

Minutes  
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network  
Board of Managers  
April 28, 2021

The April 28, 2021 meeting of the Board of Managers of the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1) convened virtually at 1:01 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, Russell Rau, Dennis Storemski, Vergil Ratliff (via phone), Shawn Thompson, and legal counsel Tommy Ramsey, Harris County Assistant Attorney, were present for the virtual Board meeting; 32 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 March 24, 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 March 31, 2021. He reported that the average yield for the investment was 0.071%

Mr. Fonseca continued with a brief overview of the overtime expenses and the monthly financial report totals ending March 31, 2021 as follows:

- |                                 |                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Cash and cash equivalents     | \$ 12.4 million |
| • Invested funds for Operations | \$ 10.0 million |
| • Liabilities                   | \$ 7.0 million  |
| • Receipts                      | \$ 11.4 million |
| • Disbursements                 | \$ 8.7 million  |

Next, Mr. Fonseca reported on the Receipts and Disbursements report, 9-1-1 service fee revenue by type and cash expenditures charts, and investment report. Board Member Denman noted that the City of Houston overtime expense is 50% into the budget balance, Mr. Denman asked if the overtime expense will continue to increase.

Mr. Fonseca stated yes, it will continue to increase and may go over the budget, depending on how the PSAP's manage their budgets. Mr. Fonseca agreed with Mr. Rau's statement that high overtime expenses are also due to inclement weather events. Mr. Fonseca added that sick time and vacancies are also contributors. Board Member Denman stated he would like to see a quarterly percentage for revenue and expenses on the budget balance report along with a standard note on the elapsed percentage. (At this time Board Member Storemski joined the meeting by phone.) Mr. Storemski commented that regarding the City of Houston's overtime, typically sick time and vacancies get backfilled by overtime, which by the end of the year the salary budget is the base for the overtime balances out. Board Secretary Anders asked how many funded vacant positions the City of Houston and Harris County have. Mr. Fonseca answered that there are about 20 vacant positions. Boards Member Ratliff and Denman mentioned that they had not received the auditor's questionnaire. Mr. Fonseca stated that he will follow up with the auditor to make sure that everyone who received the questionnaire have replied. Mr. Fonseca ended his report.

Agenda Item 5—"Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters." Executive Director Lavergne Schwender provided brief updates on the following from the FCC: The notice of proposed rulemaking adopted in February, 2021, that addresses the diversion of 9-1-1 fees by states and local jurisdiction for other purposes; the FCC's Communications Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council (CSRIC) adopted the final 9-1-1 related working group that advises the FCC on cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the 9-1-1 system and allow 9-1-1 fees collected by states and localities to be use for cybersecurity; and the FCC's report to Congress that 9-1-1 over Wi-Fi is not engineered to provide the resiliency and reliability to support communications in a major emergency and are likely to be affected by the same conditions that impair mobile networks. Lastly, Ms. Schwender reported that the National Sherriff's Association has urged the FCC to reject waiver requests by carriers who failed to comply with the Z-Axis requirement. For clarity, Chairman Rau asked Ms. Schwender if GHC 9-1-1 is in support to spend 9-1-1 funds for cybersecurity and reject the view that it would be a "diversion". Ms. Schwender stated yes.

Ms. Anya McInnis, GHC 9-1-1 Government Liaison, reported that there was a committee hearing for HB 2248 on April 8, 2021. She stated that Mr. Heffernan and Board Member Denman did a fantastic job representing GHC 9-1-1 and provided their testimony to the legislative committee. Ms. McInnis mentioned that after the hearing, there was a meeting attended by Representative James White, Chair of the

Homeland Security & Public Safety Committee, various representatives from the 9-1-1 districts and cellular phone service carriers who expressed their support. Ms. McNinnis said that the committee decided to substitute HB 2911 by combining HB 2248 into HB 2911 which increases the monthly fee from \$.50 to \$.75 for all 9-1-1 entities in Texas, and establishes a cutout for GHC 9-1-1 which allows the Board to set the fee rate the same way as HB 2248, in increments of 10% on an annual basis not to exceed the cap of \$.75 cents. Ms. McNinnis said Representative Senfronia Thompson is in support of the committee substitute HB 2911 and is willing to lend help. Ms. McNinnis added that HB 2911 was objected by three members of the committee, but is not concerned. Ms. McNinnis hopes that HB 2911 moves to the calendar committee and into the Senate.

Chairman Rau mentioned that he had spoken with Chairman White, and also he thanked Ms. McNinnis for all her efforts with the 9-1-1 fee legislation. Chairman Rau also thanked Board Member Denman for attending the hearing on his behalf. Ms. McNinnis mentioned that AT&T is in support of HB 2911. Board Member Denman asked Ms. McNinnis who voted against the bill, Ms. McNinnis stated representatives Schaefer, Hefner, and Tinderholt. There was no further discussion; Ms. McNinnis concluded her report.

Agenda Item 6—"Operations Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Operational Matters." Chief Operations Officer Stan Heffernan reported that there were no internal/external P1 service issue tickets during the month of March, 2021. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the network utilization graphs, noting that the spike in the Bandwidth chart for February, 2021 is due to winter storm Uri. Next, Mr. Heffernan reported on the 9-1-1 call session charts, he highlighted that the class of service for 9-1-1 wireless is very close to 90%. Mr. Heffernan proceeded to update on the 9-1-1 trending charts, and the call statistics provided by Houston Emergency Center (HEC) and Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO). He mentioned that the call centers experienced minor issues during winter storm Uri, but managed to perform within the acceptable percentile. Mr. Heffernan continued with an update on the 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs, he stated there were a few challenges attributed by winter storm Uri, but all the PSAPs performed well. Board Member Denman commented that the PSAPs had an outstanding performance during the month of March, 2021, he suggested sending an email to the city Mayors/elected officials about the call center's performance, so they can receive recognition. Mr. Heffernan stated that PSAPs in the 98%-99% are doing an exceptional job, and thanked to Mr. Denman for his remarks about how well the call centers are performing at the HCMCA. He added that GHC 9-1-1 staff have been working very hard with the PSAP Ops group by providing them the

necessary tools they need to perform well. Mr. Denman commented that when a wireless 9-1-1 call is misrouted to the wrong call center it delays service to the caller. He mentioned that according to “The Call” magazine the national average of 9-1-1 call misroutes to the wrong call center is 12%. He asked if the new NG 9-1-1 system would help eliminate 9-1-1 call misroutes and if so, this makes a good case as to why GHC 9-1-1 requires the 9-1-1 fee increase. Mr. Heffernan stated that GHC 9-1-1 was at the final step into the new system, and the geospatial routing part is dependent on the wireless provider’s side, but GHC 9-1-1 is building the framework and ready to receive it. GHC 9-1-1’s call misroutes are lower than the national average percentage, and the PSAPs are trained to determine where the call should go and quickly transfer the caller to the correct PSAP. Board Member Denman expressed to Ms. McInnis the importance for the legislators in the committee to know why GHC 9-1-1 needs the wireless fee increase. Mr. Heffernan proceeded with the training report; GHC 9-1-1 safely hosted two in-person 9-1-1 equipment courses at the GHC 9-1-1 headquarters and a professional growth class for PSAP telecommunicators and supervisors. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the GIS/database report and the Network Operations Center (NOC) monthly case-load report, noting an increase in incidents for the month of February, 2021 relating to the winter storm Uri.

Next, Mr. Heffernan provided an update on the final microwave location. Mr. Heffernan reported that the construction of the last tower was completed. The goal is to have the datacenter-to-datacenter connectivity implemented in a couple of months. Mr. Heffernan provided a summary report on the homeland security and public safety hearing regarding the fee legislation. He thanked Board Member Denman for all his efforts on this matter. Lastly, Mr. Heffernan presented the return-to-office plan for the staff. He stated that the staff has worked remote successfully, but some of the tasks that the operations staff is responsible for would be done more effectively returning back to the office. Staff would continue to follow the red/blue group alternate weeks schedule, and the return-to-office plan can be modified, if needed. Chairman Rau asked Board Members and staff to hold discussion until agenda item 10—GHC 9-1-1 COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive. This ended Mr. Heffernan report.

Agenda Item 7—“Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts.” Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson highlighted that every year the month of April is telecommunicator appreciation week and 9-1-1 education month. She noted that requests for 9-1-1 education material are starting to pick-up. 9-1-1 printed materials were distributed to Harris County Emergency Corps for upcoming events and Meals-on-Wheels

programs throughout the service area. Ms. Clauson mentioned that she visited with Harris County Fire Marshal Office, and they have started to attend outdoor events with the public. Next, Ms. Clauson reported that the 2021 social media campaign for 9-1-1 education month was launched. Social media messages were created with feedback from 9-1-1 call centers, combined with our paid advertising spots that are visible on all social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

Ms. Clauson continued with the 2021 public awareness media plan. Ms. Clauson reported that GHC 9-1-1 media campaign messages and video TV spots will remain the same as in 2020, since it received many good reactions. The video TV spots can be viewed on the GHC 9-1-1 YouTube page. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the schedule for the media campaign is being finalized, noting that radio advertisement will start May 31, 2021 and TV will begin June 7, 2021, following the billboards and digital ads. Board Member Denman asked if GHC tracks non-emergency 9-1-1 calls made to 9-1-1. Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 relies on the call volume data received from PSAP's, because each jurisdiction might handle and process non-emergency calls differently. Mr. Denman said he liked the campaign messages; he was curious about how big of a problem non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 were, and whether these types of calls were an issue due to non-English speakers/bilingual not know where/who to call for non-emergencies. Ms. Clauson stated that 9-1-1 call volume has decreased over the years, one reason could be that the messages of proper use of 9-1-1 are effective and causing call volume to decrease. She added that PSAP's handle non-emergency calls differently—in some instances call-takers advise the caller on who to contact for a non-emergency situation. Board Member Storemski commented that it all depends on the callers' situation and their definition of an "emergency" situation. Ms. Clauson provided examples of GHC 9-1-1 social media messages shared on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. She stated that she attended the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO) webinar on social media updates. Since then, GHC 9-1-1 Facebook page now has a verified badge, meaning that Facebook has confirmed that the profile page is the authentic brand it represents. The verified badge is beneficial and improves higher search results attracting more visitors. Ms. Clauson stated that at the next Board meeting she will highlight more social media messages from PSAPs who recognized call-takers during telecommunicator week.

Agenda Item 8—"Texas NENA 2021 Laverne Hogan Award Honoree: Laverne Schwender." Ms. Clauson reported that each year Texas NENA (National Emergency Number Association) honors 9-1-1 professionals at the Texas Public Safety Conference. This year, the 2021 conference and banquet was canceled due to

COVID-19. Ms. Clauson stated that the Laverne Hogan Award (named after former GHC 9-1-1 Executive Director Laverne Hogan) is presented to an exemplary Texas 9-1-1 administrator and at the Texas NENA virtual Board meeting on April 12, 2021 GHC 9-1-1 Executive Director Lavergne Schwender was honored with the Laverne Hogan Award. Ms. Clauson said that Ms. Schwender was instrumental in drafting the legislation that created the first 9-1-1 emergency communication district in Texas, which is now Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network (GHC 9-1-1). The legislation became the framework and the model to establish 9-1-1 legislation for the 9-1-1 districts in Texas. Ms. Schwender's involvement with 9-1-1 has been historic. Ms. Schwender expressed that she is very thankful and honored to receive the Laverne Hogan award. Board Secretary Anders suggested recognizing Ms. Schwender for her outstanding achievements via Social media.

Action—Item 9—“Request for Adoption of a Resolution Recognizing Telecommunicators in the GHC 9-1-1 Territory for their Efforts during Winter Storm Uri” Ms. Clauson reported that on February 14-20, 2021, a historically unprecedented winter storm event affected the cities within the GHC 9-1-1 territory with icy roads, power outages and communication problems. The resolution recognizes 9-1-1 telecommunicators in the GHC 9-1-1 territory for their extraordinary performance in handling an increased 9-1-1 call volume and dispatching services, despite the challenges by winter storm Uri. The resolution was drafted for adoption by the GHC 9-1-1 Board of Managers. Board Member Denman made the motion to approve the resolution. Board Secretary Anders seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The Board agreed to have Office Manager Daveda Hughes electronically insert the Board Members signatures on the resolution. Ms. Clauson added that GHC 9-1-1 will send the resolution to the Harris County Mayors and Councils Association (HCMCA), and publish a news release. Board Member Denman mentioned that he will mention the resolution at the HCMCA May, 2021 meeting.

Agenda Item 10—“GHC 9-1-1 COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive: Discussion and Consideration of COVID-19 Vaccine Incentives for GHC 9-1-1 Employees and Related Policies.” Chairman Rau thanked GHC 9-1-1 on its efforts on encouraging staff to get the COVID-19 vaccination. Mr. Rau expressed the importance for encouraging staff to get vaccinated and mentioned that the purpose for this agenda item was to discuss what GHC 9-1-1 can and cannot do to incentivize employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine. Mr. Fonseca mentioned that 60% of the staff have received the vaccine. Mr. Fonseca stated that GHC 9-1-1 contacted Harris County Attorney's Office for guidance on the limits of vaccination incentives that the Board can authorize. He advised that the Board has some latitude but cannot *require* staff

to take the vaccine. The Board can ask, but not require staff to report their vaccination status. Next, Mr. Fonseca presented two COVID-19 vaccine incentive benefits available to staff, provided by Harris County Health Benefits. 1) Employees can use 8 hours of paid leave to get the COVID-19 vaccination during regular work hours. 2) By completing the COVID-19 vaccination, employees will receive 100 points towards the 2022-2023 Healthy Actions Medical Plan (HAMP). Mr. Fonseca explained that HAMP is a rewards program that reduces employees' out-of-pocket medical expenses. Ms. Schwender added that she shared Harris County Attorney's Office email with the Board, in which Harris County listed the many ways that the Board can incentivize and motivate the staff to get the vaccine. There was some discussion on why the Board cannot mandate employees to take the vaccine and the requirement/purpose of the Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) during a public health emergency. Chairman Rau stated that he is glad that 60% of the staff is vaccinated, but ideally would like to see 100% take the vaccine. Mr. Rau encouraged the Board to discuss and brainstorm on additional incentives to encourage staff to get the vaccine. There was an in-depth discussion; Board Members expressed their thoughts and opinions, resulting in Board Members Storemski, Ratliff, and Board Secretary Anders opposing to provide additional incentives. Chairman Rau asked how many employees have taken the vaccine. Mr. Fonseca answered that 26 out of 43 employees have taken the vaccine. Board Member Storemski made the motion to table the action item. Board Member Ratliff seconded the motion to table. Board Members Ratliff and Storemski voted to table. Chairman Rau, Board Secretary Anders and Board Member Denman opposed tabling the item. Chairman Rau asked Mr. Ramsey to find out if it's possible to solicit an outside resource to provide an incentive to staff. Board Member Denman stated that as the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Rau has the prerogative, and does not need permission from the Board, to seek information from legal counsel, Mr. Ramsey, outside of Board meetings. Chairman Rau advised the staff to put the action item back on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Agenda Item 11—"In-person Board Meetings: Discussion and Consideration of Resuming In-person Board Meetings." Board Member Storemki motioned to resume in-person Board meetings, Board Secretary Anders seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Board Member Denman asked if the first in-person Board Meeting would be on Wednesday, May 26, 2021. Chairman Rau stated yes.

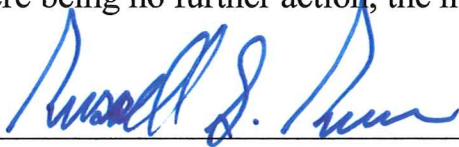
Agenda Item 12—"Appointment of Executive Director: To Fill the Position Upon the Impending Retirement of Current Executive Session Lavergne Schwender." The Board will go into executive session (agenda item 13) to discuss this matter. Its decision will be announced after Agenda Item 13.

Agenda Item 13—"Executive Session: Personnel Matter and Consultation with Attorney" The Board went into virtual executive session at 2:40 p.m., pursuant to sections 555.071(2) and 551.074(a)(1) of the Texas Government Code for the purpose of discussing a personnel matter and consulting with its attorney. The Board returned from the virtual executive session at 2:59 p.m.

***Board Member Dennis Storemski motioned to appoint Stan Heffernan as the new GHC 9-1-1 Executive Director, effective June 1, 2021. Board Secretary Anders seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*** Mr. Heffernan thanked the Board for the opportunity and stated he is grateful to work with everyone and continue to carry out GHC 9-1-1's mission. Chairman Rau and Board Members congratulated Mr. Heffernan.

Agenda Item 14—"Announcements". Chairman Rau announced that the in-person meeting of the Board of Managers is scheduled for Wednesday, May 26, 2021 and the NENA 2021 Conference & Expo is scheduled for July 25 – 29, 2021 Columbus, OH. Office Manager Daveda asked that Board Members who would like to attend the NENA conference, please let her know.

There being no further action, the meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.



Russell S. Rau, Chairman



William B. Anders, Secretary