Government of the District of Columbia
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B

DRAFT RESOLUTION #4B-23-0907

Recommendations for Improvements and Oversight at the Office of Unified Communications
Adopted September 26, 2022

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B takes note of the following:

- The Office of Unified Communications (OUC) operates both emergency and non-emergency calltaking for DC government and is a critical link for District residents for emergency response, city services, and information.

- The Office of Unified Communications has struggled repeatedly over many years to accurately receive and dispatch emergency calls. Responding to a 2015 incident, the National Transportation Safety Board identified OUC as contributing to a fatal fire at L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station and recommended that OUC "audit your public service answering point … to validate compliance with the standards published by the National Emergency Number Association or another similar standards organization." National Transportation Safety Board, Safety Recommendation R16-04-06 (May 23, 2016).

- After a fatal fire on Kennedy Street, NW in August 2019, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 4B, 4C and 4D all raised concerns about a reported four-minute delay at OUC and requested OUC "benchmark dispatch times and reporting of actual dispatch times be made available." Resolution 4B-19-0904, Request for Agency Changes following Deadly House Fire on August 18th at 708 Kennedy Street NW (Sept. 23, 2019); ANC 4C Resolution, DC Agency Review of the House Fire on August 18th at 708 Kennedy Street (Sept. 11, 2019); ANC 4D Resolution, Resolution Following Deadly House Fire on August 18th at 708 Kennedy Street (Sept. 18, 2019).

- In 2020, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B noted that Commissioners "repeatedly heard concerns from constituents and neighbors about the functioning of the Office both in emergency and non-emergency call-taking" and had received inconsistent and

contradictory responses from OUC leadership. Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 4B and 4C requested the Office of the District of Columbia Auditor perform an audit of OUC. *See* ANC 4B Letter, Requesting an Audit of the Office of Unified Communications (May 27, 2020); ANC 4C Letter, Audit Request and Process Improvements at the Office of Unified Communications (Sept. 9, 2020).

- The Office of the District of Columbia Auditor (ODCA) began an audit on February 15, 2021, and released that audit on October 19, 2021. The audit found systemic issues at OUC, including "a lack of adequate oversight of call-taking and dispatch operations," and found that there were significant equity concerns in dispatch of emergency calls in Wards 7 and 8, taking 20% longer than in other neighborhoods. ODCA, "District's 911 System: Reforms Needed to Meet Safety Needs," (Oct. 19, 2021).

- The District of Columbia Auditor released a follow-up audit report on September 9, 2022 and found that OUC had made "minimal progress" toward improvements. The report characterized the agency as "failing to meet the needs of District residents." ODCA, "911 Reform Status Report #1: Minimal Progress," (Sept. 9, 2022).

- The District of Columbia Auditor released a second follow-up audit report on March 23, 2023, which revealed that according to national standards, OUC failed to answer calls promptly around half the time and failed to dispatch calls promptly all the time. ODCA, "911 Reform Status Report #2: Progress Made but Transparency Needed." (March 23, 2023).

- In March 2023, former OUC Interim Director Cleo Subido filed a lawsuit alleging that she OUC retaliated against her and terminated her for publicly discussing OUC's ongoing failures. This is part of a continued pattern of turmoil in leadership at the agency. *See* Resolution 4B-22-0302, Resolution in Opposition to Confirmation of Karima Holmes as Director of the District Office of Unified Communications (March 28, 2022).

- The Director of OUC attended Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B's March 2023 meeting, where the Commission raised continued concerns with OUC operations and pressed for compliance with the District of Columbia Auditor's reports.

- After passage of the Office of Unified Communications Transparency and Accuracy Emergency Amendment Act of 2023 in July 2023, OUC began posting limited performance statistics publicly. These statistics show that OUC frequently does not answer emergency calls in a timely manner and that almost half of shifts at the agency are understaffed.

- Advisory Neighborhood Commissions across the city have again called for operational improvements and reform at OUC due to continued and

severe safety failures and operational challenges within the agency. *See, e.g.*, ANC 6B Letter, Failures of OUC and the 911 System (Aug. 28, 2023); ANC 5E Resolution, Urging OUC to Undertake Reforms to Improve 911 System (Sept. 19, 2023); ANC 1E Resolution, Calling for Significant Improvements OUC and an Independent 911 Task Force (Sept. 27, 2023).

- Residents of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B continue to express concerns about emergency call answering times, call dispatch and response times, and call classification. Constituents and neighbors rightly understand that this is a matter of life or death, and that is has proven to be deadly in the past.

RESOLVED:

➢ That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the Office of the Inspector General to replicate and update its 1998 report on 911 calltaking in the District, and include in its report another examination of the appropriate compensation to sufficiently staff the Office of Unified Communications.

➢ That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on Office of the District of Columbia Auditor to conduct and release an additional follow-up audit of the Office of Unified Communications to determine if the agency is making progress on the issues identified in the preceding audits.

➢ That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the Office of Unified Communications to update its performance dashboard to include metrics for call queue to dispatch and dispatch to first unit on scene to allow a complete picture of emergency response times in DC on an ongoing basis.

➢ That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the Office of Unified Communications to expeditiously adopt the recommendation of the District of Columbia Auditor that "de-identified versions of after-action reports be posted to the OUC website within 10 days of an incident with audio files available on request."

➢ That the Council of the District of Columbia pass legislation to clarify what data around emergency calls are subject to Freedom of Information Act Requests and mandate a process to aid in transparency for the public to access information that is provided routinely in other jurisdictions. Information that should be public (with personal information or narrow redactions, where relevant) includes: address of call, time of call, time of answer, time of entry into the computer-aided dispatch, dispatch notes, call type, time of dispatch, units dispatched,

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unit on-scene arrival and departure times, recordings of calls and recordings of radio transmissions.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Commission designates Commissioner Evan Yeats, ANC 4B04, Commissioner Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08, and Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioner cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matter relating to this Resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, consistent with DC Code § 1-309, only actions of the full Commission voting in a properly noticed public meeting have standing and carry great weight. The actions, positions, and opinions of individual commissioners, insofar as they may be contradictory to or otherwise inconsistent with the expressed position of the full Commission in a properly adopted resolution or letter, have no standing and cannot be considered as in any way associated with the Commission.

ADOPTED by voice vote at a regular public meeting (notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of X members was present) on September 26, 2023, by a vote of X yes, X no, X abstentions.

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