heffernan gave an update on the legislature's allocation to NG9-1-1 fund, Senate Bill (SB) 8. Mr. Heffernan reported that SB8 passed, and will ultimately be signed by the Governor, then Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) will distribute the funds. There is no word yet on how the NG9-1-1 service funds would be dispersed. Chairman Rau thanked Mr. Heffernan and GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison Anya McInnis on the legislative efforts. Mr. Rau asked if it is certain that GHC 9-1-1 will receive the NG9-1-1 service fund. Mr. Heffernan stated yes, once the Governor signs the bill. Board Member Storemski asked if GHC 9-1-1 can be reimbursed for NG9-1-1 progress and costs already made. Mr. Heffernan stated no, only for future costs and monthly recurring. Mr. Heffernan said that GHC 9-1-1 will look into different type of categories that will allow some funding. Chairman Rau inquired about who makes the decision on the dollar amount being dispersed. Mr. Heffernan explained that all the 9-1-1 districts, municipal districts, and COGS agreed on a dollar amount and have an idea of what the amount would be, that information has been provided to the legislative team. Chairman Rau asked what dollar amount GHC 9-1-1 expects to get. Mr. Fonseca stated \$20 million over a two-year period, including non-recurring and recurring charges until December 31, 2024. Board Member Denman asked if GHC 9-1-1 has a plan on how the funds would be budgeted. Mr. Fonseca said there is a conceptual plan

but he would not count on it until the Governor signs the bill and money has been allocated, hoping it would be in the next year's budget cycle for the year 2023 budget. Mr. Heffernan closed his report after he addressed questions from the Board regarding legislation.

Agenda Item 6—"Operations Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Operational Matters." Mr. Heffernan reported that there were no internal/external P1 service issue tickets during the month of September, 2021. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the network utilization charts, PSAP 9-1-1 call sessions report, noting that the class of service for 9-1-1 wireless calls were very close to 90%. He continued with the PSAP 9-1-1 trending charts, and the call statistics provided by Houston Emergency Center (HEC) and Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO). Next, Mr. Heffernan briefly reported on 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs. He highlighted HEC's improved SLA performance, despite their challenging situation with short staffing. Mr. Heffernan proceeded with the GHC 9-1-1 training report—two in-person 9-1-1 equipment courses in the month of September, 2021. Chairman Rau commented that the GHC 9-1-1 Training Newsletter was a great idea. Mr. Heffernan added that GHC 9-1-1 has the bi-annual newsletter that goes out to the PSAPs, but the training newsletter is more focused on monthly training/updates, provided by GHC 9-1-1 Training Specialist Mindi Bartee and 9-1-1 Service Officer Roger Hauck. Board Secretary Anders inquired about how the new SSAPs (TECC, ESD11, and ESD 100) are doing. Mr. Heffernan said he has not heard any updates from the new call centers, but during the cutovers everything went very well.

Next, Mr. Heffernan reported on the GIS/database report. Regarding Chairman Rau's question at the last Board meeting on what percentage of Originating Service Providers (OSPs) had been migrated to the NG9-1-1 Service, Mr. Heffernan pointed out that the percentage complete by call volume was 86.8%, based on the OSPs monthly in-bound traffic on the 9-1-1 system. He added that the 75.0% complete by total TNs/devices was an approximate estimate based on population of the wireless providers.

Agenda Item 7—"Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts." Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson reported that there was an increase in 9-1-1 education materials requests for events in October, 2021. There were material distributions for Aldine ISD PD Career Day and La Porte PD Health and Safety Fair events in September, 2021. Ms. Clauson stated that she gave several 9-1-1 presentations in-person and via Zoom teleconference to two Houston Police Department Positive Interaction Program (PIP) groups (South Gessner and the Deaf PIPs), the Kingwood Public Safety meeting, and the Forest Lake Townhouse Association. Ms. Clauson mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 had a 9-1-1 booth that was shared with new SSAP TECC at the Spring-Into-Safety event in Old Town Spring held on October 9, 2021.

Ms. Clauson concluded her report with snapshots of the GHC 9-1-1 social media messages that focused on 9-1-1 services/education messages, information on 9-1-1 texting for the deaf, and weather preparedness messages. Ms. Clauson mentioned that she will have a follow up report on the media campaign at a future Board meeting.

Agenda Item 8—“Local Telecommunicator Honorees—Recognition of 9-1-1 Personnel Honored by the Texas Chapters of National Emergency Number Association (TX-NENA) and Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (TX-APCO).” Ms. Clauson reported that the following Telecommunicators were recognized by Texas NENA and Texas APCO during their annual Board meetings, which were held virtually due to COVID-19. GHC 9-1-1 will also recognize these Honorees:

Texas APCO Telecommunicator of the Year Honoree:

Meagan Votaw – League City PD

Texas APCO Team of the Year Honoree:

Ayanna Meyers, Kristal Robinson, Jessica Wilkerson, and Laura Belvin – League City PD

Texas NENA Silent Heroes:

Ayanna Meyers – League City PD

Marsha Shamlim – Harris County Sheriff’s Office

Chris Bijarro – Sugar Land Public Safety Dispatch

Ms. Clauson thanked the PSAP’s for always recognizing their Telecommunicators. Board Member Denman asked Ms. Clauson if she utilizes her public information relations group to reach out to the media to publicize Telecommunicator recognitions. He suggested someone reaches out to the Galveston Daily News and share with them the League City TX-NENA and TX-APCO Telecommunicator honorees. Ms. Clauson stated GHC 9-1-1 sends out a news release announcing the recognitions to the media. She said she would get with League City Public Information Officer and Police Department about a news release for the Galveston Daily News. Chairman Rau mentioned he was proud to see Telecommunicators within the GHC 9-1-1 territory being recognized as Silent Heroes. Ms. Clauson mentioned that every PSAP can have a Silent Hero recognition by submitting the telecommunicator’s name and background story; she added that GHC 9-1-1 promotes this information at the PSAP Op’s meetings.

Agenda Item 9—“Houston Emergency Center (HEC) Update: Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)—Transmittal and Discussion of TCOLE’s Hiring/Age Requirements for 9-1-1 Telecommunicators.” HEC Director, Robert Mock gave a presentation on the TCOLE hiring requirements for emergency telecommunicators. Mr. Mock stated that telecommunicators under the age of 18 years old are not allowed to take emergency calls as verified by Mike Dickey, Statewide Training Evaluator with

TCOLE. Mr. Mock explained that there are two areas in the Texas Government that codifies the age requirement and enrollment in licensing courses which are; Texas Occupational Code, Chapter 17.01 and Texas Administrative Code, Rule §217.1 noting that it would take legislative action to change the requirements. Chairman Rau asked what type of calls the high school students are allowed to answer. Mr. Mock stated that they answer non-emergency calls and the police non-emergency line, which most calls are referrals to substations or to 3-1-1 for specific information. Mr. Mock mentioned that last year about 10 high school graduates were hired as telecommunicators. Board Member Denman asked what the retention rate was for students after they have graduated from high school. Mr. Mock stated that it varies from year to year. Last year HEC hired about 22 high school graduates, but some graduates decide to go to college, so the retention was between 25%–50%. Mr. Mock stated that HEC has created a telecommunicator part-time job program to allow students to work while going to college, which will be posting soon.

Action: Agenda Item 10—“GHC 9-1-1 COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive—Discussion and Consideration of COVID-19 Vaccination Incentive for GHC 9-1-1 Employees and Related Policies.” Mr. Heffernan reported on GHC 9-1-1’s latest COVID-19 vaccination rates, based on employee voluntary reporting; 34 (83%) employees reported being fully vaccinated, 38 (93%) employees reported with antibodies, which leaves three (7%) employees unconfirmed without antibodies. Chairman Rau explained that the past Board discussions about COVID-19 vaccination/incentives were meant to be positive, to help motivate staff to be more open to being vaccinated. Chairman Rau stated that state leaders, have prohibited COVID-19 vaccination mandates and deferred to Mr. Ramsey, legal counsel, on what type of incentives GHC 9-1-1 could offer to the assuming 7 unvaccinated employees. Board Member Denman asked if an incentive could be offered to employees to reveal their vaccine status and to those who are hesitant to get the vaccine. Mr. Ramsey stated yes, GHC 9-1-1 may offer a COVID-19 vaccine incentive to employees; the incentive cannot be coercive, and a recommended cash value range of \$50 - \$100. Board Member Denman asked if GHC 9-1-1 is allowed to reward staff a stipend for achieving 100% vaccination. Mr. Ramsey stated that by incentivizing employees who are already vaccinated would go against certain provisions in the Texas Constitution; he advised that an incentive program could only incentivize employees who were vaccinated after an incentive program was implemented. There was a small discussion about unvaccinated employees that may pose risks to the health and safety of employees in the workplace.

Board Member Denman asked if GHC 9-1-1 could require employees, who refuse to reveal their COVID-19 vaccination status, to submit to testing. Mr. Ramsey stated, as he has not seen this requirement being addressed outside of a vaccine mandate, it should not be an issue for employers to require unvaccinated employees to get COVID-19 testing. Mr. Ramsey mentioned that something to consider is if the employer is requiring COVID-19 testing, the test should relate to the job component

that requires necessary testing. Chairman Rau expressed the importance of protecting staff from catching/spreading the virus in the work place, which can be prevented by taking the vaccine. Board Secretary Anders stated he would like to know how HIPPA fits into the COVID-19 vaccination status. Mr. Fonseca said that meeting the 100% vaccination rate might difficult to reach being that the employees have health/medical concerns. Board Member Denman said he understands the employees who have medical concerns and emphasized on adopting COVID testing for employees who are unvaccinated. Mr. Heffernan stated that if the Board wants GHC 9-1-1 to have COVID testing, he would like to make it easy on the employee and not disrupt their daily work. Board Member Denman asked HEC representatives how they were managing COVID testing. Mr. Mock stated that unvaccinated employees get tested twice a month, and go on their own time with no re-imburement. The employee then submit their results through a portal. Mr. Mock advised that every two weeks a non-compliance report is distributed, and recently he received the first non-compliance report that listed employees who have not complied with testing. Board Member Storemski asked what consequences does the employee face for being non-compliant. Mr. Mock answered that HEC's discipline system/policy recommends informal counseling for the first non-compliance; the second non-compliance would fall into progressive discipline policy, which over time can lead to termination. If an employee falls in the discipline process, the employee would get referred to HR. Mr. Heffernan stated his main concerns are legal, HIPPA, and coercion. Mr. Ramsey advised that the Governor's executive order GA 40 does not prohibit COVID-19 testing or incentive programs. If a vaccine incentive program is created, a procedure such as a confidential medical record provision would be in place by keeping a separate confidential file of employee proof of vaccination record. Mr. Ramsey added that, possibly the reason for HEC having employees go to a third party provider to get tested may be because of certain EEOC guidelines and requirements that has to be followed if the City of Houston (the City) were to administer the testing. After some addition brief comments about the requirement of testing, Board Member Denman made the motion to require unvaccinated employees to take COVID-19 testing twice a month, and for the testing to be paid by GHC 9-1-1 (no incentive and no penalty on the employee other than the time it takes to be tested). There was a question regarding the legality of asking for proof of vaccination and/or proof of testing. Mr. Mock explained the details of City's process employee reporting of proof COVID-10 vaccination and testing. Mr. Ramsey mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 can require COVID-19 documentation. Chairman Rau stated that Board Member Denman made the motion, and was there a second to that motion; hearing none, Chairman Rau seconded the motion.

Mr. Fonseca asked if all seven unvaccinated employees are required to get tested, or just the three employees without the antibodies. Chairman Rau and Board Member Denman stated the seven unvaccinated employees are to be tested, unless they have a medical exemption. Chairman Rau expressed his concerned about what an outbreak

can do to the staff, and how important it is to keep the staff and others safe. Board Member Storemski “called the question.”

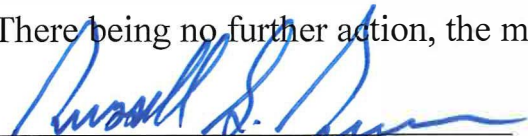
Chairman Rau announced no further and proceeded with the vote on the motion made by Board Member Denman. Chairman Rau and Board Member Denman voted yes, Board Secretary Anders and Board Member Storemski voted no. Motion was not approved. Chairman Rau requested that the COVID-19 testing program be placed back on the agenda for discussion at the next Board meeting during December, 2021. Mr. Ramsey stated that he would look into the particulars of a COVID-19 testing program, and will work with Mr. Heffernan and Mr. Fonseca.

Agenda Item 11—“Recognition of Retirement—GHC 9-1-1 Employee Ellis Rogers, NOC Technician, 14 Years of Service.” Ms. Clauson announced the retirement of GHC 9-1-1 employee, Network Operations Center (NOC) Technician, Ellis Rogers. Ms. Clauson stated that Mr. Rogers began his career with GHC 9-1-1 in 2007 as a Facilities Technician. He has dedicated 14 years of service to Public Safety, and he will be retiring effective November 30, 2021. Chairman Rau presented a resolution for adoption, acknowledging Ellis’ career. Mr. Rogers thanked the Board Members and staff.

Agenda Item 12—“Executive Session: Security Matters (per Tex. Gov. Code §§ 551.076 and 551.089) Transmittal and Discussion of Security Sensitive Information related to the GHC 9-1-1 System and Recent Events at 9-1-1 Call Centers in the GHC 9-1-1 Territory.” The Board went into executive session at 2:29 p.m., room 123A, pursuant to sections 551.076(1) and 551.089 (1)(2)(3) of the Texas Government Code for the purpose of discussing security sensitive matters related to the 9-1-1 call-taking system and recent events at 9-1-1 call centers in the GHC 9-1-1 Territory. The Board returned from Executive Session at 3:07 p.m. There were no recommendations for action.

Agenda Item 13—“Announcements—Next Board Meeting, Save-the-Dates.” Chairman Rau advised that due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays, the Board meetings for November and December will be combined, and held on Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

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



Russell S. Rau, Chairman



William B. Anders, Secretary