

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

**May 25, 2017**

**IN RE:**

**JOINT PETITION OF CONTACT  
MINISTRIES, INC. AND CONTACT-  
CONCERN OF NORTHEAST TENNESSEE,  
INC. TO TRANSFER ITS N11 NUMBER  
ABBREVIATED DIALING CODE**

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**DOCKET NO. 17-00028**

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**ORDER APPROVING TRANSFER OF N11 NUMBER (211)**

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This matter came before Chairman David F. Jones, Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard and Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill of the Tennessee Public Utility Commission (“Commission” or “TPUC”), the voting panel assigned to this docket, at a regularly scheduled Commission Conference held on April 10, 2017, to consider the *Joint Petition for Transfer of an N11 Number* (“*Joint Petition*”) filed by Contact Ministries, Inc. (“Contact Ministries”) and Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. (“Contact-Concern”). On March 27, 2017, Contact Ministries and Contact-Concern filed a *Joint Petition* seeking to merge the assignment of an N11 code, specifically “211”, with the surviving entity being Contact Ministries and the name of the surviving entity being simultaneously changed to Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. (“Contact 211”).

**BACKGROUND**

The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) released its *Third Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration* in CC Docket No. 92-105 (“*Third Report and Order*”) wherein it assigned the nationwide abbreviated dialing code 211 for access to community information and

referral services. In so doing, the FCC specifically found in the *Third Report and Order*:

Individuals facing serious threats to life, health, and mental well being have urgent and critical human needs that are not addressed by dialing 911 for emergency assistance or 311 for non-emergency police assistance. . . . We believe that the Information and Referral Petitioners have shown a public need exists for an easy to use, easy to remember N11 code to efficiently bring community information and referral services to those who need them, providing a national safety network for persons to get access readily to assistance. Therefore, we find that the public interest standard has been met.

On March 12, 2002, in Docket No. 02-00126, Contact Ministries, located in Johnson City, Tennessee received its 211 designation for Carter, Greene, Unicoi and Washington Counties. On March 26, 2002, in Docket No. 02-00127, Contact-Concern, located in Kingsport, Tennessee, received its 211 designation for Sullivan, Johnson, and Hawkins Counties, and on May 16, 2006, in Docket No. 06-00100 received its 211 designation for Hancock County.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the counties included in the collective, eight-county region are: Unicoi, Carter, Greene, Washington, Sullivan, Johnson, Hawkins and Hancock Counties.

Contact-Concern has an Executive Director that will serve as Executive Director of the merged entity, Contact 211.<sup>2</sup> Contact-Concern has space that it is now leasing for its call center in Kingsport for the continued operations of Contact 211. However, Contact-Concern has been struggling to maintain enough active volunteers and has been using paid staff to answer phones. The merger of the Petitioners will allow Contact 211 to adequately handle the volume of calls,

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<sup>1</sup> See *In re: Petition of Contact Ministries, Inc. to Provide the 211 Information And Referral Services to Carter, Green, Unicoi and Washington Counties*, Docket No. 02-00126, *Order Approving Allocation of N11 (211) to Contact Ministries, Inc.* (May 13, 2002); see *In re: Petition of Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. to Designate 211 Service for Non-Profit Health and Human Services Information and Referral Line for the Counties of Sullivan, Johnson and Hawkins, Tennessee*, Docket No. 02-00127, *Order Approving Allocation of N11 (211) to Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc.* (June 10, 2002); and see *In Re: Petition of Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. for 211 Designation in Hancock County, Tennessee*, Docket No. 06-00100, *Order Approving Allocation of N11 (211) to Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc.* (November 21, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> *Joint Petition*, p. 3 (March 27, 2017).

provide management expertise, financial stability and call center space.<sup>3</sup>

The Board of Directors of Contact Ministries and Contact-Concern have both approved the merger and will combine into a single board for the merged organization.<sup>4</sup> Consolidating their services will allow the two organizations to combine their strengths and better utilize their resources, in order to provide health and human services information and referral services to the citizens in a collective, eight-county region, serving all of Northeast Tennessee.<sup>5</sup>

The following documents were filed with the *Joint Petition* showing approval and support for the merger: *Written Consent in Lieu of Meeting of the Board of Directors of Contact Ministries*, signed by the Directors of Contact Ministries, and *Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc.*<sup>6</sup> Letters of support of the merger were received from the Executive Directors of Contact Ministries and Contact-Concern, the Executive Director of 211 in Kingsport, Tennessee and the President and member of the Board of Directors for Contact 211.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the Petitioners filed budgeted and year-end 2016 financial statements with their *Joint Petition* showing that at year-end 2016, Contact-Concern had \$67,064.92 cash in the bank with net income being \$52,932 for 2016 and a projection of \$10,026 net income for the merged organization for 2017.<sup>8</sup>

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

At the regularly scheduled Commission Conference held on April 10, 2017, the panel considered the *Joint Petition*. The panel found that the information and referral services provided

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at Exhibit A.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at Exhibit B.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at Exhibit C.

via 211 continue to be an excellent use of scarce abbreviated dialing codes, and consolidating services of the Northeast Tennessee regions will improve the quality of 211 services in Northeast Tennessee. Further, the panel found that merging Contact Ministries and Contact-Concern will result in a surviving organization that is financially and managerially better equipped to provide 211 information and referral services in the Northeast Tennessee region.

In addition, the panel found that the transition will be seamless to citizens in the eight-county service area of Unicoi, Carter, Greene, Washington, Sullivan, Johnson, Hawkins and Hancock counties because citizens calling 211 will continue to receive quality information and referral services, thereby, fulfilling the public interest.

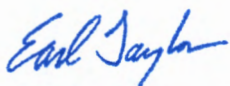
Based on these findings and the administrative record, the panel voted unanimously to approve the *Joint Petition* to transfer the designation of 211 to Contact Ministries and to change the name of the surviving entity to Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee, Inc.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:**

1. The *Joint Petition for Transfer of an N11 Number* filed by Contact Ministries, Inc. and Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. is approved.
2. The name of the merged entity will be Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee, Inc.
3. Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. will serve the following eight counties:  
Unicoi, Carter, Greene, Washington, Sullivan, Johnson, Hawkins and Hancock.

**Chairman David F. Jones, Commissioner Herbert H. Hilliard and Commissioner Kenneth C. Hill concur.**

**ATTEST:**



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**Earl R. Taylor, Executive Director**