

Minutes  
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network  
Board of Managers  
February 23, 2022

The February 23, 2022 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened at 1:05 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, Vergil Ratliff, Dennis Storemski, and legal counsel Tommy Ramsey, Harris County Assistant Attorney were present for the Board meeting. Board Member Shawn Thompson did not attend the meeting; 23 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 December 8, 2021 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 presented the investment report for the quarter ending December 31, 2021. Mr. Fonseca reported that the average yield for the investments was 0.102%. He added that the book value and market value information is provided as required by the Public Funds Investment Act (PFIA) and Article III Section 3.04 of GHC 9-1-1’s Investment Policy.

Mr. Fonseca highlighted the overtime expenses for the City of Houston and Harris County for January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. He pointed out that the City of Houston went over the budget as anticipated by \$1,186,256 and the County by \$23,863. Next, Mr. Fonseca provided the monthly financial report totals ending December 31, 2021 as follows:

- Cash and cash equivalents \$ 11.4 million
- Invested funds for Operations \$ 12.0 million
- Liabilities \$ 8.1 million
- Receipts \$ 46.5 million
- Disbursements \$ 42.7 million

Mr. Fonseca reported on the remaining budget balance report. Chairman Rau inquired about the PSAP overtime expenses in the report. Mr. Fonseca stated that the PSAP overtime expenses were included in row 10 on the worksheet, noting that in total, the line item was under budget due to vacancies. Mr. Fonseca mentioned that columns 6 and 7 were added to the report to provide an end of the year summary for 2021 projected actual funds used for rollovers for the 2022 budget. He added that GHC 9-1-1 ended the year with \$1.7 million more than anticipated...the excess funds cannot be spent until the funds are budgeted in the 2023 budget. Chairman Rau asked where the \$1.7 million would be shown in the 2022 financial report. Mr. Fonseca stated that it will be reserved in cash and cash equivalents/invested funds. Chairman Rau asked if it can be placed in the capital funds. Mr. Fonseca stated the additional funds could not be spent during 2022, unless the budget amendment is submitted through the entire approval process with the Board, City, and the County. GHC 9-1-1 has never adjusted the budget mid-year and it isn't recommended at this time. Chairman Rau asked what were some red flags that would stand out regarding the PSAP's overtime expenses. Mr. Fonseca explained that the PSAP overtime expenses are always highlighted in the monthly financial report and the Board is advised when the overtime expenses are about to reach their budget maximum. Board Member Storemski asked if money can still be moved between accounts once the budget has been approved. Mr. Fonseca stated yes, internally the funds can be changed within accounts as long as the total budget isn't exceeded; however, the staff would not internally transfer funds to the City, Harris and Fort Bend county line items without Board approval.

Mr. Fonseca proceeded with an overview of the Receipts and Disbursements report, the 9-1-1 service fee revenue, and cash expenditures trend-line charts. He presented the financial highlights for years 2017-2021. He noted a decline in the "cost per call excluding major site expenses" trend line chart, due to the suspension of monthly NG9-1-1 payments, it will go up once payments start to go out. Board Member Storemski asked if there is a national average in cost per call. Mr. Fonseca stated that many 9-1-1 districts in the state of Texas run their operations different and costs components vary. Mr. Fonseca said he would gather cost per call for other entities. Lastly, Mr. Fonseca presented the PSAP training and related travel for HEC, HCSO, and other PSAPs.

Taken Out of Order: Action Item 10—"Investment Policy— Transmittal and Consideration for Approval of the Investment Policy for Year 2022 – 2023." Mr. Fonseca presented the proposed investment policy for the March 1, 2022 through February 28, 2023. He noted that the proposed investment policy is similar to prior years and minor revisions listed were made by Harris County Financial Services Division. Board Secretary Anders made the motion to approve the investment policy for the year 2022-2023. Board Member Ratliff seconded the motion. The Board Members voted in favor of the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5—“Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters.” Executive Director, Stan Heffernan reported that during December, 2021 the U.S. Senate confirmed Jessica Rosenworcel as the FCC Chairwoman, her term will run through June 30, 2025. Mr. Heffernan provided an update on the FCC diversion of funds, he stated that an annual report was released listing the states that were diverting 911 fees. Next, Mr. Heffernan reported on the NG9-1-1 funding (SB 8) effort, he highlighted that all 9-1-1 districts in the state are eligible for a total of \$101,059,098. GHC 9-1-1 is eligible for \$20,333,840. The start date for eligible costs is November 8, 2021 and the end date for eligible costs is December 31, 2024. Mr. Heffernan mentioned that Mr. Fonseca would discuss more details on this effort in agenda item 8 of the report. Board Member Storemski asked what will GHC 9-1-1 spend the money on. Mr. Heffernan stated that the funds would be used on anything relating to NG9-1-1 services, for example; the 9-1-1 technology infrastructure, IP network costs, and NG9-1-1 course systems. Mr. Storemski asked if GHC 9-1-1 could get reimbursed for the costs incurred in prior years. Mr. Heffernan stated that only for eligible costs with the start date of November 8, 2021.

Taken Out of Order: Agenda Item 8—“Next Generation (NG) 9-1-1 Grant Funding Update—Transmittal and Discussion of Funding Appropriated by the Texas Legislature in Senate Bill (SB) 8 for NG9-1-1 Services.” Board Member Denman stated that although GHC 9-1-1 did not get the wireless fee increase, he is glad that GHC 9-1-1 will receive the NG9-1-1 grant funding. He complimented Mr. Heffernan, Mr. Fonseca and GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison Anya McInnis for their efforts on the NG9-1-1 funding grant.

Chairman Rau asked if the funds were “locked-in.” Mr. Heffernan stated yes, the total amounts for all 9-1-1 districts and GHC 9-1-1’s portion of the money were locked-in. Chairman Rau asked if GHC 9-1-1 will receive a single payment or lump sum. Mr. Heffernan stated that GHC 9-1-1 would only submit eligible costs, incurred on a reimbursement basis. Mr. Fonseca explained that the State holds the funds and GHC 9-1-1 will request reimbursement for eligible costs. Chairman Rau asked how GHC 9-1-1’s future plans would be impacted by the reimbursement payments. Mr. Heffernan said that the NG9-1-1 annual recurring expenses are close to \$8.0 million, two years of reimbursements would benefit GHC 9-1-1’s five year budget plan. There was a short discussion about what the total dollar amount for two years would have been, if the wireless fee increased. Mr. Fonseca stated that the wireless fee increase would have been long-term revenue compared to a two-year reimbursement payment.

Next, Mr. Heffernan reported that GHC 9-1-1 support divisions returned to the office on February 21, 2022. The remaining administrative staff will return on February 28, 2022. Mr. Heffernan announced that GHC 9-1-1 is tentatively planning a March or April outdoor spring event that would be combined with the years of service recognitions.

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 January, 2022. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the network utilization charts, he noted a decrease in voice bandwidth due to 9-1-1 call volume decrease for the month of January, 2022. He reported on the PSAP 9-1-1 call sessions report, noting that the class of service for 9-1-1 wireless calls in January, 2022 was 90.22% and in February, 2022 89.01%, he stated that it will continue to fluctuate between the high 80 and 90 percentile. Mr. Heffernan continued with the PSAP 9-1-1 trending charts, and the call volume statistics provided by Houston Emergency Center (HEC), Harris County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO), and Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office (FBCSO). He mentioned that FBCSO’s call volume measurement was different due to the type of system configuration they currently have, but the SLAs are consistent. Board Secretary Anders inquired about how FBCSO average handling time is measured. FBCSO Public Safety Communications Manager, Meghan Rivas explained that it is measured by total call duration, from answering time to hang-up time, not counting dispatch time. Next, Mr. Heffernan briefly reported on the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs for the months of January and February, 2022.

Mr. Heffernan provided a quick overview of the GHC 9-1-1 training for the year 2021. Mr. Heffernan reported that the State passed House Bill (HB) 786, which requires all Texas 9-1-1 Telecommunicators to receive training in Tele-CPR. GHC 9-1-1 is working with CY-Fair FD to host an on-site instructor course to certify 10 telecommunicators from the GHC 9-1-1 working group, so they can provide the required training to other 9-1-1 agencies in the area. Next, Mr. Heffernan reported on the training attendance report and the GIS/database monthly service requests/tasks report for the month of January, 2022. Mr. Heffernan proceeded to update on the Originating Service Providers (OSPs) migration to NG9-1-1. He highlighted that 74.40% OSP migration is complete, 84.30% complete by legacy TN count, 52.60% complete by VoIP TN count, and 91.30% migrated by call volume (call volume from service providers are now going to GHC 9-1-1’s NG9-1-1 platform.)

Agenda Item 7—“Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts.” Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson reported that GHC 9-1-1, Spring FD, Texas Emergency Communications Center (TECC), and Commissioner Jack Cagle’s office recognized an 8-year old boy as a “9-1-1 Kid Hero” for his quick action when he noticed his neighbor’s house on fire at 2 A.M. The boy quickly alerted his parents to call 9-1-1.

Ms. Clauson continued to report on the GHC 9-1-1 telecommunicator recruitment outreach efforts. She mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 is promoting telecommunicator job

opportunities throughout GHC 9-1-1's social media and website page. The filming of the telecommunicator recruitment videos took place at the HCSO call center. Three 15-second videos and two 30-second videos have been completed. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the videos would be used in GHC 9-1-1's 2022 media campaign. Ms. Clauson thanked all the PSAP personnel and supervisors who participated in the videos. Board Member Storemski asked what platform the video will run on. Ms. Clauson stated that the videos would run on GHC 9-1-1's social media, website, and YouTube page, and other 9-1-1 call centers can also utilize the videos to help with recruitment efforts. She added the videos would be incorporated in the GHC 9-1-1 annual media campaign. Chairman Rau asked what would be the earliest date that the recruitment videos can start running. Ms. Clauson answered that normally the annual media campaign starts in June, but the month of April would be a good opportunity to run the videos, because April is 9-1-1 education month and the second week in April is telecommunicator appreciation week. Chairman Rau asked if the PSAs would be limited to run in spots at no cost or would it be paid. Ms. Clauson stated that, as in the past, the PSAs would be part of the paid campaign. When spots are paid, added value is received on the different digital media platforms; such as Google. Chairman Rau asked whether GHC 9-1-1's public education budget was enough to where the efforts are effective. Ms. Clauson stated yes Chairman Rau asked if billboards would be effective. Ms. Clauson stated yes, billboard messages are included in the media campaign, and other avenues are being discussed.

Next, Ms. Clauson reported that there were six GHC 9-1-1 area call centers that submitted nominations for the following Texas NENA and Texas APCO award categories: Silent Hero, Telecommunicator of the year, and various other categories. The Texas 9-1-1 awards will be presented at the Texas Public Safety Conference banquet on April 6, 2022 in Galveston, TX. Ms. Clauson said that, as has been done in the past, local recipients will be recognized at a future Board meeting. Ms. Clauson encouraged everyone to follow, like, and share GHC 9-1-1's social media messages and pages to help create effective engagements. She added that the month of February, is American Heart Health Awareness, GHC 9-1-1 shared various 9-1-1 messages relating to signs of heart attack and strokes. EMS agencies and 9-1-1 call centers were "tagged" in the messages to allow their followers to see the messages.

Lastly, Ms. Clauson provided the analytics for GHC 9-1-1's Facebook messages. Board Member Denman noted that text-to-9-1-1 in January 2021 vs. January 2022 increased 30%. He is glad that GHC 9-1-1 continues to educate the public on text-to-9-1-1. Mr. Denman added that he is looking forward to video service, where people can send videos to the call-taker via text. Mr. Heffernan stated that currently, GHC 9-1-1 systems are capable to receive videos and has already provided that service to some call centers. Board Member Denman asked if any call centers in the country are offering video service. Mr. Heffernan answered yes, but is not widely used in the major metropolitan areas.

Agenda Item 9—“Transmittal and Consideration for Approval of a Resolution Declaring April 10 – 16, 2022 Public Safety Telecommunicator (TC) Week in the Territory Served by GHC 9-1-1.” Ms. Clauson presented the Resolution declaring 9-1-1 telecommunicator week, for their dedication and efforts to emergency services. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the signed resolution will be shared with the jurisdictions. She added that during telecommunicator week, call centers create a different theme each day to honor telecommunicators. Some jurisdictions also honor telecommunicators by providing them with treats throughout the week. Board Secretary Anders motioned to approve the resolution. Board Member Denman seconded the motion. Board Member Denman asked if the resolution will be shared with area cities, as he would like to see the city of Nassau Bay present the resolution at the April, 2022 Harris County Mayors and Councils Association meeting (HCMCA). Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 is putting the resolution out early, so that it can be shared with HCMCA. Motion passed unanimously.

Action: Agenda Item 11—“PSAP Staffing Committee Update—Transmittal and Consideration of Options that Could Aid 9-1-1 Call Centers in the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Territory (Harris and Fort Bend Counties) in Processing 9-1-1 Calls.” Mr. Heffernan provided a summary of actions taken by the staffing committee. He stated that staffing continues to be a big challenge, not only at HEC, but in our region and across the nation. Mr. Heffernan said that there is no technology solution that can replace the number of call-takers needed to meet the 9-1-1 call center SLAs. Mr. Heffernan reported that some actions taken by the staffing committee are: systems changes were implemented with the approval of the call centers to help increase efficiencies; changes were made to the GHC 9-1-1 website landing page to draw attention on the staffing recruiting effort; telecommunicator recruitment videos were created to assist with hiring efforts for all call centers in the Harris and Fort Bend counties. Mr. Heffernan went over some possible actions that call centers should take such as, call centers should initiate/request competitive salary studies based on market region, and this new (COVID-19) environment. Call centers with increased turnover and retention resulting in lower SLAs could consider operational reviews, and call center training. He highlighted that the staffing committee will now become a permanent sub-committee of the PSAP Operations group and meet quarterly, the PSAP committee will provide quarterly updates to the Board, as needed. Chairman Rau asked if there was a consulting firm that could help improve a call centers operations/performance. Mr. Heffernan stated that there are firms that provide that type of service, he mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 has been reviewed on the technology and network security. Board Secretary Anders expressed his concern regarding the long hiring process, and call-takers experiencing possible burnout from working long hours. HEC Director Robert Mock mentioned that HEC is working on speeding up the hiring process. HEC has new hires every month and is providing monthly training, noting that the training process is still 10 weeks long. Mr. Mock mentioned that

the last two months HEC experienced short staffing due to employees out sick with COVID-19, which effected their SLA performance. Chairman Rau commented that if HEC would be interested in requesting a consulting service to review their operations/performance, he would be in favor of funding the request. Mr. Mock mentioned that HEC would be open to suggestions and ideas in order to aid HEC's staffing issue. George Buenik, Director of Public Safety and Homeland Security, City of Houston, commented that the recruitment video would be helpful and he would like for the videos to be attention grabbers for the public. Mr. Buenik mentioned that HEC has been working with the HR department to shorten the hiring process. HEC is open to the ideas discussed at a past Board meeting, such as the hiring bonus, and cross training with HCSO call center. Mr. Mock stated that there are a few part-time call-taker vacant positions available for former call-takers who may be interested coming back on a part-time basis. Board Member Ratliff asked if the part-time positions can be filled by retirees. Mr. Mock stated it is possible, but it is reserved for former call-takers in order to shorten the hiring/training process. Chairman Rau advised Ms. Clauson to work with Mr. Buenik to make sure the videos meet Mr. Buenik's vision. Ms. Clauson said that the PSAP Operations working group had been in touch with Mr. Buenik and Mr. Mock about information about the job, the type of skills required, and what it takes to be a telecommunicator. Chairman Rau inquired about Mr. Buenik's idea on the hiring bonus. Mr. Heffernan stated that the hiring bonuses are beneficial, but employee retention might still be an issue. There was a short discussion about the hiring bonus and the issue with employee retention. FBCSO Public Safety Communications Manager, Meghan Rivas commented that the videos may sound convincing, but in reality, the stress level and the psychological toll on the call-takers is high and a reason for the high turnover. She stated, people go into the job thinking it's easy but then realize the job is not for them, and that's when retention becomes an issue. Ms. Rivas stated that when she interviews people she tells them the real side of the job and the type of calls they will receive, because at the end of the day that's what they will have to deal with. She mentioned that a hiring bonus is a short-term solution, but hourly pay is key factor to employee retention. Ms. Rivas stated that FBCSO is conducting competitive salary studies, providing training, and mental health classes. Chairman Rau thanked Ms. Rivas for her input. Chairman. Rau asked Mr. Buenik about the pay increase for their call-takers. Mr. Buenik said that Mr. Mock submitted three proposals to HR; Incentive, certification pay, and longevity. The City agreed on 5% and 7%, pay raise and an addition of 6% pay raise for all city employees. The average pay is \$16.81, Mr. Buenik stated that since GHC 9-1-1 funds the majority of the salaries, if it's possible to fund more money for salary increase. Mr. Mock added that last year's budget proposal, HEC requested funding for employee retention incentives for call-takers who have worked 3, 5, and 8 years. Chairman Rau asked if it was approved by City Council. Mr. Mock stated it was approved by the Mayor. Mr. Mock said that HEC is providing education incentives to help retain and educate supervisors, he mentioned that he requested for TCOLE certification pay, but it did not get approved; he

is hoping to try again this year. Chairman Rau asked, since GHC 9-1-1 reimburses HEC salary expenses, can GHC supplement HEC salaries. Mr. Fonseca stated that the Board did approve as part of the 2022 budget, an additional \$250,000 for incentive pay. Chairman Rau asked if it's possible for HCSO call-takers to take 9-1-1 calls at HEC and make over time. HCSO Director of Communications, Kathi Yost commented that her concern is training, since HEC's call-taking system is different than HCSO system. HCSO call-takers can login to any 9-1-1 system from any agency, but the issue is getting the 9-1-1 call to the dispatcher, which involves HEC's CAD system, which HCSO would need training for that part of the job. Chairman Rau stated that he supports the idea of having some overtime money for any PSAP to fund call-takers to work for HEC. Board Member Ratliff asked if HCSO is consuming their overtime budget. Ms. Yost stated yes. Ms. Ratliff expressed her concern about the mental health of call-takers when working overtime. Ms. Yost stated that HCSO call-takers are only mandated to work 12-hour shifts on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Board Member Ratliff commented that she understands the need for a consultant to review HEC's operations, but the biggest source of information that can point out the issues, would be the call-takers. Chairman Rau asked if there was any action to be taken related to this item. Mr. Heffernan mentioned that there was no action, but it was placed as an action item in case the Board wanted to take any action.

Next, Ms. Clauson played three telecommunicator recruitment videos. Chairman Rau commented that he liked the videos. Ms. Clauson stated that there are two 30-second videos, and three 15-seconds. GHC 9-1-1 is working on developing longer videos with supervisors that talk about training and what it takes to be a call-taker. GHC 9-1-1 will share those videos once they become available. Chairman Rau asked where the video directs the public to go if they are interested in the job. Ms. Clauson answered that the videos will direct you to visit GHC 9-1-1's website 9-1-1.org, where a list of job openings are provided to GHC 9-1-1 by the PSAPs. She mentioned that the homepage now has a button for easier access to the list of job openings. Ms. Clauson added that another agency is working on recruitment efforts and they are also creating videos similar to GHC 9-1-1's videos. Chairman Rau mentioned if the website should have a link that would direct people to HEC job openings. Ms. Clauson added that GHC 9-1-1's social media shares job postings and tag the agencies. Board Member Ratliff suggested that the words "it takes a special person to be a call-taker" or "find your calling/purpose" would be a great idea to add to the video script. Ms. Clauson explained that the marketing team is working on targeting the young and older generations, she said that they will work on that scripting. Lastly, Ms. Clauson mentioned that Spanish videos were created, since bilingual call-takers are needed.

Action: Agenda Item 12—"GHC 9-1-1 COVID-19 Program—Transmittal and Discussion of a COVID-19 Vaccination/Testing Policy for GHC 9-1-1 Employees."

Mr. Heffernan reported that the Board requested this item to be brought back for discussion and consideration of possible action. He provided the latest vaccination status for the staff based on voluntary reporting. Board Member Denman added that GHC 9-1-1's COVID-19 testing policy sets a precedent for GHC 9-1-1 to use as an example to be followed in the future. In summary, Board Member Storemski expressed his thoughts and opinions against having the Board set a GHC 9-1-1 vaccination/testing policy and allowing the Executive Director to manage. Mr. Fonseca commented that GHC 9-1-1 staff exposure to external personnel was reduced by allowing staff to work remotely and have staff take proper precautions when visiting the PSAPs. Board Member Denman expressed the importance for GHC 9-1-1's vaccination/testing policy, stating that getting the vaccine or getting tested can lower the risk of catching or spreading the virus that can cause serious illness or death. He added that GHC 9-1-1 is a safety/health agency and should lead by example. Board Member Ratliff shared her thoughts and expressed that it is an individual decision to get vaccinated. Chairman Rau called for a motion. Board Member Denman made the motion to approve GHC 9-1-1's COVID-19 policy. Chairman Rau seconded. Board Members Denman and Rau voted yes, Board Members Anders, Storemski, and Ratliff voted no. Chairman Rau stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Heffernan successfully managed to keep GHC 9-1-1 staff safe, and operations running smoothly. As a compromise, Chairman Rau requested that Mr. Heffernan create a policy based on GHC 9-1-1's COVID-19 plans and actions taken during the pandemic, and provide it to the Board. Board Members agreed. Chairman Rau stated he would like to see GHC 9-1-1 keep encouraging staff on vaccinations. Board Member Denman thanked the staff who got vaccinated.

Agenda Item 13—"Announcements—Next Board Meeting, Save-the-Dates." Chairman Rau advised of the following: 1) The next meeting of the Board of Managers of GHC 9-1-1 is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2022; 2) 9-1-1 Goes to Washington: March 15 – 18, 2022 in Arlington, VA; 3) Texas APCO/NENA Public Safety Conference: April 3 – 6, 2022 in Galveston, TX; 4) NENA 2022 Conference & Expo: June 11 – 16, 2022 in Louisville, KY. Please let Daveda know, if you are interested in attending.

There being no further action, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.



Russell S. Rau, Chairman



William B. Anders, Secretary