

**ORLEANS PARISH COMMUNICATION DISTRICT  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**REGULAR BOARD MEETING  
March 12, 2024 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**

The roll was called with the following attendees present: Chairman Director John Thomas (Public Safety and Homeland Security), Ross Bourgeois (proxy for Vice-Chairman Director Collin Arnold, NOHSEP), Capt. Valentine Emery III (proxy for Capt. Joesph Piglia, LSP-Troop B), Dr. James Aiken (proxy for Interim CEO John Nickens, UMCNO), Supt. Anne Kirkpatrick (NOPD), Supt. Roman Nelson (NOFD), Dr. Megan Marino (NOEMS), Dr. Jennifer Avegno (CNOHD), and Dr. Brobson Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society).

Col. Kenneth Donnelly, Ret. (LA National Guard), and CAO Gilbert Montaña (CNO), were absent.

**III. APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 12, 2023 BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

Board Chairman Thomas called for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous regular OPCD Board meeting on December 12, 2023. The motion was made by Dr. Avegno (CNOHD) and seconded by Dr. Marino (NOEMS). The motion passed.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**Sewer Repair Update**

Executive Director Fasold stated that during the December 2023 Board meeting, the Board directed OPCD to hire a plumbing company to perform the engineer-reviewed plumbing work for the toilets and shower rooms in the call center. There were no additional bidders for this work so the agency will negotiate with the contractor who originally responded to the RFP. The board previously approved Resolution 23-02 to increase funds from \$100,000 to \$185,000 to cover the cost of the repairs. Based upon the Board's emergency action in September 2023, OPCD will proceed with the project as soon as funding is available.

**Expansion Project**

The CEA with the State for the scaled back building expansion project was submitted to the state, and OPCD is still awaiting state approval. ED Fasold requested the state

waive the matched funds, move the project from P5 to P1 status, and give OPCD immediate access to the requested \$6,000,000 for startup costs, i.e. engaging a new architect and creating plans for the project.

### **Mental Health Service**

ED Fasold introduced OPCD's new full-time Chaplain, Ms. Stephanie Friend, whose services are provided free of charge to OPCD employees. OPCD continues to move forward with working to have a full-time, non-secular social worker on-site to support additional support for OPCD employees. The mental health support program provided as an extra-cost option from our insurance carrier which OPCD paid to provide was not well used, so that program has not been renewed.

The NeoGov pilot program for on-line, peer-to-peer counselling is in use and currently being analyzed for effectiveness.

### **Compensation Study**

The recent job classification study identified four (4) positions salaried below the minimum living wage for the City of New Orleans, in addition to recommending increases for the ECS I position ("Call taker"), the most essential position in the agency. The original budget submitted included a 10% increase for the ECS I position, but during the budget presentation, the City Council asked that Interim ED Fasold resubmit OPCD's budget and include the full 28% salary increase recommended by the compensation study. The budget was resubmitted as requested and was approved. The City Council passed the ordinance on December 7, 2023. In January 2024, the salaries for the ECS1 employees were raised 28%, with salary adjustments applied up the position ladder to avoid salary compression

The Board budget approval restricted any increases for employees not falling in the categories above, pending resolution of council intent. That question was resolved, and Resolution 24-01 to be considered today includes a 2.5% raise for all OPCD employees not falling into the criteria above. As per the CAO's resolution during the December meeting, the raise will be made retroactive to January 7, 2024 (the start of the first full pay period of 2024). For the 2025 budget, ED Fasold will again recommend increases for Tech and Administrative staff as recommended in the compensation study.

### **Louisiana Legislative Auditor and Office of the Inspector General**

ED Fasold reported there are several on-going investigations into past OPCD activities. The OPCD is cooperating fully with all investigations and is committed to full transparency. There was nothing new to report at this time, and ED Fasold will keep the Board up to date on any new information.

### **Staff Recruitment, Training, and Performance**

The first 2024 recruit training class began on January 8, 2024. Nine recruits graduated, and the next recruit class will begin in March. To avoid losing potential employees before a training class begins, qualified applicants are hired immediately and placed in departments that may be backlogged and need some assistance. When enough recruits are hired to hold training class, the new hires transition to training. Additionally, a Dispatcher training class has started, making way for promotions for calltakers. OPCD

continues to rehire experienced former employees who have chosen to return to OPCD employment. The number of open positions continues to remain at 40, or about 1/3 of the positions in Operations.

OPCD is consistently hitting the NENA standard for call answer times (90% of calls answered within 10 seconds) about 80% of the time. During activation periods, when the center is fully staffed, the standard is regularly met, indicating the continued need for more call takers. ED Fasold reported that OPCD is retaining more staff than losing at this time. A power watch shift (10 am – 10 pm) has been added to the schedule and is staffed by Assistant Operations Managers who also serve as a communication bridge between shifts. Additionally, OPCD analysis is being performed on the factors that go into meeting the call answer time standard in order to maximize the resources available for improvement.

In the Public Records division, the OPCD is meeting the 72-hour deadline for public records requests. Records requests from NOPD are also remaining manageable by existing staff. A new form will be shared with NOPD to help eliminate duplicate requests.

A significant backlog of records requests from the DA's office remain (over 1,500), we believe due to duplicate requests for records. OPCD is currently working with the DA's office to assist in streamlining their processes and inner communications, similar to the NOPD records requests. The backlog consists of requests received by OPCD prior to implementing the streamlining changes. To handle this backlog, new recruit hires are assisting in the process. Additionally, OPCD is hiring more staff for the Public Records division.

## **Board Subcommittees**

### **Finance Sub-committee.**

Chairman Thomas reported on his activities to move forward the City's review of financial statements provided by OPCD's Finance Department and to report his findings to the OPCD Board. Progress has been made in the review process, but Chairman Thomas is not yet ready to appoint Finance subcommittee members. He is confident that going forward, the OPCD finances should be more clearly and correctly represented for more informed Board decisions for the agency.

### **Bylaws Subcommittee**

ED Fasold will follow-up with Vice-Chairman Arnold (NOHSEP) on the Bylaws Subcommittee activities.

### **CEA with City of New Orleans**

ED Fasold reported that the amendment to the CEA with the City expired in December, 2023. A concerted effort was made between the OPCD and the City to amend the CEA, which was signed on February 21, 2024. CNO CAO Montano's office still needs to complete entering the CEA amendment details in the city's financial system before OPCD can begin to draw on CEA funds.

Board discussion followed about the need to create a new CEA with the City to better reflect the current administration of OPCD and its employees. The current CEA was created during the consolidation period and contains language which no longer applies to OPCD operations. ED Fasold reported that work on the new CEA will soon begin in order to give the Board time for review and input. He expects it to be completed to coincide with the end of the current CEA amendment at the end of this year.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Resolution 24-01 Approval of the Revised 2024 Budget**

The Board discussed the budget revisions due to missing and past due expenses from the 2023 budget. ED Fasold reported that no payments had been made to the City's retirement system (NOMERS) since September 2023. A concerted effort was underway by OPCD, Chairman Thomas, and the City to identify unpaid OPCD budget obligations and bring the 2024 budget toward a balanced conclusion.

A motion was made by Chief Kirkpatrick (NOPD) to suspend the agenda and vote on proposed resolution 24-02 while the Board had a quorum. The motion was seconded by Dr. Lutz (Orleans Parish Medical Society) . The motion passed.

### **Resolution 24-02**

Troop NOLA is a new Louisiana State Police troop to be stationed in New Orleans / Orleans Parish. Capt. Valentine Emery III (proxy for Capt. Joesph Piglia, LSP-Troop B) is assigned to lead Troop NOLA. In that capacity, Resolution 24-02 names the commander of Troop NOLA as the LSP delegate to the Board. In the future event that Troop NOLA is disbanded, Resolution 24-02 states that the LSP representative to the Board would revert back to the commander of LSP Troop B. Motion to approve the resolution was made by Dr. Marino and seconded by Mr. Bourgeois (NOHSEP). The motion passed.

Motion was made by Mr. Bourgeois to resume the agenda and seconded by Chief Kirkpatrick. The motion passed.

The Resolution 24-01 budget discussion resumed about approval of the 2024 budget. There were no additional questions about the proposed budget. Chairman Thomas reiterated the efforts between the City CAO, OPCD, and himself to work on correcting OPCD's budget. ED Fasold reported that he and OPCD Finance Director are committed to a conservative budget designed to put OPCD back on stable financial footing. He reported that OPCD currently has no reserve funds.

Chief Kirkpatrick suggested that OPCD create a plan to rebuild the agency reserves. Chairman Thomas requested ED Fasold share the finance spreadsheets Chairman Thomas created to help understand the 2023 revenue and expenditures with Board members. The spreadsheets should assist the Board in understanding OPCD's financial situation.

A motion to approve Resolution 24-02 was made by Dr. Aiken (UMCNO) and seconded by Supt. Nelson (NOFD). The motion passed.

### **State Supplemental Pay**

ED Fasold discussed legislation and a constitutional amendment introduced at the State Legislature to provide state supplemental pay to Municipal EMS employees. HB 84 is a proposed constitutional amendment and HB 85 is proposed legislation to accomplish this goal. Dr. Aiken (UMCNO) would like to see New Orleans EMS to receive state supplemental pay, just as police and fire personnel receive. He asked that the Board support this legislation. The Board Counsel recommended against the Board making such an endorsement. Dr. Lutz suggested the Louisiana Medical Society would support the proposed legislation. ED Fasold recommended that both he and Board members could individually advocate for the passage of this legislation. ED Fasold does not want 9-1-1 Telecommunicators to be included with the EMS legislation at this time so as to not to interfere with EMS's chances of success. ED Fasold plans to work through the Louisiana Chapters of APCO/NENA to lobby for telecommunicator state supplemental pay in the next two years.

### **9-1-1 General Funding Discussion**

ED Fasold reported that revenue from 9-1-1 fees paid by the carriers continue to fall, while the costs for NextGen 9-1-1 technology and maintenance of the 9-1-1 equipment and software continue to rise. Ed Fasold presented the pros and cons of three possible scenarios of ways to improve future funding for OPCD.

1. Terrebonne Parish has introduced HB 4 in the 2024 LA legislative session. It is a local action bill for raising their 9-1-1 fees and bringing it to a vote of parish residents. OPCD could attempt to follow this pattern and possibly place it on the the November presidential election ballot (thus no charge to OPCD for the election!). ED Fasold stated it would be a big lift to attempt this year. However, with the existing tax burden on Orleans Parish residents, asking for an increase in 9-1-1 fees could be unpopular, and ultimately unsuccessful, effort. LA APCO/NENA leadership are watching HB 4 closely to gauge its reception and success. The last time the legislature approved a rate change for all state communication districts (with LA APCO/NENA support) was in 2012, and ED Fasold feels LA APCO/NENA may be ready to move forward with statewide changes in 2026 (the next fiscal session).
2. ED Fasold reported he and his staff have been brainstorming on possible sustainable sources for additional 9-1-1 funding. Ideas about trying to get a portion of existing taxes (sales tax on hotel/entertainment activities) could be justified due to the 9-1-1 resources used to keep those activities safe for tourists and residents alike. The competition for gaining a percentage of the funding from the sales tax would be very tough: many agencies in the City already rely on that funding. ED Fasold asked for suggestions from Board members about how they could facilitate the negotiations for a successful outcome for OPCD.

3. Absent any viable options, OPCD will have to request an increase in City contributions going forward.

Discussions followed with suggestions from Dr. Avegno and Mr. Bourgeois about finding money in various city taxing districts established to fight crime. ED Fasold suggested the agency needs approximately \$2 million more annually to operate, not including money needed to rebuild the agency's reserve fund. ED Fasold wanted to make the Board aware of the changing landscape in funding 9-1-1 operations in hopes that they could assist in identifying other funding options.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

ED Fasold called for a motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss agency personnel concerns. Mr. Bourgeois motioned to enter Executive Session and Supt. Nelson (NOFD) seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The Regular Board Meeting was adjourned.

Upon resumption of the Regular Board Meeting, the meeting was called to order.

### **VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Upon returning from Executive Session, ED Fasold said there were no actions taken in the Executive Session which required Board action.

ED Fasold had several situational awareness announcements for the Board.

1. A Frequent False Caller Identification initiative is being worked with NOPD's 1<sup>st</sup> District and 4<sup>th</sup> District for known 9-1-1 callers who have mental issues. The goal is to identify the frequent callers to the responding officers who can engage MCIU resources to assist with an appropriate response.
2. The CNO Chief Resilience Officer has been working with OPCD to provide a full-time, 3-1-1 liaison to assist in moving 3-1-1 requests for service/complaints to resolution via the appropriate city agency. There is currently a backlog of unresolved 3-1-1 tickets.
3. There is a plan in place to use OPCD Auxiliary personnel to answer 3-1-1 calls during emergency situations such as street flooding events, weather events, etc. There was concern that not having twenty-four-hour access to 3-1-1 for reporting certain problems would cause issues to go unreported.
4. NOPD has reverted to "signal codes" as incident types. OPCD and NOPD continue to plain talk when communicating via radio. The NOPD Consent Decree Monitors, as well as Domestic Violence advocates, are pleased with the changes.
5. OPCD has implemented changes to the NOPD Paid Detail assignment process in CAD to better track detail hours and detail work locations. These changes are

in agreement with the NOPD Consent Decree requirements and NOPD's existing policies and procedures.

6. OPCD has trained NOPD personnel involved with sexual violence cases to use their MDTs to pull CAD information themselves rather than requesting OPCD personnel to do so. This has freed up more time for Ops Floor supervisors to do their jobs.
7. OPCD developed a prototype dashboard for use by the NOPD Domestic Violence Unit to review calls for service in near-real time. This is tied in with NOPD Consent Decree requirements, and it allows officers the ability to see existing record requests. This should help lower the number of duplicate requests for 9-1-1 records from this NOPD unit.
8. NOPD, NOFD, and EMS are now responsible for reviewing and updating their agency's notification lists so OPCD can make the correct notifications to the correct personnel.
9. EMS Fleet Management Dashboard is available to EMS Dispatchers to provide situational awareness to EMS first responders. Also, the EMS review of their notification list is completed and has resulted in far fewer notifications about fewer events. OPCD is currently working with EMS to pre-plan EMS paid detail needs in an effort to reduce OPCD overtime.
10. The NOFD review of their notification list is completed and has been updated in QuickBase and Rave.
11. OPCD is improving the Firewatch and notification processes for high-rise, residential buildings to reduce the number of false alarms. Also, notifications about water main breaks are sent to MDTs when the unit is within the affected geographical area. Coordination with the S&WB and DoTD continues to be streamlined to better communicate road closures and re-openings in a timely manner.
12. NOFD and EMS are cooperating with OPCD to report the locations of AED units and Stop the Bleed kits in the field. OPCD enters these locations as Premise Hazards in CAD to facilitate OPCD personnel's ability to notify emergency responders and the public where to find the closest equipment.
13. State legislative bill SB 375 has been introduced to create a telecommunicator prestige license plate. ED Fasold is investigating where the funds from the sale of the new plate will be applied, and he is pleased about the increased recognition 9-1-1 telecommunicators will receive.
14. In an effort to use technology to lessen the burden on calltakers, OPCD is actively investigating AI (Artificial Intelligence) services provided by Carbyne to assist with call triage of multiple calls about the same incident. The agency is

also testing AI for two-way translation voice translation, in addition to the one-way (incoming) translation & transcription already in production use.

15. Dr. Aiken requested a resumption of the provision of Call Answer Times Reports in the Board meeting packets. ED Fasold concurred the reports would be included.

## VII. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Bourgeois and seconded by Dr. Marino. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Submitted by,



Karl Fasold  
Executive Director