

MINUTES
Tarrant County 9-1-1 District
June 22, 2020

According to Section 551.021 of the Government Code, minutes of a meeting must state the subject of each deliberation and indicate each vote, order, decision, or other action taken. These minutes do not include a summary of the discussion but only reflect the action taken by the body. A complete audio recording of this meeting is available on the District's website www.tc911.org.

A meeting of the 9-1-1 Board of Managers was held at 12:00 PM, Monday, June 22, 2020, in the Training Room of Tarrant County 9-1-1, 2600 Airport Freeway, Fort Worth, TX 76111.

Don Crowson presided.

Board Members present:

Don Crowson, Chair
Rick Brunson, Vice Chair
Douglas Hooten
Brian Johnson
Jim Davis
Aubry Insco
Robert Brooks, Secretary

Board Members absent:

Jeff Spivey

Others present:

Wayne Olson, Attorney
Bill Paxton, The Paxton Firm

Staff Members present:

Shinar Haynes, Executive Director
Aniel Austin, Finance Manager
Shantelle Oliver, Director of Support Services
Renee Boeglin, Executive Assistant
Mandy Chanthapanya, Admin. Assistant
Sarah Sellers, Systems Support Manager
Monte Cockrum, Network Support Analyst
Travis Trevino, Interoperability Coordinator

CALL TO ORDER

Don Crowson called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

AGENDA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Shinar Haynes stated there are no agenda announcements.

No action taken.

BOARD OF MANAGERS UPDATE

A. Aniel Austin stated the Frost Bank Signature Card needs to be updated because there are new members on the Board.

Frost Bank Signature Card signed.

B. Shinar Haynes stated the Board members signed a Conflict of Interest Affidavit in January, but they were not notarized.

Conflict of Interest Affidavit signed and notarized.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Motion to approve the consent agenda items was made by Aubry Insco and seconded by Douglas Hooten. Motion passed unanimously.

ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A. R20-031 – City of Euless NETCO Interoperability Assistance Request – \$28,116.32

Travis Trevino stated the City of Euless requested \$28,116.32 for the System Upgrade Assurance (SUA) fees associated with the CFW system. Wayne Olson said he is the city attorney for the City of Euless.

Motion to approve Radio Interoperability Assistance Program application for the City of Euless NETCO Interoperability Assistance (\$28,116.32) was made by Brian Johnson and seconded by Jim Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

PURCHASES OVER \$25,000

A. RN20-020 – TRANE Rooftop Units – \$62,721.00

Shinar Haynes stated quarterly HVAC review was performed in March, and Enviromatic advised the District of the eight air conditioning systems, at least six are cracked. The system is 10 years old and beyond its normal lifespan. Enviromatic quoted approximately \$7000 to patch to potentially make it through summer and \$62,000 to replace eight units. Do not have it in the budget to replace, but have it in the interoperability budget. The District is still looking at contract pricing, but is asking the Board to approve us to move forward to replace the units before it breaks. Don Crowson stated with the new R22 refrigerant factor, patching the units will not be a long-term solution.

Motion to approve the District to move forward replace the eight broken air conditioning systems was made by Rick Brunson and seconded by Doug Hooten. Motion passed unanimously.

PRESENTATIONS

A. Text to 9-1-1 Update – Shinar Haynes stated we are slightly delayed due to COVID-19. Comtech engineers are very backed up. Go live date was pushed out to August 1 and still hoping to meet the timeline. Paperwork has been submitted for each PSAP, have training completed, have been testing system in lab, waiting for live to verify it matches the training documentation that has been put together.

No action taken.

B. Construction Update – Shinar Haynes stated that all the walls are up and sanded, painting now. Will start dropping frame for ceiling tiles. Slight delay with the AV system due to questions and changes – had to make a few adjustments after taking walls down. Looking at mid-July completion.

No action taken.

C. 911 Appreciation Update – Shantelle Oliver stated the event was changed from July 17 to August 27, 7 PM to 11 PM at Top Golf. COVID-19 measures are taking place. Top Golf staff is required to have temperature checked before starting work and also required to wear masks. Food served buffet style with a partition between the server and guest, as well as bays separated by dividers. There will be social distancing markers along the common areas. Confirmed each person can bring one guest.

No action taken.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

2021 Budget - Shinar Haynes stated she put together a couple of examples. Because VOIP is legislated in such way, the carriers can either pay \$0.50 matching the wireless, or if they designate the lines to be residential/business, they pay the residential/business amount. Example: AT&T VOIP business lines – we are earning \$0.46/line instead of \$0.50, losing \$2900/month. Other examples include keeping residential at \$0.20 and raising business and PBX rates, as well as raising residential to \$0.50 and keeping business at \$1.00 and PBX at \$2.00. Aubry said raising residential is not going to increase funding because those are becoming fewer and farther between. Rick asked if VOIP lines return a street address to PSAPs, and Aubry stated they do if they are registered by the user. She said the account holder has the ability to put whatever address they want for the VOIP accounts. Rick said the State statute states to be qualified as a landline, a service supplier shall furnish for each calling telephone number of the subscriber and the address associated with the number. He stated anything the user has to register for is a VOIP line and \$0.50 and can't be claimed as landlines if they don't do landline functionality, in his opinion. Residential was copper when the statute was written, and if a VOIP line can't do the same thing/provide the same functionality as a copper line, then it shouldn't be charged a copper line rate, it should be charged a \$0.50 rate. Don asked Wayne if he had an opinion and Wayne said the logic is sound, and it's something we should focus in on and will do so. Rick stated there is no technology benefit for a wireline customer in the new NextGen 911. It's a low cost, low tech, low expense item. He said the deciding factor should be if the carrier provides the street address. Shinar stated the carrier does, and it's up to the resident to update it. Rick said the telephone company takes care of updating the address for landlines. If the carrier takes on the responsibility of updating the address, then they should pay the higher rate. Shinar stated the VOIP legislation is not written that way, and Rick said it needs to be updated. Shinar said that legislation states the VOIP is not your regular phone service and is set at \$0.50 unless the carrier indicates the line as a

business or residence, and then they pay the fee in which the 9-1-1 Authority assesses, which is \$0.20 for residential, \$0.46 for business. Don asked if there is a way to segment it to VOIP residential copper residential, and Shinar said the carrier would have to do it. Shinar stated the Board sets the wireline fees, but we are bound by a VOIP agreement. Mayor Johnson asked to confirm that we set the residential, business, and trunk rates, and they were last adjusted in 1987. Don told the Mayor this is an opportunity to take this issue to take to the Mayor's Council. Don said we need to identify the rate and test it to see if the Mayor's Council would be on board with raising the rate. Mayor Johnson said the next meeting is August 1, and he would be happy to put something on the agenda to discuss. Don said there are two things, the PSAP consolidation issue and the rate issue. Mayor said he thinks the Mayor's Council will be on board for both. Aubry said the data shows (in the binder of 9-1-1- fees) we're in the bottom 25 surveyed Districts in terms of fees. We're behind in times and keep up with the growth that's needed for the District to support the PSAPs with NextGen efforts if we do not take some type of initiative to raise the fee structure. It's a service/delivery issue, and there are public expectations. Jim Davis asked how we got the different rates for the same services. Shinar stated for business and trunks, there are more lines paying for the fee. Rick stated when the District was established, the original Board said the fee would be 2% of the price for that service. Jim asked why the 2% didn't go up and the cost of service went up. Robert Brooks stated a lot of the service cost didn't go up because competition moved in and drove the cost down. Rick also stated the \$0.74 is only for the first 100 lines on a premises.

Don stated our rates are historically low compared to our peers. He said it's not necessarily a reason to raise rates if you can get by with it, but now the District is getting to the point of forecasting deficits because our rates are too low. He stated he'd like to push the issue a little further out there to see what the pulse is of the community if we were to raise rates comparable to our peer entities.

Rick stated the District needs to look at the budget. We've had low rates for a long time because we've had lots of money. We do things that fiscally conservative organizations probably don't do anymore – still pay for meals, have an overly lucrative travel budget, employee appreciation. Don asked Rick if he is suggesting cutting all of it out of budget. Rick stated he expects staff to give the Board a balanced budget with a wish list of other things that need to be considered. The Board will decide what items on the wish list to take to the Mayor's Council to show why we need to raise our rates. Shinar stated the District could go lean by getting rid of the PSAP Assistance Program and Radio Interoperability Program. Jim told Shinar what she said makes a lot of sense, and the Board needs her to do that and take a top-down, bottom-up approach. Need to present what a balanced budget would look like – staff layoffs, cutting services, etc. Showing the impact of trying to balance the budget gives Jim and Doug the opportunity to go to Mayor Price and David Cook and ask for direction. The state has impacted local funding through the last session, and now COVID's come, and there is a \$37 million deficit.

Mayor Johnson stated we need to show the consequences of not having an increase. Rates haven't been adjusted for inflation, and it's fiscally irresponsible not to cover what the cost of the service is. Making the budget lean is always going to be the case. Rick stated the rates that haven't been raised in 25 years is about 18% of our budget, and it covers about 12% of our cost. In the ensuing 25 years, we have \$0.50 that's charged every month on cell phones, which weren't around when the rates were started, so that's an influx of new revenue. About five years ago, we got another influx of new revenue with prepaid cell phones. Don said the same conditions apply to all the other Districts. Mayor Johnson stated it's irrelevant because we're still going into the red. Don stated we're at a point where we're going through a paradigm shift with more services, and we need to make logical next step decisions. He said if we were keeping up with everyone else the last 25-30 years, we wouldn't be having this discussion right now. Rick said the red is materialized because we are considering changing our funding mechanisms for the assistance funds. It was set up that we would fund those from our previous years' surpluses. He said if there is no previous year surplus, then there is no funding. Don stated the entities that are currently receiving this money would not be happy if the money went away. Jim said that is why they have to be involved in the decision, and he has to be able to present a balanced budget. Mayor Johnson said his concern is once you get rid of the grants, then you lose the opportunity to encourage cities to upgrade their facilities and equipment. Robert Brooks asked if you have to go after the \$0.50, maybe charge a different amount. Mayor Johnson stated the rate would depend on what the numbers were showing is necessary. Jim said that the consolidation of PSAPs in the County is in the best interest of this office, the

Board, our communities, and we can find cost savings in our budget by reducing the number of touchpoints we have in the number of PSAPs. Shinar stated the call volume would not change and the same number of people will still be required. For a lot of the smaller PSAPs, the dispatcher works part of the jail system and does admin work for the police and fire department.

Don asked if we can survive next year with the current budgetary situation? We can't raise rates today; can we make the 2020-21 budget? Driving agenda for 2021 in consolidation – most agree it makes sense to some extent. PSAP funding and Radio Interoperability Assistance Programs provide NextGen services and support efforts. Don stated 2020-21 looks to be a survival year. Rick said if the District shows a red number in the next two years, the Commissions Court will not approve the budget. Shinar stated the following fiscal year we would dip into our reserves and not be in the red. Don asked Wayne if any entity that has a voting representative to this Board could stop the budget by voting no. Wayne confirmed the statute requires all entities have to approve the budget unanimously. Entities include Tarrant County, Fort Worth, Arlington, Irving, Grand Prairie, and Mayor's Council. Rick stated the Commissions Court didn't approve the budget one year because the City's didn't give raises, and the Board presented a budget that proposed a 3% raise to staff because the District could fund it and not raise rates. Had to come back with a budget without raises.

Aubry stated Grand Prairie is not getting cost of living increases and has cut 1% out of the budget for next fiscal year. Don said Fort Worth is not either getting cost of living increases either and making 2020-21 a survivable year and not authorize employee raises to be consistent with the rest of the cities that we serve. We're approaching a problem that we have to address sooner or later, which is if we're forecasting future economic problems here in the District, how do we address those problems. Cutting everything to the bare minimum is not the interest of the Board or the community, and those things generate costs. The PSAP and Radio Assistance Programs drive improvements in the District and the cities and services we provide the PSAPs and the radio system that is the conclusion of the 9-1-1 call. Need to look at the budget every year to make sure we're making the most cost-effective decisions. We're approaching that redpoint where that decision making is going to have to occur, and we collectively want to be proactive on how we deal with the budget.

Don asked if everyone is in concurrence that we move forward with the 2020-21 budget, and we'll make appropriate decisions regarding employee pay and other things like that to make sure we stay in the black this year. We'll address the issue of consolidation and rate costs the year as our two primary objectives for FY21. Mayor Johnson agreed. Rick stated he would like input from staff on radio interoperability and what they see in the future because right now, it's all based on P25, and that standard was set at the same time as the \$0.20 rates. With FirstNet coming on, that money may be better spent on trying some of our member communities trying to get to newer technologies instead of paying operational expenses. Wayne stated he will do research on the options we have for VOIP rates and whether or not we have the ability to adopt different residential and business rates versus landlines.

No action taken.

BRIEFINGS

Legislative Update – Bill Paxton stated they were relaxing restrictions at the Capitol, but some DPS troopers tested positive for COVID-19, so they went back into a complete lockdown. Leadership is trying to figure out what Session is going to look like in January. The Senate can spread out far enough to conduct business on the floor, but the House has 150 members, and they're looking at everything from putting up plastic partitions, moving members into the gallery and preventing the public from getting in there, so it's going to be interesting and uncharted territory how they handle business on the floor and how they conduct public hearings. Right now, all interim meetings have been postponed indefinitely. Will have to figure out a way to work around. July 14 special elections coming up and then primary runoff elections. Early voting starts June 29. Have a call this afternoon to discuss what other lobbyists and members of what the Alliance is trying to do for their reliability funding legislation. Greater Harris County is having a hard time asking their legislators to vote for an increase in funding.

No action taken.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:58 PM.

***** NEXT BOARD MEETING: Monday, July 20, 2020, at 12:00 PM in the Conference Room of Tarrant County 9-1-1 District, 2600 Airport Freeway, Fort Worth, TX 76111. *****

Don Crowson, Chair
Tarrant County 9-1-1

ATTEST: Robert Brooks
Tarrant County 9-1-1
