

# MARIN EMERGENCY RADIO AUTHORITY

c/o Novato Fire Protection District  
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E.B. 9/11/13 AGENDA ITEM B-1

## Executive Board

Draft: 8/23/13

### Minutes of July 24, 2013 Meeting

#### Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hymel on July 24, 2013 at 2:36 p.m. in the Heritage Conference Room, Novato Fire Protection District Administration Office, 95 Rowland Way, Novato, CA 94945.

#### **Board Members Present:**

County of Marin  
Marin County Sheriff  
City of San Rafael  
City of Novato  
Fire Services  
Ross Valley Cities/Towns  
Southern Marin Cities/Towns

Matthew Hymel  
Robert Doyle  
Chris Gray  
Jim Berg  
Richard Pearce  
Debra Stutsman  
Jim McCann

#### **Board Members Absent:**

Police Departments  
Special Districts

Todd Cusimano  
Bill Hogan

#### **Staff Present:**

MERA Executive Officer  
MERA Operations Officer  
MERA Special Project Manager  
DPW Communications Services Manager  
County Communications Engineer  
Recording Secretary

Maureen Cassingham  
Craig Tackabery  
David Jeffries  
Shelly Nelson  
Richard Chuck  
Gretchen Felciano

#### **Guests Present:**

Indie Politics  
Price Campaign Solutions  
Southern Marin Fire Protection District

Dan Mullen  
Terry Price  
Martin Langeveld

A. Consent Calendar

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

1. Minutes from May 8, 2013 Executive Board Regular Meeting
2. Report #12 on Strategic Plan Implementation
3. Proposed Fifth Amendment to Office and Staff Services Agreement between MERA and Novato Fire Protection District

*M/S/P Pearce/Doyle to approve Consent Calendar Items 1-3 as presented.*

AYES: All

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: Gray – Item 1

Motion carried.

B. Executive Officer's Report (Cassingham)

1. Recommendations from the MERA Finance and Project Oversight Committees on Next Generation System Project

Cassingham presented the recommendations from the Finance and Project Oversight Committees on the NBS Parcel Tax Study Report and the Next Gen Project Financing Plan. The Parcel Tax Study presents a parcel tax mechanism for a \$29 parcel tax per single-family residence and an average annual tax of less than \$40 for all parcel types, except exempt. This generates \$3.6M per year and will fund a \$40M project and other financing costs for a 20-year term as outlined in the proposed Financing Plan. Project costs above base budget are proposed to be funded by continuing current member debt service to pay for zero-interest capital appreciation bonds. She noted the latest revision to the Parcel Tax Report included consideration of a low-income senior exemption.

Cassingham said County Counsel and MERA General Counsel are reviewing the proposed parcel tax mechanism in light of an appeals court decision earlier this year regarding the uniformity of an Alameda Unified School District parcel tax. There are, however, other code sections that apply to the County's levy of parcel taxes for public safety purposes. General Counsel Ortiz will provide Executive Board members information on this directly under attorney-client privilege in the next few days.

Hymel commented that the good news is a \$29 parcel tax will fund the \$40M project including four additional sites to address coverage issues. Legal analysis will confirm whether a different amount of tax can be levied on different classes of properties. He mentioned poll results which showed increased support for the lower parcel tax which was accomplished by extending the bond term and replacing only existing radios.

McCann said he was struck by the reduced parcel assessment and asked for more background. Hymel said the initial project budget included 5,000 radios for existing and replacement radios. Poll results did not support that level of willingness to pay. The budget was revised to 3,000 radios which reduced costs and extended the average useful life of the system from 15 to 20 years. McCann inquired about coverage issues with the new system referencing the Stinson area coverage concerns. Hymel said Tackabery's Operations Group prioritized eight additional sites for presentation to the Executive Board. The \$40M project budget provides for four more sites including Stinson.

McCann noted that technology advances quickly and while the current system is functioning well, replacement parts are becoming an issue. He asked if we will be in the same situation at some point with the Next Gen System. Tackabery said the current platform is not upgradeable. The next system will have an upgradable I.P. platform. They are still recommending a 15-year planning horizon for certain system components. Nelson added, an I.P.-based, P-25 standardized platform will permit replacement of pieces by other manufacturers, since more will be manufacturing and supporting components longer. The I.P. platform will allow us to keep up with technology changes without replacing everything.

Pearce said manufacturers are building in planned obsolescence in their products. He is concerned project costs may exceed estimates and how we will deal with that. Hymel said there is a 25% contingency in the budget to address this plus we may have to cut or generate more revenues. Cuts would involve more discussions and capital appreciation bonds may be necessary to generate supplemental funding from members above what a successful parcel tax would generate. CABS would generate funding to complete a project with members paying for them by continuing debt service contributions. The parcel tax would hopefully be supplemented by grants with member support being used as the last resort. Tackabery said the budget is designed to provide cost-cutting options like radio types, etc.

*M/S/P McCann/Stutsman to approve the revised draft (7-24-13) of the NBS Parcel Tax Study Report pending final review of the proposed parcel tax mechanism by County Counsel and MERA General Counsel.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

*M/S/P Pearce/Berg to recommend Governing Board approval of the revised Project Financing Plan funded by a parcel tax described in the NBS Parcel Tax Study and confirmed by Legal Counsel and funding of additional project costs with Capital Appreciation Bonds paid by continuing current member debt service if needed.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

2. Report on Executive and Governing Board Actions – 700 MHz Replacement Technology

Cassingham said on July 10, Project Oversight Committee members discussed the selection of 700 MHz replacement technology which has been under review by County staff, is part of the UASI program and the MERA Strategic Planning and implementation process and has been included in ongoing discussions and presentations to MERA's Committees and Boards. She was asked to research whether the Governing or Executive Boards had approved the 700 MHz technology. Neither had taken such action. However, since 2009, meeting minutes showed reports and discussion of 700 MHz on 26 occasions.

Cassingham said the Strategic Plan required presentation of a system replacement plan to all member agency Police and Fire Chiefs and Public Works Director, followed by the submission to the Executive Committee and Board for action. She noted that DPW's Draft System Feasibility Study on today's agenda, which recommends a 700 MHz system, could serve this purpose. She added that the record to date seems to support 700 MHz technology. Pearce said it was clear 700 MHz was to be a component of the final system. Tackabery recommended no action on the draft Study today as good comments and information were still being received. Discussion was requested and the Study will be presented for action in November/December. Hymel confirmed that Study acceptance would constitute 700 MHz acceptance. He said he felt discussion of Next Gen was synonymous with 700 MHz.

McCann asked if there was an alternative to 700 MHz. Tackabery said there were many options but 700MHz best fits our needs, including addressing FCC requirements. McCann asked if there was some question as to whether this was the proper technology to pursue. Pearce replied that approving 700 MHz was a loose end, plus other options presented in the AECOM Report appended to the Strategic Plan need final addressing. He wants any remaining questions to be answered. Nelson clarified that 700 MHz is frequency bandwidth spectrum and P25 I.P. platform is the technology. The 700 MHz technology has been set aside for public safety by the Federal Government and provides us capacity for the future. Chuck said the AECOM Report was completed several years ago and one option of expanding the current system is no longer possible due to the T-band give-back requirement. Berg noted that all the other Bay Area agencies are going to the 700 MHz platform. Nelson said 700 MHz permits interoperability with State and Federal agencies beyond local entities. Hymel confirmed Cassingham's report was informational and no action was needed.

3. Report on MERA Reserve Funds Balances and Reserves Policy

Cassingham said in May, the Executive and Governing Boards recommended Finance Committee review of projected FY13-14 Reserve Funds balances with particular attention to the Replacement Fund which is charged with Strategic and Outreach Plan expenses. The Reserves Policy establishes minimum balances for the Replacement and Emergency Funds of \$500,000. Based on Governing Board-approved expenditures, the

Replacement Fund balance will be reduced from \$927,353 to \$581,229 by June 30, 2014. The Finance Committee has recommended that the Executive Officer provide a Consent Calendar update on fund balances at every Executive Board meeting going forward. She said it is imperative, given unanticipated System expenses and estimated expenditures leading up to the November 2014 ballot measure, that this Fund 70036 be closely monitored. The Committee also recommended no change to the Reserves Policy. Berg confirmed Governing Board action to receive reimbursement for Next Gen Project-related expenses from parcel tax proceeds.

*M/S/P Pearce/Doyle to continue Executive Board monitoring of MERA Reserve Funds at the bi-monthly meetings and maintain the Reserves Policy as is.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

4. Outreach Presentation for Board of Supervisors' Workshop

Jeffries distributed copies of the PPT presentation along with the Fact Sheet and FAQs. He noted recent presentations to MMA and the Joint Police and Fire Chiefs' Meeting. The internal FAQs will evolve into presenter notes. Yesterday, staff met with Hymel in preparation for the August 6 BOS Workshop. Chief Weber will lead the presentation to the Supervisors. A presentation is scheduled for August 7 to Novato Fire. Berg will present to City of Novato on August 20. Kentfield Fire is scheduled for August 21. Central Marin Police Authority is likely to be scheduled last due to their meeting schedule. The first round of informational meetings should be completed by the end of October including a special meeting of the Public Works Directors. He has received excellent feedback from the initial presentations.

Pearce asked if personalizing the presentations for each agency was still an option. Jeffries said the talking points would be personalized versus personalized PPTs. Hymel said, out of the MMA meeting, came the suggestion to customize with each Member agency's Plan B costs for funding the Next Gen Project without a parcel tax. The multiplier would be 160% without the tax. Jeffries said he and his Assistant Anderson would provide back-up support at as many of these presentations as possible. A second round of presentations in early 2014 would seek member agency support of a detailed proposal.

5. Executive Officer Work Plan Review Committee

Cassingham reported on the Committee's July 17 meeting to review the E.O. 2013 Work Plan, recap of actual and compensated hours worked and performance. The Committee asked for E.O. perspective on administrative issues to date and the seven goals of the Plan. She characterized the review as very positive and was pleased with the feedback and suggestions received from the Committee members. She asked members for their input.

Pearce said how happy they are with the fine work Cassingham is doing and with moving MERA from a maintenance organization to one developing a Next Generation system. He expressed appreciation for her effort and hours. Gray commented on Executive Officer competence and keeping the organization on its toes. Hymel concluded that this was a very positive exchange and we would be working together to find ways to help the E.O. work within contract hours. He expressed thanks for going above and beyond.

*M/S/P Gray/Pearce to approve the Executive Officer 2013 Work Plan Update and Recap of Hours as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

6. Other Information Items

None.

C. Operations Officer Reports

1. MERA – Next Generation Radio System Implementation Feasibility Study

- Request for Additional Funding for Cost Overrun through 6/30/13

Tackabery noted considerable additional time expended on the coverage analysis and site visits associated with the Feasibility Study. He recommended reallocation of unexpended funds in the System Analysis Agreement budget for FY12-13 as follows: \$8,000 for Tomales, \$8,000 for Martha and \$30,000 for the Feasibility Study. Pearce asked how much had been spent on the Feasibility Study to date. Cassingham said about \$63,000 had been expended through June ending. He asked about the \$20,000 expenditure. It was clarified that this was for this fiscal year. Tackabery and Nelson confirmed the final bills for the Study in this fiscal year would be about \$24,000-\$25,000; \$30,000 was an estimate.

Pearce asked about the duplication between the AECOM Report and Feasibility Study. He asked about the cost to reboot AECOM. Tackabery said at the Project Oversight Committee, one of the attachments to the Draft Feasibility Study, the AECOM System Design Report, was completed in April 2010. The Committee asked what it would cost to update it. Since it was developed, more information has come to light including the CSI Frequency Licensing Report and Federal legislation. AECOM can provide an update for \$92,309 which would include an updated budget and a presentation to the Governing Board in December. Pearce asked if the update would give us the bang for the buck we are looking for.

Hymel said the Study was to be an internal update of AECOM. Tackabery said the Finance Committee asked for a cash flow which was not included in AECOM. In meetings with Revere and Hymel, more questions arose which are covered in the Study, like system obsolescence and paging. Hymel said the Study was meant to be an add-on to AECOM and to address issues with voters. Pearce asked if the Feasibility Study would be completed with this reshuffling of costs. Tackabery said no. These costs are for last fiscal year and there are new items being worked on this year. Nelson started clarifying for Hymel last year's and total costs. Time was requested to allow her to work on same and report later in the meeting.

*M/S/P Doyle/Gray to reallocate System Analysis Project costs within the FY12-13 budget as presented.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

2. Marin Emergency Radio Authority – Next Generation Radio System Implementation

- Draft Feasibility Study – July 24, 2013
- Report on Coverage Options and Site Prioritization Recommendations

Tackabery highlighted the contents of the Study beginning with the background on the current system, its impending obsolescence, current indebtedness with the last payment to be made in 2020, summary of current volunteer paging which is under review by Weber and Mark Brown, Federal legislation requirements, references to the AECOM and Licensing Reports and the County 2010 RFP for a 700 MHz, which is the basis for the project cost estimate. DPW is reviewing the cost estimate. A summary of grants received to date is included.

Tackabery discussed the eight sites identified to improve coverage holes. He said the base project budget has sufficient funds to address four of the eight sites. The Executive Board asked the Ops Group to help prioritize these sites. Dispatch centers provided one year of call data which was plotted on coverage maps. Ops also considered areas where private properties would pay a parcel tax, areas where sites can be added quickly, lower priority to areas with viable work-arounds and areas with potential for partnerships with other agencies like Fort Baker. They ranked sites 1 through 8. Recommended priority was Tomales, Martha, Wolfback and Muir Beach/Stinson. The remaining four would be considered based on funding availability and partnerships. The North County site has been retitled East Marshall.

Hymel asked when the Study would be finalized. Tackabery said the Study would be updated for the next Executive Board meeting with the goal of final presentation in November/December for both Boards' review. Tackabery said if needed to make the report stronger, AECOM could be updated and their scope could be revisited to reduce costs. Pearce asked for total cost of Feasibility Study completion. He estimated \$10K or

less to finish the Study unless more questions arise and more research is required. More pager information is expected and project costs will be updated based on other agencies' systems. Nelson provided the Feasibility costs for FY2012-13 as \$27,214, most due to coverage research.

Doyle clarified with Tackabery that AECOM would charge \$92K+ to do what DPW is doing with the Study. Tackabery said he did not know their approach to updating the cost estimate. They would update the frequencies information and legislation changes and not look at paging. Hymel asked about the additional value gained with the AECOM update versus DPW's work on the Feasibility Study. Doyle supported DPW's work over what AECOM would do for \$90K+. Nelson confirmed AECOM would only update their report, not do any additional research such as on additional sites. Pearce confirmed site research is in their report, so there are redundancies. Nelson responded that some, not all, are included.

Berg said AECOM would be revisiting their cost estimates from 2010 and opening whether 700 MHz was our best option going forward. Hymel said this would address these points and not be a re-do of the report. Tackabery read AECOM's response to the County's request for an update to the 2010 System Design Report. Hymel said the Finance Committee could review the AECOM update and costs. Pearce said this may be part of our due diligence and noted we could be paying for the same information twice between AECOM and the Feasibility Study, including the site analysis which was in AECOM. Berg asked if DPW could update the prices. Tackabery confirmed this was one of DPW's pending tasks which could be accomplished within the estimated \$10,000 to complete the Study. Hymel said Finance Committee would also need to advise on whether the AECOM update would be the right use of reserves.

Tackabery asked for assistance in reviewing the AECOM scope before the Finance Committee meeting. Berg and Pearce offered to review AECOM's proposal and work with Tackabery on the scope.

### 3. Request for Waiver of Radio Moratorium

- County of Marin Parks Department

Tackabery presented Parks' request for 11 additional radios. The Ops Group recommended the request be granted based on the addition of five new rangers and two resource specialists. Doyle inquired why resource specialists need radios. Pearce and Gray clarified they would work in isolated locations and need reliable communications. Gray saw rangers as needing radios and Doyle questioned the specialists' need. Doyle said Deputies perform the law enforcement duties.

Berg proposed elimination of the word "moratorium" with these requests. Hymel suggested this is more a review-and-approval process. Doyle supported the rangers' allocation and asked for more information on the specialists' use. Nelson clarified the rangers' request was for five radios in vehicles and five portables with one radio for the



specialists. McCann confirmed Ops' review of this request. Berg asked if these radios would be covered in the Next Gen budgeted radios. Tackabery said 3,000 radios are budgeted. Chuck confirmed 2,875 radios are currently active on the System, plus these 11 if approved. Pearce confirmed the Open Space District is separate from the County, and County Parks is under the County.

*M/S/P Doyle/Gray to approve Marin County Parks' request for 11 radios as clarified with five mobiles for rangers, five portables for rangers, and one radio for the specialists.*

AYES: All  
NAYS: None  
Motion carried.

4. Status/Work Statistics Reports

Chuck reviewed the MERA System Activity for May and June 2013 and System Activity Year-to-Date for 2013. He noted more busies in June due to system testing. YTD statistics show the system is performing well day to day.

5. Other Information Items

Tackabery reported a BOS hearing on the Martha site set for October 22. Pearce said he requested a copy of this report.

D. Open Time for Items Not On Agenda

None.

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.

**NEXT:** MERA Executive Board Meeting

**Wednesday September 11, 2013 3:30pm**

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[WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG](http://WWW.MERAONLINE.ORG)**