

MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District
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“Draft”

Agenda Item B-2: E.C. 11-10-10

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2010, REGULAR MEETING

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Kinsey at 3:39 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	Steve Kinsey
County of Marin Sheriff	Robert Doyle
City of San Rafael	Chris Gray (Alternate)
City of Novato	Joe Kreins
Ross Valley Agencies	Michael Rock

Committee Members Absent:

Southern Marin Cities/Towns	Adam Politzer
Novato Fire Protection District	Marc Revere
Fire Districts At-Large	Jim Irving

Nonvoting Members Present:

Marin Public Works Association	Nader Mansourian
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Nonvoting Members Absent:

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

Staff Present:

MERA Executive Officer	Maureen Cassingham
County Public Works Director	Farhad Mansourian
Recording Secretary	Denise Wade

A. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1. Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee's Recommended Draft – Marin Emergency Radio Authority Strategic Plan and Proposed Second Amendment to

Agreement for Strategic Planning Facilitation Services Between NERA and CBG Communications, Inc.

Tom Robinson, CBG Communications, Inc., President and facilitator of NERA's strategic planning process, participated in the meeting via WebEx and conference call along with his Senior Engineer Dick Nielsen. Robinson summarized the draft plan by going through the Executive Summary, noting that the document identifies seven major strategic directions. He said it is designed to be a high level plan that includes guideposts and pathways for the future of NERA's communications system, its members' needs, and to meet the initiatives under these strategies. A key part of the plan is the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning Committee's analysis of NERA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.

He summarized the seven recommended strategic directions as follows:

- 1) Adopt a new Mission Statement;
- 2) Consider changes to NERA's governance structure including, a Board self-assessment;
- 3) Development of a system technology replacement plan;
- 4) Development of a short and long-term funding plan;
- 5) Development of a public education and outreach campaign;
- 6) Expansion of partnerships; and,
- 7) Strengthening the common bonds of the Membership.

As opposed to a page-by-page review of the document, Kinsey solicited Committee Member questions and comments. Kreins said the plan is an excellent product that reflects a great amount of work. He suggested revisiting the plan every three years versus the recommended five years given the changing technology and economy. Kinsey asked if NERA can muster the number of work groups with the necessary skills to implement the directions. Robinson said the Board may need to prioritize and synchronize implementation of the strategic directions and workgroup efforts versus a great deal of simultaneous activity. Work groups may need DPW's assistance or consulting resources to help with the workload. Kinsey inquired about staff FTE to provide support. Robinson said the plan would require more than the current 15 hours per week being provided by the Executive Officer.

Kinsey inquired of Mansourian as to who developed the short-term and replacement system cost estimates. Mansourian said the short-term projects costs

were estimated by consultants and staff; however, the replacement estimate depends on whether MERA proceeds with a full 700 MHz rebuild or a new T-Band system. He said while \$50M is a good estimate for the type of replacement system needed in the future, it could be considerably more since we do not know what that system will look like. This estimate does not include the cost of doubling the number of sites likely required for 700 MHz or the cost of member equipment for the new system. Robinson said the message here is that it will be a big cost and now is the time to identify a group to begin working on developing resources to meet these costs. He said the recommended Sustainability Subcommittee, is a critical one when looking at short and long-term system priorities.

Mansourian asked to talk more about the three options and costs noted in the recent AECOM study referenced in the draft plan. He said an RFQ has been issued for proposals to further develop the cost of the options along with suggested ways of financing them. There are four pre-bidders at this time. Beyond the best technology approach, future costs will have a direct effect on MERA governance. For example, if a smaller MERA member with limited resources, under the current governance structure, votes against significant replacement costs, the project cannot go forward. Robinson said the financial participation of members would be an issue. The CTA report mentions ways of developing resources to fund such costs which the workgroup or Sustainability Subcommittee would have to weigh in on. Kinsey asked whether the governance and sustainability workgroups should be one. Robinson suggested crossover membership between the two would be advantageous.

Kinsey asked Robinson to take the Committee through the critical next steps with the plan in the next 90 days if we get Board support. Robinson said the Board should adopt the mission statement first followed by a Board membership self-assessment in the next three to six months. A Governance Work Group should be appointed, with membership overlap with the Sustainability Committee, along with a technology workgroup which could be Mansourian's Operational Issues Workgroup. The next steps would be to begin work on MERA's message to the community followed by expanding partnerships and strengthening member bonds. Partnerships could help with sustainability. For example, working with hospitals, which already have extensive funding mechanisms in place, could be very useful. He suggested the Finance Committee could take on sustainability by involving those with expertise who may not have been tapped within the member agencies or experts from agencies outside of MERA.

Mansourian said his Operations Group is constantly looking at first-level technical issues but suggested that a group of Police and Fire Chiefs be asked to weigh in on short-term projects and system replacement. Kinsey asked if we are looking at development campaigns for this funding since MERA did not have an initial community message until it encountered siting issues. Robinson said given the extent of financial requirements for current and replacement projects, the

current dollars available will fall short, so a public education campaign would be needed.

Gray summarized his take on the plan by noting he agrees that the plan has to be reviewed more frequently than recommended given the dynamic issues before us like interoperability. He also cited the staffing demands from the additional committees. He agreed with the emphasis on governance and sustainability and that MERA representation will need to be modified given the future resources required. Gray said the technology issues are still evolving so not all the talking points are available yet. He said MERA may need to go beyond grants, possibly toward Federal earmarks along with leveraging with other partners. MERA needs to expand its local footprint and noted that we can learn from the experiences of hospitals. Greater use of MERA radios versus cell phones for emergency communications should be addressed. Gray summarized that the draft plan reflected good staff work in its presentation.

M/S/P Doyle/Gray to recommend adoption of recommended draft of the MERA Strategic Plan by the Board of Directors and conveyance of the implementation priorities and approaches discussed by the Executive Committee at this meeting.

AYES: All
NAYS: None
Motion carried.

M/S/P Kreins/Gray to approve the proposed Second Amendment to the Agreement for Strategic Planning Facilitation Services between MERA and CBG Communications, Inc., in the amount of \$10,000.

AYES: All
NAYS: None
Motion carried.

Mansourian noted it was important to point out to the Board that our remaining system life is 10 years and we must begin planning for and funding system replacement now. The past philosophy of using the current system until it dies is not an option. He also noted that the acquisition of more frequencies is a two-year process plus FCC licensing requires time beyond that, so we must begin now.

Kinsey requested a concise presentation of the plan to the Board on September 22. The Board needs to decide on what form the self-assessment process will take along with the composition of the workgroups with Mansourian handling the technology plan with the Police and Fire Chiefs' group. He noted that the Sustainability group will have the hardest task of all. He asked Rock if he could assist with this effort and Rock agreed to participate on behalf of the Ross Valley Agencies.

He asked Cassingham to provide a brief description for the Sustainability group's charge for the Board. Mansourian suggested that the Finance Committee (Gaffney, Kreins, Nordhoff and Rzepinski) be expanded to work on sustainability. He suggested Chief Pearce, Marin Fire Chiefs' Association; Chief Revere, NFPD; and the County Finance Director be added to the Committee.

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

None to report.

C. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

NEXT: MERA Executive Committee Regular Meeting
Wednesday – **November 10, 2010** – 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)