

**ORLEANS PARISH COMMUNICATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, September 8, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Orleans Parish Communication District
Meeting and Votes Held Online Via Zoom**

MEETING MINUTES

I. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Michael “Beau” Tidwell called the virtual meeting to order. OPCD Executive Director Tyrell Morris called the roll with the following members present:

Chairman Michael “Beau” Tidwell, Ross Bourgeois (proxy for NOHSEP Director Collin Arnold), Lt. John Stelly, LSP (proxy for Capt. Donovan Archote), Dr. Jim Aiken, UMC New Orleans (proxy for Mr. Danny Hardman), CAO Gilbert Montaña (CNO), NOPD Supt. Shaun Ferguson, Bill Sameron NOEMS (proxy for Dr. Emily Nichols), and Sarah Babcock CNO Health Dept.(proxy for Dr. Jennifer Avegno), were present.

Brig. General Keith Waddell (LA National Guard), NOFD Supt. Tim McConnell, and Dr. Brobson Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society) were absent.

II. APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES (MARCH 10, 2020)

Chairman Tidwell called for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 10, 2020 regular meeting. There was motion by Chairman Tidwell, and it was seconded by Ross Bourgeois.

Lt. Stelly asked about information on page 4 of the minutes about the NFPA’s standards. It says, “The NFPA standard states that the agency must answer 15% of its calls in 95 seconds or less and that was met in 2019.” It should read, “The agency must answer 95% of its calls in 15 seconds or less and that was met in 2019.” That information was corrected.

Board members unanimously approved the minutes, as amended.

III. FINANCIAL REPORT

A. FINANCIAL REPORT

Director Morris stated the agency has been identifying as many cost-saving opportunities as possible. COVID-19 has put a strain on the agency financially and he has now reserved spending for only mission critical functions. As of today, OPCD’s Reserves account has gone down to about \$600,000, reflecting

funds used to close budgetary gaps at the end of 2019. The board was briefed back in March on the use of the funds.

The income for the agency is down by \$850,000. Director Morris stated that many of the carriers have been delayed in making payments to OPCD, due to billing delays caused by COVID-19 relief efforts. The law gives the carriers until the end of October to remit those payments to OPCD for the third quarter. The agency is at about \$850,000 outstanding as of year to date.

Director Morris stated in the first and second quarter the agency saw a slight decrease in received revenues, and that he anticipates most of this budget gap closing.

Regarding prepaid wireless revenue, OPCD has seen a \$98,000 reduction in fees collected. However, Director Morris pointed out that the agency is up significantly in the other revenue category due to revenue from the billboard in OPCD's parking lot which is performing better than anticipated.

When it comes to expenses, to date, OPCD is about \$277,000 under budget for salaries. Position vacancies were held for three months to realize salary savings. The agency also received \$393,000 in cost reimbursements under the Cares Act from the state. In past years, the agency has sent their emergency expenses through the city of New Orleans, and getting that money reimbursed proved to be difficult. Director Morris stated that the Governor's Office for Homeland Security (GOHSEP) informed him that OPCD should have been submitting directly to GOHSEP for reimbursement because it is a state agency. OPCD has now done that for three emergencies that took place this fiscal year, and reimbursement has been received by the agency, particularly for COVID19 expenses. Additionally, FEMA has agreed to pay the agency, to date, about \$300,000 in reimbursements for salaries in response to COVID19. These funds have yet to be received, but OPCD has received a commitment and a purchase agreement signed by the Director of GOSEP and Director Morris. The money still must go through the state's finance process.

Director Morris reported that benefits and salary expenses are down, operating expenses are under budget across the board, and utilities and other expenses are down quite a bit. The Board did authorize for the agency to move the expansion project to Phase Three, which is design development, which costs about \$400,000. That purchase has not yet been made, and would be financially irresponsible to do so right now. Director Morris is in conversations with the state department of Capital Projects, and OPCD plans to submit a capital outlay request for the expansion project which will include a lot of costs that the agency anticipated paying itself. Submission of the request is not due to the state until November and the agency does not anticipate further spending on the project until we have a firm response on whether or not the state department of Capital Projects can pay a large portion.

Lt. Stelly asked for clarification, on page two of three, under Professional Services where it appears about \$550,000 was budgeted. Director Morris stated that under the initial design development, the Board authorized the expense to happen in 2019 but the invoice did not come until 2020. The Finance team, when they do reconciliation at the end of August, will reclassify that to the fiscal year stating that the dollars were held.

Jim Aiken asked for clarification about utilities expenses. Director Morris stated actual expenses were \$273,000. A new financial management system is being used. The agency stopped using Soloman, which caused finance tracking issues, and switched to QuickBooks. Some of the budget numbers did not land properly, but there is a constant evaluation as reports are printed. He also stated utilities' costs have increased significantly, and the Facilities team is looking into that. Bills were also coming to the agency with the wrong address, so the finance team is checking the validity of the bills. OPCD also anticipated a waiver from Sewerage and Water Board to not pay the sewerage bill because all other government entities in Orleans Parish do not pay that bill. The waiver has not yet been received by OPCD. The agency has booked the expenses although the checks have not been cut yet. Director Morris stated he was working with Director Corbin to find a remedy to that and to get a solid waiver in place. He stated this is the preliminary PNL at the end of August. The agency has not finished reconciliations for the month of August yet. Once those are final, a new document will be published to the Board.

Director Morris also stated that the agency is in the middle of a financial audit with the state legislative auditor. Due to the audits of the last two years, OPCD has made significant changes to internal controls and how dollars are handled. The 2019 audit is not finished, but Director Morris has received a preliminary report that there were no findings thus far.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Third Quarter Report– Overall status of OPCD

When it comes to statistics, there is about a 5% decrease in 9-1-1 calls compared to last year. 3-1-1 calls have shown a 25% increase in call volume due to COVID-19. Most of the calls are related to reporting large gatherings, businesses that are non-compliant, and people enrolling in the federal feeding program. Public safety incidents and calls for service are down across the board. The agency's overall call volume has a 2.25% percent increase compared to the prior year. Overall public safety incidents are down by about 13%. The number of requests entered for 3-1-1 is up 15% overall.

There are three emergency declarations currently in place by GOHSEP. With COVID19, the agency has received preliminary approval that the state and FEMA will reimburse OPCD for its emergency pay. Traditionally that bill has been

passed on to the city of New Orleans but that will no longer be the case. When emergency declarations are in place, FEMA and GOHSEP will be billed directly by OPCD. The agency also preliminarily received a fully executed MOU to reimburse the agency for any preparation or mitigating measures taken during Hurricane Laura, which also includes the work for Tropical Storm Marco.

Director Morris recognized OPCD's Director of Human Resources, David Taylor, for coming up with a way for the staff to give back to the community by creating "Project Unity." On Juneteenth, OPCD staff did a food drive in Algiers and a beautification project at one of the women's shelters in the city.

OPCD also launched "Employee of the Quarter." The winner of the quarter was Mr. Darius Brown. He was nominated by his peers and recognized by leadership as an outstanding employee.

The agency is working to expand the use of its citywide CAD platform. The agency is expanding more units for EMS. In June of last year, the Board passed a resolution directing staff and Director Morris to increase interoperability with non-NOPD law enforcement agencies. OPCD built redundancy into its infrastructure to welcome new agencies to the platform. Nine law enforcement agencies have agreed to come on board to OPCD's CAD platform. That will revolutionize how mutual aid is handled, allow visibility of unit locations and when 9-1-1 calls come in OPCD, all agencies can see the information that has been recorded. That includes texts to 9-1-1 and, soon to be available, video to 9-1-1.

The Text to 9-1-1 and Smart 9-1-1 Platforms have been launched in Orleans Parish. With Smart 9-1-1, when calling 9-1-1 all the caller's pre-entered profile information will be presented to the telecommunicator. This information includes if there are pets in the home, if the caller has a history of medical health issues and more. Important information will be relayed to the first responders enroute to help the caller.

The agency has launched the transition of the New Orleans Fire Department's record management system to a cloud-based system called Image Trend. EMS has been using it for a while, and during the 2019 cyber-attack, EMS didn't suffer a direct impact. OPCD is also integrating a new labor management system, Crew Sense, to help first responders understand the calls they are going on, to help them manage their workforce, and to provide the agencies visibility on where their resources are. This will help NOFD as they seek to meet NFPA standards and maintain their Class 1 rating.

There will be a telephony network transition from the AT&T tandem switches to the AT&T ESInet, which is the Emergency Services IP Network. The 9-1-1 system in New Orleans is about 52 years old, and during Hurricane Katrina, the system failed. The ESInet is IP-based, redundant, and a secure system that will

help prevent phone outages and will allow the agency to route calls to alternative PSAPs should OPCD become overwhelmed.

With NOLA 3-1-1 growing, OPCD will be bringing on Citibot to keep labor costs as controlled as possible. Text to 3-1-1 will launch soon. Artificial intelligence and a machine learning robot will help citizens with frequently asked questions and help them submit a service request without the interaction of a human. There will also be a web bot when visiting the website.

OPCD has been selected by the Department of Homeland Security to go through a cyber security assessment. When the city of New Orleans was under a cyber-attack, the federal government was interested as to how OPCD's network remained protected while the city's network was compromised. As other 9-1-1 centers succumb to these types of attacks, DHS has taken an interest in how OPCD's system is set up. The agency is in the middle of a multi-month assessment with DHS team and four other PSAPs that will help produce national security recommendations for all 9-1-1 centers to use to protect their IP-based systems.

The Fiscal Year 2020 Budget is currently being developed and looking into cost reduction. The agency is looking to see if contracts can be renegotiated, if they are still required, if someone else should be billed and more. Once OPCD comes together with their partners from the city of New Orleans and come up with a number for next year's allocation, a budget presentation will be made to the Board. OPCD has made a request to the state for a \$2,000,000 appropriation. This will help close budget gaps, to limit service reduction, and to provide relief to the city's general funds. OPCD is working with the city's Intergovernmental Relations Staff and state delegation to help move this proposed appropriation along. Once a decision is made about appropriation, the Board will be notified. The special meeting would more than likely be in mid-October. In November, the Board will formally adopt a budget for next fiscal year. The expansion project is temporarily on hold as the agency prepares capital outlay requests to the state. That request would be to fund 75% of the project. It depends on the financial state of Louisiana if they could fund the project.

The current pandemic level for the agency is Level One. Six people have been temporarily hired, non-benefited, to assist with the city-wide feeding program. Those costs will be billed to FEMA. At OPCD, there is an internal mask mandate, daily temperature checks, and frequent facility cleaning to lower the risk of the virus at OPCD. Director Morris stated that at this time there are no staff impacts due to illness related to COVID19.

During Hurricane Laura and Marco, the Health Department set up a call center to relieve calls to NOLA 3-1-1 regarding special needs registry. Sarah Babcock with the Health Department stated the numbers are currently the same for the special needs registry as they have been in previous years. Normally during June and

July, the Health Department does a lot of in-person outreach which didn't happen this year due to COVID-19. There was a great increase in the number of people who registered during Hurricane Marco and Laura, so the city is back to its normal volume. No one registering expressed concerns about evacuating during COVID-19, but the people registering are part of the most medically vulnerable group who want to be evacuated regularly. Ms. Babcock stated, the Health Department is focusing on and addressing the nursing home population when it comes to evacuation because that group is currently most at risk of dying from COVID-19. Due to that, there may be more situations where the Health Department allows those facilities to shelter in place for a high category storm than they have in the past.

V. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

VI. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

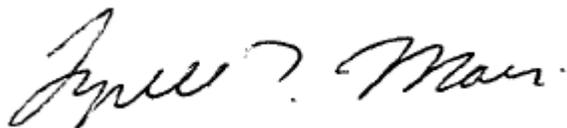
VII. Announcements

There were no announcements.

VIII. ADJOURN

The Chairman called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Lt. Stelly. The motion was approved unanimously.

Submitted by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyrell Morris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tyrell Morris
Executive Director