

Minutes
Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network
Board of Managers
September 22, 2021

The September 22, 2021 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 headquarters at 10220 Fairbanks N. Houston Rd., Houston, Texas 77064.

Board Members Bill Anders, Mark Denman, Russell Rau, Dennis Storemski, Vergil Ratliff, and legal counsel Philip Berzins, Harris County Assistant Attorney were present for the Board meeting. Board Member Shawn Thompson 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 July 13, 2021 and August 25, 2021 were approved with a motion by Board Secretary Anders and seconded by Board Member Denman.

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 provided a brief overview of the monthly financial report totals ending August 31, 2021 as follows:

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| • Cash and cash equivalents | \$ 15.9 million |
| • Invested funds for Operations | \$ 10.0 million |
| • Liabilities | \$ 7.6 million |
| • Receipts | \$ 30.3 million |
| • Disbursements | \$ 24.5 million |

Mr. Fonseca provided a brief overview of the remaining budget balance report, Receipts and Disbursements report, the 9-1-1 service fee revenue, and cash expenditures trend-line charts. Lastly, Mr. Fonseca presented the Houston Emergency Center (HEC) training expenses funded by GHC 9-1-1 for the period ending June 30, 2021.

Agenda Item 5—“Executive Director Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Legislative/Regulatory and Administrative Matters.” Executive Director, Stan Heffernan reported that the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee released its portion of the Budget Reconciliation Act. The bill includes an appropriation of \$10 billion for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1). He noted that there has been a lot of support for NG9-1-1 funding at the federal level and mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 will continue to track the effort. Next, Mr. Heffernan provided an update on House Bill 2911 “NG 9-1-1 Service Fund”, he stated that there has been some discussion with the legislative team about the difference in cost between the existing legacy 9-1-1 systems to the new NG9-1-1, emphasizing that the NG9-1-1 system is more expensive to implement/maintain. GHC 9-1-1 continues to work closely with the legislative team. Chairman Rau asked if GHC 9-1-1 Legislative Liaison Anya McInnis is still involved with HB 2911 efforts. Mr. Heffernan stated yes; Mr. Fonseca has been providing Ms. McInnis numbers/information and she continues to work with her people and the alliance in Austin, TX. Chairman Rau inquired about the “NG 9-1-1 service fund”. Mr. Heffernan explained there is no word yet about the fund, but GHC 9-1-1 and the legislative team are trying to understand the difference in cost between the two systems. GHC 9-1-1 has made a lot progress in identifying the monthly and annual recurring costs for NG9-1-1. Mr. Heffernan proceeded to report on GHC 9-1-1 staff COVID-19 update, noting that the Administrative and GIS groups continue to work successfully remotely and the critical support groups are working in-office, as needed, following the red/blue health team protocols. Mr. Heffernan mentioned that the staff vaccination rate is at 80%. Board Member Denman asked what the head count was. Mr. Heffernan said that 80% of 41 staff members are vaccinated. Mr. Fonseca added that 8 staff members are unvaccinated, a total of 90% including those with natural immunity. Chairman Rau added that he would like to see 100% of staff vaccinated and requested a COVID-19 vaccine incentive for staff. Mr. Heffernan stated that GHC 9-1-1 is working with Legal Counsel Tommy Ramsey on this effort. Legal Counsel Philip Berzins advised that the main issue is that only employees who aren’t vaccinated can receive the incentive, one cannot go back to incentivize employees who are vaccinated. Board Member Denman asked if all employees can be awarded a bonus for reaching the 100% vaccination rate. Mr. Berzins stated that his legal team will continue to look into it since there’s a lot of grey area on the COVID-19 vaccine incentive. Chairman Rau advised that GHC 9-1-1 staff put the COVID-19 vaccine incentive on the agenda for the October Board meeting for further discussion.

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 August, 2021. Mr. Heffernan highlighted the downward trend illustrated in the voice bandwidth chart for the month of August, 2021—he mentioned that it’s due to the 10-digit non-emergency call traffic on the GHC 9-1-1

network that is not reported on the total 9-1-1 sessions chart. GHC 9-1-1 will continue to research and monitor the trend. Mr. Heffernan provided an overview of the PSAP 9-1-1 call sessions report, noting that the class of service for 9-1-1 wireless is very close to 90%. He continued with the PSAP 9-1-1 trending charts, the call statistics provided by Houston Emergency Center (HEC) and Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO). Mr. Heffernan noted a decrease in HEC's call service level for the month of August, 2021, possibly due to the staffing issues discussed at the last Board meeting. Mr. Heffernan mentioned that GHC 9-1-1 staff is working and assisting HEC from a technology standpoint to help improve service levels. Next, Mr. Heffernan briefly reported on 9-1-1 call Service Level Agreement (SLA) report for all PSAPs/SSAPs. Mr. Heffernan commented that staffing shortage has become an issue at call centers across the nation. Board Member Ratliff asked what is causing staffing issues. Mr. Heffernan stated COVID-19 has affected many people and the 9-1-1 call-taking job is tough with low pay, an issue that the public safety community will need to address. HEC Director, Robert Mock added that several call-takers at HEC had resigned; giving an example, one of them took a job at an insurance call-center that is less stressful, allows them to work from home and earn more money. Board Member Denman asked how GHC 9-1-1 could help PSAPs hire/retain staff. Mr. Heffernan stated that GHC 9-1-1 supports the High School for Law and Justice Program where students are able to obtain 9-1-1 call-taking skills. Mr. Mock agreed, and said that last month he met with the HR department and did some salary comparisons and salary surveys to see what HEC could do to raise salaries, offer other benefits, and alter working schedules for employees. Mr. Mock added that the pay for call-takers is behind the market salary. Chairman Rau asked what the average age for call-takers at HEC was. Mr. Mock answered that the average age was 30; HEC lost a lot of experienced employees who retired in the last couple of years. Mr. Mock said that HEC requested in the budget, some dollars for incentives to help retain employees. He added that 9-1-1 Service Officer, Roger Hauck and 9-1-1 Systems Engineer, Monette Hurtt helped HEC on some procedure changes to better their call volume, which he greatly appreciated. Board Member Denman stated that 9-1-1 call-takers are critical for 9-1-1 operations, and GHC 9-1-1 would do what it could to help HEC resolve their staffing issue. Board Member Ratliff inquired about what HEC staff are saying about the job. Mr. Mock stated that since HEC is short staffed their employees are being worked 12 hours a day, which is not sustainable in the long run. Board Member Storemski asked if the City of Houston is still in a hiring freeze. Mr. Mock answered no; two weeks ago Mayor Sylvester Turner lifted the hiring freeze for general fund positions. Mr. Mock stated that to the City of Houston's hiring process takes six to eight weeks, and HEC makes every effort to get candidates on board as quickly as possible. HEC has lost a few people during the hiring process, since it takes a while to get them hired. Board Member Denman asked if it would help for GHC 9-1-1 to speak to Mayor Turner about the hiring/training process issue. Mr. Mock explained that he has been in several meetings

with Mayor Turner and the HR department to discuss the staffing issues. Mayor Turner is supportive, and they will take the opportunity to raise the staffing issue at the City Council budget presentation. There was a short discussion regarding the hiring and training process, and low pay salary for call-taking positions. Board Member Storemski expressed his opinion against the idea that GHC 9-1-1 would get into the act of meeting with Mayor Turner. Board Member Denman and Chairman Rau both expressed the importance that emergency response is a vital part of GHC 9-1-1 emergency service to the public. Mr. Heffernan commented that GHC 9-1-1 would continue to work with the PSAPs and providing training. Chairman Rau asked HCSO how they were doing with their staff. HCSO Director of Communications, Kathi Yost stated that HCSO has the same hiring requirements required by TCOLE. The biggest challenge is hiring and retaining quality employees. Many citizens that have been laid off due to COVID-19, and who decide to work as 9-1-1 call-takers; after the training process they realize that the job is not for them. Chairman Rau asked if HCSO staff work 60-hour shifts. Ms. Yost stated yes, there are staff members working two days of mandatory overtime, but they no longer do 12-hour shifts. Board Secretary Anders commented that working 60-hours or more a week could cause the staff member to burnout and become inefficient. Lastly Ms. Yost mentioned that she will be visiting with Klein ISD and Spring ISD to do a site assessment for a trade program, similar to the one at HEC for 9-1-1 telecommunications. Board Member Storemski asked if the High School for Law and Justice do non-emergency calls. Mr. Mock stated yes, they handle non-emergency calls and use the same equipment, once they are done with high school, they are trained with the emergency calls. Board Member Storemski asked if there was a possibility that there could be some adjustments in TCOLE's regulations to allow HEC to hire the high school students. Mr. Mock said they could explore that avenue, but at the moment it is not possible due to TCOLE rules. HEC has permission to run the program, but students are not allowed to answer emergency calls. Mr. Storemski added that since it is critical to fill in the call-taking positions, there could be some temporary TCOLE adjustments to wave some requirements (age requirement, diploma etc.) and allow students to answer emergency calls. Mr. Mock stated he would contact TCOLE on that matter. Chairman Rau requested for Mr. Mock to provide an update on TCOLE regulations, and advised GHC 9-1-1 staff to put it on the agenda to discuss at the October, 2021 Board meeting. Board Secretary Anders added that TCOLE has rule-making authority and the Commission can change rules, but if it is a statute, it would require legislation.

Mr. Heffernan proceeded with the GHC 9-1-1 training report. He highlighted the monthly GHC 9-1-1 Training Newsletter that goes out to PSAP Managers for distribution to their call-takers to keep them updated on training and 9-1-1 system changes/updates, provided by Mr. Hauck and GHC 9-1-1 Training Specialist Mindi Bartee. Next, Mr. Heffernan provided an overview on the GIS/database report and the

Network Operations Center (NOC) monthly case-load report. Mr. Heffernan reported that on the morning of September 1, 2021 ESD 100 and ESD 11 cutover and took their first 911 call, he stated that he attended the ESD 11 cutover and it went very well. Lastly, Mr. Heffernan provided an update on the Originating Service Provider (OSP) Migration to NG9-1-1 Service. He reported that the last step was bringing the service providers into the data center, he highlighted that T-Mobile migrated 97% of PSAPs into GHC 9-1-1's NG9-1-1 service. Chairman Rau asked what percentage of OSPs had migrated to NG9-1-1 as a whole. Mr. Heffernan explained that reporting the percentage as whole was complex; landline phone was a small percentage that does not add much value to track, however wireless carriers are the largest percentage to track and hoped to get them to 100% soon. He noted that T-Mobile was the largest call volume provider.

Agenda Item 7—"Public Information/Education Report—Transmittal and Discussion of Public Education Outreach Efforts." Public Information Officer Sonya Clauson reported that during the month of August, 2021 there was an increase in requests for 9-1-1 education materials and distribution of materials for various community events. Ms. Clauson stated that there has been requests for 9-1-1 presentations by various Houston Police Department Positive Interaction Program (PIP) groups, which she has done a couple of presentations in person and she mentioned she did one on August 26, 2021 via Zoom teleconference. Next, Ms. Clauson provided an overview of the 2021 public awareness media campaign. There were five added 9-1-1 billboards placed throughout the area as a bonus for no additional charge, noting that the billboards may stay throughout the end of the year. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the 9-1-1 digital marketing will continue until September 30, 2021.

Ms. Clauson presented charts on the social media trends and digital marketing trends from August, 2021. She highlighted that the GHC 9-1-1 Facebook page traffic has increased by 11,729 followers in the month of August, 2021 with the help of the advertising campaign. Next, Ms. Clauson reported on a HCSO text to 9-1-1 success story. Ms. Clauson concluded her report with snapshots of the GHC 9-1-1 social media messages that focused on back to school safety, weather preparedness messages, GHC 9-1-1 training site and courses, Kari's Law, and PSAP job postings. Board Member Denman asked Ms. Clauson if GHC 9-1-1 can redirect media funds to help promote and encourage the public to apply for open job positions. Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 can help with PR support by using social media and paid ads. Ms. Clauson added that she and 9-1-1 Service Officer Roger Hauck have been talking to the PSAP Ops group about creating a video to highlight their work. Chairman Rau added that besides 9-1-1 Day and Telecommunicator week in April, there are other avenues that GHC 9-1-1 can help to promote and recognize 9-1-1 call-takers for example, local talk shows, and newspapers. Ms. Clauson said GHC 9-1-1 social media highlights Telecommunicator week every year in April, by sharing pictures of their work and

sharing feedback from Telecommunicators and PSAPs. Ms. Clauson mentioned that the PSAPs also highlight call-takers and their service; she mentioned that several years ago Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office shared a video on social media, that they created highlighting call-takers. League City Police Department also created a video, which she stated she would share with the Board via email. Mr. Heffernan added that GHC 9-1-1 will get with the PSAP Ops group to discuss creating a general 9-1-1 recruitment video. Board Member Denman inquired on whether GHC 9-1-1 should seek a public relations agency to assist. Ms. Clauson stated that GHC 9-1-1 has an agency that helps develop 9-1-1 messages and the media campaign.

Chairman Rau inquired about the GHC 9-1-1 app. Mr. Heffernan stated that in 2017 GHC 9-1-1 developed an enhanced location app but the 9-1-1 industry caught up with the need. GHC 9-1-1 is working on creating a 9-1-1 app with a trademark name for citizens and call centers to utilize. Chairman Rau added that he agreed that the 9-1-1 app is not needed, but it would go well with the NG9-1-1 system, and at some point in time there is going to be a 9-1-1 app. There was a short discussion about the 9-1-1 app and its functionality on location and the benefits that the app can provide.

Board Secretary Anders thanked GHC 9-1-1 GIS Manager Brenda Pope for attending the Harris County Firefighters Association meeting in August, 2021.

Agenda Item 8—"Recognition of Retirement—Randall 'Randy' Waller, Communications Supervisor (GHC 9-1-1 PSAP Coordinator), Cy-Fair Fire Department." Ms. Clauson recognized GHC 9-1-1 PSAP Coordinator Randy Waller's retirement from Cy-Fair Fire Department. She expressed appreciation to Randy on behalf of the GHC 9-1-1 Board and staff, for his 31 years of dedication and service as a firefighter and emergency telecommunicator. Mr. Waller thanked GHC 9-1-1 and Board Members for the retirement recognition.

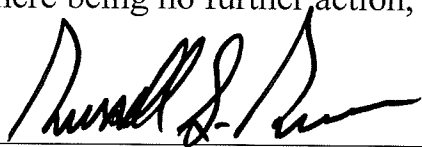
Action: Agenda Item 9—"GHC 9-1-1 Budget—Discussion and Consideration for Approval of the Order Adopting the Greater Harris County 9-1-1 Emergency Network's Operating and Capital Budget Including the Adoption of the Service Fee Rates for the Year 2022." Chairman Rau emphasized to everyone that there was plenty of time to discuss the budget on any questions regarding budget items or policy matters and welcomed discussion. Mr. Fonseca presented a summary of the budget request that was presented and discussed at the August, 2021 Board meeting. He stated that there were minor changes to the budget; rounding of numbers and the 3% salary merit budget increase. In summary, Mr. Fonseca presented the order authorizing the approval of the operational and capital Budget totaling \$53,210,000 for the year 2022, 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, and \$0.50/wireless fee.

Chairman Rau inquired about the salary study. Mr. Heffernan stated that at the August, 2021 Board meeting, the Board authorized GHC 9-1-1 to contract with Public Sector Personnel Consultants to update the GHC 9-1-1 staff compensation plan. Chairman Rau asked if GHC 9-1-1 would be utilizing the results of the new study to compensate staff. Mr. Heffernan said that the updated plan would update the existing guidelines and salary ranges for market changes. Chairman Rau asked Mr. Heffernan if he could provide the Board an overview of where the GHC 9-1-1 staff fit in the salary ranges once the study becomes available. Mr. Heffernan stated yes. Board Secretary Anders asked if Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office (FBCSO) is aware the monthly call volume report that they need to provide to GHC 9-1-1. Mr. Fonseca stated that if the Board approved the funding request, then an interlocal agreement with FBCSO will need to be executed. GHC 9-1-1 is working with the Harris County Attorney's Office in drafting the agreement. Funding for FBCSO call-takers and the agreement will be effective January 1, 2022. Mr. Fonseca stated that an amount totaling \$1.1 million for 15 call-taker positions was included in the budget, pending Board approval. Board Secretary Anders asked FBCSO if they had anything they would like to add/or discuss about the budget since they did not attend the budget discussion at the August, 2021 Board meeting. FBCSO Public Safety Communications Manager, Meghan Rivas, mentioned that she will get with Mr. Fonseca to discuss the interlocal agreement and the required monthly reports. Chairman Rau advised Ms. Rivas that HEC and HCSO also provide the required monthly report. 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 2022. Board Member Storemski seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 10—"Announcements—Next Board Meeting."

Chairman Rau advised that the next meeting of the Board of Managers is scheduled for Wednesday, October 27, 2021.

There being no further action, the meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.



Russell S. Rau, Chairman



William B. Anders, Secretary