

The Board of Directors of the Emergency Communications District (ECD) of Nashville and Davidson County met in regular session at the Metro Emergency Communications Backup Center, 5240 Harding Place. Chair Cleo Duckworth called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM and presided over the meeting with the following board members present: William Johnson, Lorinda Hale, Susan Mattson, Rick Cowan, and Domingo Gonzalez. Board member Carolyn Tucker was not in attendance. Board member Ruby Baker attended virtually. Others who attended the meeting in person were Mark Lynam and Larry Law (ECD Admin), Stephen Martini (Metro DEC), Russell Freeman (Legal Counsel), Neil Pickering and Shari Dennis (Finn Partners). Attending virtually were DEC employees Tim Watkins, Angie Milliken, Paul McCallister, Patrice Coleman, Leah Quarles, Kristin Mullen, and Dwayne Vance.

Minutes

Ms. Hale made a motion to accept the minutes from the January 19, 2023 ECD Board meeting. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Financial Report

Mr. Lynam went over the February financial report with board members. He reported cash available for operations totaled \$23,029,477. This consisted of \$340,836 in our checking account and \$22,688,641 in our LGIP account.

Mr. Lynam went over the various business transactions that took place during the month. He reported that income for February was \$1,609,820 while expenses amounted to \$386,056. This resulted in a net gain of \$1,223,764 for the month.

Mr. Lynam pointed out that the need for language interpretation services was increasing and that we may exceed our budget in that area. Ms. Baker asked if we knew what areas of the city these foreign language calls were coming from. Mr. Lynam stated that we only knew the number of times that interpretation services were requested for a particular language, not the area where it originated.

After discussion ended, Ms. Hale made a motion to accept the financial statement as presented. Mr. Johnson seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Introduction of New ECD Board Member

Mr. Domingo Santos Gonzalez was introduced as the newest member of the ECD Board of Directors. Mr. Gonzalez will be representing School District 7. His term will expire February 14, 2027

Public Awareness Update

Mr. Neil Pickering from Finn Partners introduced Ms. Shari Dennis to board members. Ms. Dennis will be taking on the lead role for managing our account.

Board members were provided an informational report regarding the Rescue Rex program. It reflected the number of Rex performances this school year and a schedule of upcoming appearances.

Mr. Pickering went over the advertising reports with board members. He stated that the new creative was launched on February 13th. The new digital ads include the “Road Debris Campaign” and the “Police Assistance Awareness”. New billboards (both English and Spanish) are in place and new radio ads have commenced.

Mr. Pickering and Director Martini talked about a potential campaign for next fiscal year that would spread awareness to foreign language speakers regarding both 911 and 311. Director Martini brought up the fact that most non-English speaking people do not call emergency services because they assume that we cannot speak their language, therefore we cannot help them. Director Martini wants to find a way to get a message to these communities to tell them that we do have interpretation services available. He mentioned the possibility of having wall posters or banners that could be displayed in markets or businesses that cater to these communities. Board members asked him and Finn Partners to come up with a cost estimate and they would take it under consideration as part of next year’s budget.

Legislative Report

Ms. Mattson updated board members on legislation before the Tennessee General Assembly that may affect emergency communication districts. She reported that Representative Bricken from Coffee County had refiled one of his bills from last year and has moved it to calendar. Our lobbyist, Mr. Will Denami, is following this bill and will keep us informed on any action taken with it.

Director Martini added that Representative Bricken had filed a house floor resolution on the morning of March 16th recognizing police, fire, and EMT’s as emergency responders. Dispatchers were not part of his resolution.

Ms. Mattson also mentioned that there was a bill being looked at by the Finance Committee which would give death benefits to families of call takers and dispatchers who die in the line of duty.

DEC Directors Report

Director Martini provided his monthly informational report to board members. He reported that his department currently has 51 vacancies, 40 of which are new positions approved in this year’s budget. Filling these vacancies has been difficult. Hopefully this hiring trend will improve with a recent increase in applications.

DEC will not have to present its FY24 budget to the Metro Council. However, they will have to attend the Mayor’s budget hearings.

Remote call taking for non-emergency calls is becoming a real option. A pilot project will take place over the next few days to try and bring this to reality.

Call volume continues to go down for non-emergency calls. This has come about due to DEC’s partnership with 311.

The Artificial Intelligence project for handling non-emergency calls has been finalized. A grant application for \$1 million dollars has been submitted through Vanderbilt to the National Science Foundation. We should know by November if we will receive funding to continue this project.

DEC has not seen a huge increase in Text to 9-1-1. Director Martini shared with board members samples of some of the text message conversations received from citizens and visitors to Nashville.

Compliance times continue to improve. As a means of attacking heavy call volume, a fourth shift, referred to as a “power” shift, has been put in place between the hours of 9:00 PM and 2:00 AM. This has resulted in a massive improvement in answer times.

Adjournment

Upon proper motion by Mr. Johnson and second by Ms. Hale, the meeting adjourned at 3:11PM.

The next meeting of the ECD Board of Directors will be held on April 20, 2023.

Minutes submitted by Mark Lynam