**ORLEANS PARISH COMMUNICATION DISTRICT**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

**Tuesday, October 19, 2021, 10 a.m.**

**Orleans Parish Communication District**

**Meeting and Votes Held Online Via Zoom**

**MEETING MINUTES**

1. **ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order at 10:02 am

OPCD Executive Director Tyrell Morris called the virtual meeting to order. OPCD Director of Communications and Government Affairs, Marcus Creel, called the roll with the following members present:

Joshua Cox (proxy for Chairman Michael Tidwell), Vice-Chairman Director Collin M. Arnold, Dr. James Aiken (proxy for CEO Danny Hardman, UMC New Orleans), CSM Greg Wilson (proxy for Brigadier General Keith Waddell, LA NG), Chad Brown (proxy for CAO Gilbert Montaño, CNO), NOFD Supt. Roman Nelson, NOPD Assist. Supt. Paul M. Noel (proxy for Shaun Ferguson, NOPD), Dr. Emily M. Nichols (NOLA EMS), Dr. Jennifer Avegno (CNO Health Dept.), Dr. Brobson Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society)

Absent: Capt. Donovan T. Archote, LSP

Guest: Terry Sterling

1. **APPROVAL OF JUNE 15, 2021, REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

ED Morris called for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 15, 2021, Regular Board Meeting. Dr. James Aiken (proxy for CEO Danny Hardman) proposed an amendment which was accepted. Vice Chairman Arnold made a motion to accept the minutes as amended and Joshua Cox (proxy for Director Michael Tidwell) seconded the motion. The motion passed.

1. **FINANCIAL REPORT BY JOSIAH MORGAN, OPCD DIRECTOR OF SUPPORT SERVICES**

Mr. Morgan stated that OPCD’s year-to-date revenue is $10.8 million. Up to and including the 3rd quarter 2021, OPCD had budgeted $12 million. OPCD revenues are currently down $1.1 million. This is due to the revenue of OPCD not yet fully received, as carriers have up to sixty days to remit payment. The revenue amounts should match budgeted amounts by the end of November.

Expenses are a little over $11.4 million for 2021. OPCD budgeted 3rd quarter expenses to be $13.1 million, so OPCD is currently under budget on expenses by approximately $1.6 million. Director Morgan expects the expenses to be in line with the budget once the full remittance is received.

ED Morris discussed the 2020 financial audit that is ongoing but ending soon. Status of 2020 audit: OPCD did apply for an extension with the State due to delays caused by Hurricane Ida. Director Morgan noted that there are no indications thus far of any substantial findings or on-going concerns by the auditors. The remaining portions of the audit are expected to be complete by November 1.

Dr. Aiken made a motion for Board members to receive the Financial Report two calendar days prior to the OPCD Board meetings to have time to review it before the meeting. The motion was brought to the floor by Vice Chairman Director Colin Arnold and seconded by Dr. Brobson Lutz. The motion was approved by the Board.

Dr. Aiken asked about the expected balance for OPCD at the end of Fiscal Year 2021. He noted that the budget still contained some upcoming expenditures for Training, Education, and Personnel Benefits. ED Morris is confident that OPCD will have an ending balance of $1.1 million.

**IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S THIRD QUARTER REPORT**

**Call Stats** – Director Morris stated that in 2020, there was a decrease in 9-1-1 calls due to COVID. As the city reopens, Calls for Service totals are starting to rise. ED Morris described the agency’s problems with achieving the call answer time standard of 95% of all calls answered within 15 seconds or less. It is a problem across the country in Emergency Communication Centers. Issues include staff shortages, increased call volume, and low recruitment numbers. Currently, the longest call hold times are approx. 40 seconds. Some solutions being implemented include checking with Priority Dispatch to see if there is any flexibility in the protocol when multiple callers are reporting the same incident and accepting smaller recruit classes to get applicants engaged sooner. OPCD is currently at 93% of all calls answered within 15 seconds. Operations staff monitor the call answer times hourly.

There is currently a decrease in 3-1-1 calls due to the closure of many COVID-related services. However the caller engagement level has gone up. The call volumes seem to be stabilizing to pre-COVID levels. ED Morris noted that during Hurricane Ida, there was a 200% increase of 3-1-1 calls for a short time. Citizens are engaging with 3-1-1 via the web page and the new automated “OPCD Jazz” chat feature.

**New OPCD Staff** – ED Morris welcomed two new OPCD administrative staff members. Ms. Vanessa Caliste-Swafford is the new Finance Manager who has been instrumental in the on-going state audit. Ms. Sierra Wallace has been hired as a Public Engagement Specialist and works with Mr. Marcus Creel.

**OPCD Training Academy** - OPCD has received accreditation and certification for its Telecommunicator and Dispatcher training programs from APCO International Agency Training Program. The OPCD Training and Compliance team, led by Ms. Teresa Thompson, achieved this accreditation after completing the two-year application process.

**V. 2022 PROPOSED BUDGET**

ED Morris made a presentation of the 2022 OPCD Proposed Budget. The agency is no longer able to use the OPCD reserve funds as it has done in the past to float the organization. OPCD has been using savings from position vacancies to fill the gap for next year. OPCD is asking the City of New Orleans for an allocation of $10.6 million dollars. This is a proposed amount and has not been finalized. The budget includes:

**Capital Improvements** - Hurricane Ida identified areas where the OPCD facility is beginning to show its age. There are roof repairs needed to the McDaniels Call Center, and the Roman Capitol building suffered significant roof and interior damage.

**Salaries and Benefits** - There are longevity increases pending for long-time staff members. Additionally two FTEs are needed in the Technology Department to support OPCD’s technical infrastructure.

The New Orleans City Council recently passed an ordinance that everyone working in or for city government make above $15.00/hr. There are some workers on the 3-1-1 staff that do not meet this requirement. To remain compliant with the ordinance, OPCD will be increasing their pay from $14.90/hr. to $15.15/hr. to make 3-1-1 salaries competitive in the market and help with employee retention.

**OPCD Vehicles** - OPCD has three vehicles that are deemed unsafe. The rear windshield fell out of one vehicle while staff was driving, and there is another vehicle in which the seats no longer lock, and riders are thrown during stops. OPCD would like to acquire additional vehicles and the recommendation has been to lease these vehicles. This would allow our five-year vehicle replacement plan to be preplanned. OPCD can use its contract with Jefferson Parish to replace our entire fleet for $20,000 a quarter. This contract will expire soon, and ED Morris would like to take advantage of the current pricing while available.

**Revenue Projection** – ED Morris reported that 9-1-1 surcharge revenue is returning to pre-Covid levels and may soon surpass that. OPCD plans to seek an allocation request from state legislature to help secure an annual allocation from the state budget to help fill the revenue gap. The tourist industry that the city relies on subsequently relies on a strong 9-1-1 system. ED Morris thinks it is appropriate to ask for the allocation since the state of LA does benefit from the revenue generated by the tourist industry. ED Morris thinks an annual request of $2.5 million dollars would be adequate. OPCD made the request last year and received a one-time allocation of $1.1 million. OPCD will continue advocacy efforts to secure an annual allocation from the state.

Board members requested additional information regarding the fleet replacement expenses. What type of vehicles, is there additional information on the vehicles’ use, and what are the details on the proposed vehicle lease plan under the Jefferson Parish contract? ED Morris said additional information will be provided to the Board.

**V. OLD BUSINESS – None reported**

**VI. NEW BUSINESS – None reported**

**VII. Announcements – None reported**

**VIII. ADJOURN**

Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Joshua Cox (Mayor’s Office) and seconded by Supt. Roman Nelson (NOFD).

Meeting ended at 10:35 am