

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

DATE: October 28, 2013
TO: MERA Finance Committee
FROM: Dave Jeffries, Special Project Manager
SUBJECT: AGENDA ITEM **C-1**: REPORT ON ROUND ONE PRESENTATIONS

Recommended Action: Receive, discuss and file Report on Round One Presentations.

Background: The Round One Presentations were designed to provide all MERA Member agencies with an update on the Next Generation System project and to introduce them to the funding mechanism chosen by MERA. Those presentations began on July 18, 2013 with presentations to the Marin City Managers and to a joint meeting of the Marin Fire and Police Chiefs.

One MERA Member Agency, the Central Marin Police Authority waived presentations as all of their board members were scheduled to receive the presentation at their home Board or Council meetings. All of the remaining presentations, including one for the Marin Public Work's Directors, have now been completed (24) or scheduled (3).

A final report will be provided after the conclusion of all Round I presentations.

Presentation Feedback: During each of the presentations, questions and feedback were noted. In many cases, the questions were answered at the time, but some issues needed to be brought to the attention of the POC and now the Finance Committee, especially in terms of funding alternatives. Some of these issues came up once, but some came up multiple times.

In the Round Two Staff Report, I will be recommending specific actions for some of these issues.

I have tried to categorize and summarize these comments and questions below, noting the questions not addressed in the presentation in bold or that need further discussion based on an overall view of all of the presentations to date: (*Items in italics are new since the POC meeting*)

Funding Issues:

1. **Can MERA start a reserve account to fund the Gen III system?**
2. **What are our jurisdiction's current bond and O&M costs?**
3. **What are the O&M costs for Gen II?**
4. **Would it be cheaper to lease rather than purchase equipment?**
5. **Can we split the Gen II costs between Parcel Tax and Agency budgets?**
6. **Is there a plan to sell off Gen I equipment? Does that affect Gen II budget?**
7. **How do we begin charging non-member agencies for system use?**
8. **Functionality for our agency and re-examination of O&M and distribution of costs essential for continued support.**
9. **What methodology will be used to determine O&M costs for Gen II for each agency?**
10. What happens if the Parcel Tax fails? Impacts on agency budget?
11. If the Parcel Tax fails, who decides new funding mechanism?
12. How did we determine averages for different categories of Parcel Tax?
13. Is there a contingency for changing technology? (In other words, if costs increase or technology changes from the time proposal is accepted to time of purchase what will we do?)
14. Do Parcel Tax rates vary from city to city?
15. Can we use specific costs in ballot language?
16. Request for more clarification between Capital and O&M costs
17. Can Grants be used to cover O&M? *What are the prospects to obtain grants?*
18. Can the Parcel Tax be increased to cover O&M as well?
19. Can Gen I reserve be used to pay off final year of Gen I bonds?
20. Why is the State not paying for this system?
21. Why are operating costs omitted from the presentations?
22. How did we get Parcel tax down to \$29?
23. Can parcel tax factor in community usage of MERA system?
24. Can we use Taxpayer Obligation Bonds instead?
25. Why doesn't MERA already have a replacement account to address the Gen II acquisition?
26. Will each member agency pay for its own radios?
27. Will acquisition costs ever end? (Long-term for Gen III, IV, etc.)
28. West County – Frustration that tourism impacts do not result in funding breaks for West County members funded by other members and Federal government.
29. Happy that MERA is going to Parcel Tax for capital costs.
30. *Concerns about voter fatigue and tax measures.*
31. *Why doesn't Marin County pay for the entire system out of their budget?*
32. *Can we refinance current bonds to extend payments in order to pay for the Gen II system?*

Generation I Issues:

1. **What is being done about the Gen I promise of radios for schools?**

2. Controversial nature of Gen I. Do not repeat “mistakes” of Gen I.
3. “We are golden” with Gen I compared to pre-MERA systems.
4. Why did MERA exceed Gen I radio estimates?
5. Recognized the importance of the MERA system and feels like voters will understand as well.
6. Be clear about what MERA can and cannot do. Overselling of Gen I.

Vendors:

1. **Are there vendors besides Motorola?**
2. **Will the RFP process be transparent?**
3. How many/which vendors will submit proposals?
4. Do vendors state up front how long equipment will last?

Technology:

1. **Why can't MERA coordinate with other counties in same situation? (Super-system and joint purchasing)**
2. What is the life expectancy of the Gen II system? *Will we get 20 years from Gen II?*
3. Where will the new towers be located? How many?
4. Why can't we simplify and go back to an analog system?
5. What is FirstNet? (Question created by slide comment)
6. Will technology out last bonds? What do we think of that?
7. What is the Gen I technology?
8. What is the main driving factor for Gen II (Three factors noted)
9. What new technology will Gen II introduce?
10. Will the Gen II system be expandable?
11. How will Gen II address lack of service and coverage for West County?
12. How will Gen II address overlay issues?
13. Is there a difference in narrow-banding requirements between UHF and 700 MHz?
14. Pleased about better coverage and resolution of paging issues for West County
15. *What is narrow-banding?*
16. *What are talkgroups?*

Outreach:

1. Importance of public outreach and clarity of MERA's mission.
2. What is MERA? I don't call MERA in an emergency? (Public)
3. What are we doing for Public Relations? Quelling negative feelings and rumors?
4. How was the General Obligation Bond question asked in the survey?
5. Recommendation to use personal stories in outreach.
6. How do we expect to reach 2/3 vote based on current survey?
7. Concern about voter fatigue and impact of other tax measures in 2013 and 2014.

REPORT ON ROUND ONE PRESENTATIONS

Page 4

8. Requests single slide in Round II of source and usage of finances and more detail on use of Parcel Tax.
9. *It will be important to spend a lot of time educating voters about what MERA is and does.*
10. *Will there be an organized campaign to support the Parcel Tax?*
11. *Is there any opposition?*

Membership

1. **Are their plans to expand MERA membership to other agencies?**
2. Why is North Marin Water not a MERA member?