

# **MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY**

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945  
PHONE: (415) 878-2690 FAX: (415) 878-2660  
WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG

**APPROVED: 3/14/12**  
(name correction May, 2012)

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES OF JANUARY 11, 2012 REGULAR MEETING**

#### **Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order by President Revere on January 11, 2012 at 3:32 p.m. at the Novato Fire Protection District's Administration Office, Heritage Conference Room, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA.

#### **Committee Members (or Alternates) Present:**

County of Marin	Matthew Hymel
County of Marin Sheriff	Robert Doyle
City of Novato	Joe Kreins
City of San Rafael	Chris Gray
Novato Fire Protection District	Marc Revere
Fire Districts: At-Large	Jim Irving
Ross Valley Agencies	Michael Rock
Southern Marin Cities/Towns	Jim McCann

#### **Nonvoting Members Present:**

Marin County Fire Chiefs' Association	Richard Pearce
Marin County Police Chiefs' Association	John Rohrbacher

#### **Nonvoting Members Absent:**

Marin County Public Works Association	Nader Mansourian
---------------------------------------	------------------

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
MERA Operations Officer/ County Assistant Public Works Director	Craig Tackabery
County Communications Engineer	Richard Chuck
Recording Secretary	Denise Wade

#### **A. Consent Calendar**

All matters on the Consent Calendar are to be approved with one motion unless a Member of the Committee or the public requests that separate action be taken on a specific item.

1. Minutes from December 7, 2011, Executive Committee Regular Meeting

*M/S/P Gray/Hymel to approve Consent Calendar A-1 as presented.*

AYES: All

NAYS: None

Motion carried.

B. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1. Report #6 on MERA Strategic Plan Implementation

Cassingham updated the Committee on the Board's December 14 actions further implementing the Strategic Plan. The Vision Statement and Core Values were approved and are now posted on the MERA website. The revised Principles of Governance and creation of a 9-member Executive Board were approved, in concept, while retaining the 25-member MERA Board as the ultimate authority over operational matters, annual budgets and indebtedness. The Board also approved the recommended process for annual revision of the Strategic Plan and the proposed changes to the Outreach sections of the Plan. The revised Outreach sections of the document will also be posted to the website.

The Board was updated on the work of the Finance Committee on a financing plan for the next gen system after DPW delivers the 700 MHz Feasibility Study. The Outreach Subcommittee will meet on January 19 to further review the draft MERA Fact Sheet and FAQs, the proposed tagline in the Strategic Plan and an additional services proposal from public affairs consultants Mullen and Price.

Cassingham noted the proposed timeline attached to Report #6, which plots out meeting dates of the Governance Work Group, Finance and Executive Committees and Board and their respective Strategic Plan tasks. This draft does not yet incorporate a distribution date of the draft JPA revisions to the MERA members for presentation to their governing bodies as needed. She and General Counsel Karpiak conferred after the December 14 meeting and he has since provided the first draft of an amended and restated JPA Agreement and revised Bylaws for initial staff review. Karpiak is providing fresh eyes for the Governance Work Group's work and subsequent input from the Board on the proposed New Governance Structure. The next steps will be for Karpiak to review these documents with the Governance Work Group and thereafter the Executive Committee. Proposed changes will go to the Board of Directors on 5/16/12. Revere said he appreciated the one-page summary of what lies ahead for all the Committees. Once this calendar is fine-tuned, Cassingham will send it to MERA Board Members so they can build in their agency reviews. Revere said the schedule, as presented, is very positive and shows we are really moving and doing things. Cassingham thanked the Executive Committee for all its hard work in getting us to this point, noting the vetting process to date has been very thorough.

2. Other Information Items

Cassingham reported that preliminary budgets for FY12-13 would be presented to the Finance and Executive Committees in February and March respectively. Thereafter, the preliminaries will be distributed to Board Members to assist with their agencies' budget preparation as early as possible. She noted she would be meeting with Tackabery and Shelly Nelson on January 20 to review the draft new Technical Services Agreement with

the County, which goes into effect July 1, 2012. Technical services costs represent a significant amount of MERA's Operating Budget so this agreement has considerable bearing on the members. The draft agreement will be presented to the Finance and Executive Committees in February and March. She also noted that property insurance will increase by approximately 3%, which reflects the current state of the market and was anticipated.

Cassingham said meraonline.org has been added to MERA's letterhead. The website is being updated to post the recently approved Vision Statement and Core Values, new or revised Board-approved documents and an updated Chronological History. She will be working with MERA Board Members to create links on their agencies' websites to meraonline.org. The intent is to communicate more broadly through the members to the public about MERA. The City of Belvedere and Southern Marin Fire Protection District have already done this.

Irving asked about when the tentative budget numbers would be available. Cassingham said this information will be distributed after the March 14 Executive Committee meeting.

*M/S/P Irving/Gray to accept Items B-1 and B-2 of the Executive Officer's Report as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

C. Operations Reports (Tackabery)

1. Update on Coastal Commission Permitting and Environmental Review – Tomales Coverage Project

Tackabery reported there has been no change since last month's meeting. The County does not have title to the property, so DPW is working with the applicant to co-sign the permitting documents. A number of relatives are involved so it is taking some time. This, plus the holidays, has resulted in some delay but work will be picking up on this.

2. Request for Waiver of Radio Moratorium

- American Red Cross
- Town of San Anselmo

Tackabery noted MERA Board approval of two policies guiding DPW in reviewing these requests, namely the Additional Radios Policy and Procedures and the Non-member User No-Fee Policy. He said the Red Cross requested a second radio mainly to communicate with the EOC during emergencies. There was considerable discussion about this at the MERA Operations Committee meeting. The concern is to minimize the number of non-essential users. While there was support for the request, he received several calls from Emergency Operations staff after the meeting. At this point, Red Cross only uses the radio when cell phone service is not available. There is concern that this is not the best way to communicate with them. In talking with Chris Riley, the new Emergency Services Manager for the EOC, it is recommended to give them the radio now but continue working

with them to find the best way to communicate in hopes of curtailing them as a MERA user. Gray asked who the Red Cross would talk with on the MERA radio. Tackabery said they would talk to staff at the EOC during emergencies, not communicate with each other. They would be considered a low user. Gray said the potential is there for them to be a moderate-level user during an incident and it is important to assure they can use organizational discipline when using it. They, like Salvation Army, are not going to be able to access by phone and possibly tie up the dispatch center. He felt that this radio is a useful tool but they just don't have the volume of incidents to help exercise discipline. Tackabery clarified the Red Cross already has one phone and this new one would be used in Southern Marin. Doyle asked why we would grant this request now if we are eventually going to remove it. Tackabery said approval of the request now addresses the immediate situation while we look for other ways to communicate with them. Gray said if they needed to open a shelter, the radio would be useful. Tackabery said the Red Cross has a grant to purchase the \$4,000 radio and there is a timeline to use it.

Tackabery reported that San Anselmo has decided to co-locate dispatch with Twin Cities. They have asked for a new base station radio as a back-up in case Twin Cities goes down. Gray said this is very basic backup.

*M/S/P Irving/Gray to receive the update on the Tomales Coverage Project and approve the American Red Cross and Town of San Anselmo requests for one additional radio and one new base station radio, respectively.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

3. Status of 700 MHz Feasibility Study

Tackabery said a first draft was provided to the Finance Committee Subcommittee and it has been revised again and given to Hymel and Gaffney for comment. It will eventually be agendaized for full Finance Committee review. Hymel noted he and Revere would go over this with Tackabery and Cassingham on January 20 in advance of the Finance Committee's review.

4. Status/Work Statistics Reports (Chuck)

Chuck reported that the system is fully operational. DPW has done the monthly, weekly and daily preventive maintenance checks this last month. The required microwave software update has been completed. Forbes Hill had a transmitter that was replaced and Sonoma Mountain had a microwave transmitter replaced. The Prime Site digital interface was replaced. All generator fuel tanks were topped off, and gauges and block feeders were tested. All databases were updated and backed up. They have started the annual database overhaul dealing with annual unit ID updates. A number of alias and ID changes have been done in the last month.

*M/S/P Irving/Gray to accept Item C-3 and C-4 Reports.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

5. Other Information Items

None

Revere said the member agencies' website links to MERA's website is a good idea and he asked Cassingham how she intended to proceed. She plans to contact all the Board members for their assistance in getting this done. She will refer them to the City of Belvedere and Southern Marin Fire Protection District websites as examples. She noted that City of Belvedere has extensive information about MERA on its site, including a link in the text. Revere offered staff assistance to complete this project.

D. Open Time for Items NOT on Agenda (*limited to two minutes per speaker*)

None

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

**NOTE: NEXT MEETING OF MERA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday – March 14, 2012 – 3:30 p.m.**

**AGENDA AND STAFF REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT**  
**WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG**

cc: Diane Patterson (for posting)  
MERA Staff  
General Counsel  
Novato City Clerk (w/minutes)