

**ORLEANS PARISH COMMUNICATION DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING
July 6, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Chief Warren McDaniels Board Room**

MEETING MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Director John Thomas called the meeting to order.

II. ROLL CALL

Chairman Director John Thomas (Public Safety and Homeland Security), Vice-Chairman Director Collin Arnold (NOHSEP), Lt. Joseph Piglia (proxy for Capt. Donovan T. Archote, LA State Police Troop B), Dr. James Aiken (proxy for CEO Emily Sedgwick (UMCNO), CAO Gilbert Montaña (CNO), Supt. Roman Nelson (NOFD), Dr. Megan Marino (NOEMS), Dr. Jennifer Avegno (CNOHD), and Dr. Brobson Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society), Supt. Michelle Woodfork (NOPD). A quorum is present.

Brig. Gen. Keith Waddell (LA National Guard) was absent.

III. APPROVAL OF MARCH 16, 2023 BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Chair Thomas called for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous regular OPCD Board meeting on March 16, 2023. Director Arnold (NOHSEP) motioned to accept the minutes, and Dr. Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society) seconded. The motion passed.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TYRELL MORRIS

The agency expects to begin receiving second-quarter carrier remittances by the end of the second quarter over the next 60 days. There is a reduction in revenue from commercial and residential landlines; however, OPCD is seeing higher remittances from wireless carriers and the amounts are balancing themselves out. The agency is expected to meet its revenue goals and the investment instruments are performing incredibly well in LAMP. A total of \$7,000 in interest revenue was initially budgeted, but at the half of 2023, the agency has already accrued \$55,000 in interest so the markets are performing well.

A significant amount of reimbursable income was also received from services OPCD provides to other agencies such as equipment and software. Those funds have been collected. Also, a significant amount of ED Morris' travel costs were reimbursed by the federal government and is noted in a line item in the P&L statement.

OPCD Vacancies

The agency is currently down to twenty-five (25) vacancies in Operations, which is significantly better than the fifty (50) vacancies during the same period last year. ED Morris stated that OPCD is moving in the right direction. A class of fourteen (14) recruits began training last week and the goal is to have all vacancies filled by the end of the year. Salaries remain on budget through the first six months of this year.

Fire Station Alerting System

The revenue line item of \$2,500,000 is for the Fire Station Alerting software project that OPCD is managing through the ARPA funds awarded to the city. The Selection Committee met on July 10th and made a final decision on the vendor. Once that information is communicated to the City of New Orleans and the agency agrees to move forward, the selected vendor will be made public.

An RFP for that process was issued to fully replace the Fire Station Alerting System in the City of New Orleans which will help dispatch fire units quicker and, hopefully, secure the Class 1 rating the city received several years ago.

OPCD Performance

ED Morris briefly discussed the OPCD's performance to date in comparison to previous years. A PowerPoint slide showed statistics of 9-1-1 calls since 2021. The graph showed a 10,000-call volume increase every month over the prior year for 9-1-1 calls. The agency, over the past three months, has either hit or exceeded the national call answering standard, answering 90% of calls within 15 seconds or less. So, although the agency is taking many more calls than were taken this time last year, it is performing higher than has been in recent years.

Hexagon Project

As part of the overall report, the Hexagon project is scheduled to Go Live on August 29th. The agency is onboarding external non-NOPD agencies that will be using the platform as well. This project has been ongoing for many years and is expected to revolutionize OPCD's technology infrastructure with regards to law enforcement records. A vendor has been selected and the agency is continuing to move through the process.

Dr. Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society) asked if the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office (OPSO) would be using Hexagon. ED Morris replied that OPSO has issued its own separate RFP for a jail management system, and they are considering Hexagon as part of that evaluation. The Sheriff will decide once that process has concluded. Dr. Lutz asked if NOPD was happy with Hexagon. ED Morris replied that the project will replace over 20 legacy systems at NOPD, and it will have a significant burden reduction, as well as make efficiencies, to how calls are processed for service.

V. NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION 23-01 AUTHORIZE THE PSAP EXPANSION PROJECT PHASE III

A motion to open the discussion was made by Dr. Avegno (CNOHD), and seconded by Dr. Marino (NOEMS), The motion passed unanimously.

OPCD completed a feasibility study two years ago that discussed what the agency specifically needs, as the city of New Orleans grew, to become a modern emergency communications organization. This project includes, first ever in the nation, a public safety childcare facility. The agency submitted a capital outlay request to the Division of Administration for a total of \$34,000,000 dollars. The request was added to House Bill 2 by the Governor and has gone through the process. Last week, the Governor signed House Bill 2 into law giving OPCD the full \$38,000,000 million dollar appropriation requested to fund this project. \$5 million dollars of those funds are immediately available which will allow the agency to continue the process to get the project completed. To move any further, the OPCD Board will need to pass a resolution to enter into a cooperative endeavor agreement with the State Office of Facility Planning. That agency will then assign a Project Manager for the expansion project.

The remaining funds are in P5 status because the agency is unable to provide construction documents until the construction costs are determined. The Office of Facility Planning has suggested, as a logical next step, the agency enter into a CEA to make the \$5,000,000 available and complete the design development phase with the architect that has been selected, which will cost \$410,000.

Resolution 23-01 is written in several steps. One, with the approval and review of OPCD general counsel, the agency enters into a CEA with the Office of Facility Planning. Two, OPCD enters into a contractual obligation with the architect firm that will provide design development for the expansion project. The total for this service is NTE \$410,000. Three, the contract will need approval by OPCD general counsel and the Office of State Facility Planning.

The architect firm that will complete the design development phase is VergesRome Architects. OPCD has worked with this company since the beginning of the project, and they also completed the feasibility study. Along with design development, VergesRome will create the construction documents that will be used to go to public bid. From the public bid process, a vendor will be selected to build.

Professional services, particularly architectural and design services from a state level do not require an RFP, but one was completed two years ago, and presentations were taken from three different vendors. VergesRome was the firm that was selected.

A Motion to accept **RESOLUTION 23-01** passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION 23-02 DECLARATION OF MAINTENANCE EMERGENCY REGARDING SEWER LINE

A motion to open the discussion was made by Dr. Marino (NOEMS) and seconded by Director Arnold (NOHSEP). The motion passed unanimously.

OPCD conducted a normal testing and facility assessment prior to the hurricane season and learned there are drainage issues in the Call Center showers and bathrooms. Upon exploration, it was discovered the sewer lines are beginning to sink under the building not allowing water to move. An RFP was issued through the State Office of Procurement's website, but the agency did not receive a single response.

The public bid law says the OPCD Board must declare the matter an emergency to complete the work. ED Morris believes not having consistent reliable water or working showers in the middle of hurricane season should be considered an emergency. A vote from the Board will allow the agency staff to make the necessary repairs. A contractor has offered to perform additional exploration work to provide a solid proposal. The agency's insurance company has also been contacted since it's believed the matter may rise to the level of a claim if the work is substantial enough. This could also protect the agency from financial risk due to the unknown costs.

Board members inquired about the lack of response to the RFP. ED Morris explained contractors would need to explore the problem a bit further to determine the actual cause. The exploration is an additional cost that will cross the \$60,000 threshold. Due to the urgency and timeliness of the matter, ED Morris thought it prudent to bring the matter to the Board to declare it an emergency rather than issuing an RFP to complete the exploration and assessment to determine the total cost of the project. This would help speed up the completion of the repairs. CAO Montañó (CNO) questioned the scope of the proposed emergency declaration. ED Morris confirmed the emergency declaration would be isolated to just the sewer line repair project.

ED Morris explained the agency recently learned of using this declaration to pay for emergency repairs during an audit with the Office of the Inspector General. One of the collective lessons learned was how the agency responds to emergencies. There was an incident where the generators caught fire and staff made emergency repairs. The OIG explained an OPCD Board meeting should have been called within 10 days to declare the matter an emergency. It is believed the total cost of the project will be between \$60,000 and \$100,000.

The project was advertised by using the state's RFP procurement system, LaPAC. It makes notifications to any vendors that registered for a commodity code. It was also posted on the agency's website and social media platforms.

Supt. Nelson (NOFD) noted the challenges NOFD is experiencing to get work done on their facilities. He supports the emergency action to get the work expedited.

Director Arnold (NOHSEP) asked if there were any existing city or state contracts that could cover the cost of the repairs and ED Morris explained there is nothing current that is specific enough for this project. Any existing projects cover things like general maintenance but nothing that addresses sagging sewer lines, etc. The RFP that was advertised includes the assessment, repair, and stabilization of the sewer system. Director Arnold suggested placing a cap of \$100,000 on the emergency declaration spending with the opportunity to request additional funds. Questions and discussion continued.

ED Morris called for a motion to place a cap of \$100,000 on **RESOLUTION 23-02**. The motion was made by Director Arnold and seconded by Supt. Nelson. The motion passed unanimously.

Compensation Study

The contractors are completing their final review of the compensation study and as the agency prepares to build its budget proposal for next year, ED Morris wanted to highlight some important observations that were taken from the compensation study.

The Consultant compared OPCD with six other agencies of comparable size and scope and looked at all things compensation, not just hourly rate, but things like insurance, benefits, leave, etc. OPCD ranked 7 at the bottom of all the cities compared. Most of the staff that was surveyed stated that benefits were the most important to them. Health insurance costs to employees were identified as a huge burden.

The Consultant made recommendations regarding agency realignment and workload development and management across the board. Once the final report is provided by the Consultants, the final draft will be provided to the Board and will be made public.

The goal is to get the agency aligned with comparable wages and benefits, and that will probably begin with an average of a \$3 increase across the board although this may not be feasible fiscally. The Board will make a decision on any adjustments to those wages based upon the compensation study, but it is very robust and detailed across the entire organization. The Consultants are making final adjustments while waiting for additional information to see how OPCD compares in the area of leadership, then the final report will be published.

There are currently two positions in the agency that fall below the livable wage. The average starting salary for an entry level call taker is \$36,000 but is proposed to increase to \$42,000. Although the \$15.00 per hour wage looks fine on paper, it falls below the livable wage when you consider deductions. It's also important to note that housing costs in New Orleans are 44% higher than the national average, which is an incredible burden to the staff at OPCD.

The report does not appear to include exit interviews from persons no longer employed with OPCD but there is a full private sector comparison analysis that list who the major private sector competitors are in the region and what they offer versus what OPCD can provide. OPCD had an overwhelming response from employees who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Over 105 employees responded to the survey, which is the largest the Consultant has ever seen respond to a compensation study.

The Consultants used Lafayette Parish and counties in Atlanta, Washington, DC, Las Vegas, Fairfax County, VA, etc. in the comparisons. OPCD's study was based on call volume and not necessarily population because the New Orleans population is not indicative of the actual workload.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Chairman Thomas called for a motion to enter into Executive session to discuss ED Morris' and his position at OPCD. The motion was made by Supt. Nelson and seconded by Dr. Lutz. The motion passed unanimously.

All Board members and State Legislative members Representatives Mandi Landry (District 91), Stephanie Hilferty (District 94), Amy Freeman (District 98) and were present in the Executive session.

The Regular Board meeting was paused.

Upon resumption of the Regular Board Meeting, Board Chair Thomas read a prepared statement which postponed a decision about ED Morris' position at OPCD until a Special Board meeting could be held on Tuesday, July 11, 2023, at 10 am.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Dr. Aiken (UMCNO) asked about the 9-8-8 Suicide Hotline and how it would interface with 9-1-1. ED Morris explained that the 9-8-8 hotline has been active since July 2022, and that when calls from the hotline were received by OPCD, the Mobile Crisis Units would respond.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements.

VIII. ADJOURN

Motion to adjourn was made by CAO Montañó (CNO) and seconded by Supt. Woodfork (NOPD). The motion passed.

Submitted by,



Karl Fasold
Interim Executive Director