

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 14, 2010

TO: MERA Executive Committee

FROM: Maureen Cassingham, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM **B-1**: REPORT ON MERA MEETING LOCATION,
ACCESS, MEMBER ATTENDANCE AND
REQUEST FOR DIRECTION

Recommended Action: Provide direction regarding MERA meeting location and member attendance.

Background: Since MERA's relocation to the NFPD Administrative Offices, July 1, 2009, MERA has been using the District's Heritage Conference Room for Executive Committee and Board meetings. President Kinsey and I have periodically discussed public access to the Heritage Room. I asked MERA's General Counsel to review the access issue with respect to the open meeting requirements of the Brown Act. Likewise, it is important to determine whether the current location of MERA's meetings has affected member attendance. Previous meeting sites included the San Rafael Community Center, Marin Civic Center and the Marin Community Foundation building at 555 Northgate, San Rafael. These locations were geographically central, publicly accessible and free of charge. However, staff encountered room-availability and set-up challenges at each of these venues; and, MERA incurred travel expense and comp time for MERA's Administrative Associate to act as recording secretary.

Use of the Heritage Conference Room is part of MERA's Office and Staff Services Agreement with the District. To date, there have been no scheduling or room-setup issues. NFPD staff support for MERA's meetings is also much easier to arrange since the Administrative Specialist works at this location. As for public access, if there are no sign-in or "buzz-in" requirements for ingress to the Conference Room, and doors are open except for closed sessions, General Counsel has stated MERA complies with the Brown Act. District facilities are also ADA compliant. MERA meeting notices state if special accommodations are needed, the District Administrative Specialist will provide assistance.

While the current location works effectively for MERA in many ways and is publicly accessible, it is unknown whether it affects member attendance. Staff suggests polling

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MERA Board and Executive Committee Members and Alternates to solicit input on whether the current meeting location affects their attendance and, if it does, determine meeting location preferences that work for the greatest number and thus better assure quorums (e.g., North County, Central County and South County on a rotating basis, a Central County-only venue, etc.). Only rent-free, consistently available public facilities will be considered and where NFPD recording secretary services can be arranged.

Given the significant issues and projects that lie ahead for MERA, it is critical that member attendance be facilitated to ensure representative decision-making.